ARBITRARY READINGS OF 3PL PRONOMINALS[*]

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Abstract

In the generative literature antecedentless readings of 3pl pronouns have been referred to as *arbitrary*. The present article argues that antecedentless readings are not a unitary phenomenon and proposes to distinguish 5 types of antecedentless readings for 3pl pronouns. I propose that the antecedentless readings depend on a deficient form of 3pl agreement that allows a non-anaphoric reading and only contributes the feature [+human]. I further propose that the different readings rely on two possible translations of 3pl pronouns combined with different mechanisms of content identification.

1 Introduction

It is well-known that pronouns allow readings without an antecedent.

(1) oh everything they do in Edinburgh – they do it far too slowly (Yule 1982)

Suñer (1983) draws a parallel with between 3pl *pro* without an antecedent and PRO without antecedent (*arbitrary PRO*), coining the term *arbitrary pro*.

The term *arbitrary pro* for antecedentless 3pl null pronouns is misleading in two respects, however. First, cross-linguistic data[1] show that the antecedentless readings of 3pl pronouns do not constitute a unitary phenomenon (section 2). And secondly, antecedentless readings of (null) 3pl pronouns differ in their properties from arbitrary PRO, suggesting that both phenomena should be treated separately (section 3).

In section 4 I propose an analysis for the different antecedentless readings.

2 The classification of 3pl arb readings

In their studies of *arbitrary* null pronominals Suñer (1983), Jaeggli (1986) the focus is on occurrences of antecedentless 3pl pro in episodic sentences where the interpretation can be roughly paraphrased by existential quantification:

(2) a. Dijeron en la radio que iba a llover. (Sp)
"(They) said on the radio that (it) was going to rain."
$\exists$ x: x said on the radio that it was going to rain.

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[1]In the examples, the languages are indicated as follows Fr= French, Ge= German, Gr=Greek, It=Italian, Sp=Spanish.

b. Tocan a la puerta.
"(They) are knocking at the door." = "Someone is knocking at the door."
$\exists$ x: x is knocking on the door.

Cinque (1988) points out that there is also a reading closer to universal quantification, and proposes to distinguish a *quasi-existential* and a *quasi-universal* reading. Cinque treats these two readings as contextual variants of the same *arb*-index ((Rizzi 1986)) depending on the tense and aspect of the sentence: the quasi-existential reading arises in episodic sentences while the quasi-universal reading is obtained in the environment of a generic sentence.

(3) (i) **Quasi-existential in episodic sentences**

    a. Tocan a la puerta.   (Sp)
       "(They) are knocking at the door." = "Someone is knocking at the door."

    b. They fixed your computer yesterday.

  (ii) **Quasi-universal in generic sentences**

    c. En Paris conducen como los mil demonios.   (Sp)
       "In Paris (they) drive.3pl like a thousand devils."

    d. In Italy, they love pasta.

As shown by Condoravdi (1989), however, the distribution of existential and universal readings does not coincide with the episodic/generic distinction. She shows that in generic sentences an existential antecedentless (quasi-existential) reading is possible:

(4)   *Quasi-existential* **and generic**

    a. To apogevma sinithos poulane pagoto   s afti ti gonia.   (Gr)
       the afternoon usually   sell.3PL ice cream in this the corner

       "In the afternoon (they) usually sell ice cream in this corner."

                                        ((Condoravdi 1989))

    b. En este parque juegan fútbol en la tarde.   (Sp)
       "In this park, (they) play.3pl football in the afternoons."

Alonso Ovalle (2000) shows that the inverse also is true since the universal antecedentless (quasi-universal) reading can appear in episodic sentences:

(5)   *Quasi-universal* **and episodic**

    a. ayer en España celebraron el día del trabajo   (Sp)
       yesterday in Spain pro celebrated.3pl the day of the work
       "In Spain, they celebrated Labour Day yesterday."

                          (adapted from Alonso Ovalle (2000))

    b. (No puedes llamar.) En Francia están durmiendo ahora.
       "(You can't ring.) In France (they) are.3pl sleeping now."

The existential antecedentless (quasi-existential) and the universal antecedentless (quasi-universal) readings can therefore not be treated as contextual variants conditioned by the episodic or generic character of the sentence. In what follows I will not use Cinque's terms *quasi-existential/quasi-universal* using the labels *existential* and *universal reading* indicating whether the interpretation of the antecedentless pronouns is closer to existential or universal quantification.

2.1   The classification of 3pl arb readings

In this section I first propose a classification of 3pl arbitrary readings. I then present cross-linguistic data that support the distinctions drawn between the different types of antecedentless readings.

The classification proposed here takes into account several factors.

For the three existential readings the main dividing factor is whether the event described is anchored to a particular point in time or not, distinguishing the *specific existential reading* in (6.I) from the *vague existential* and *inferred existential readings* in (6.II) and (6.III). The inferred existential reading in (6.III) differs from the vague existential reading in (6.II) in that it is only possible in the presence of a result from which the event can be inferred (see discussion in Tóth (2000)).

The readings in (6.IV) and (6.V) differ from the first three readings in that they cannot be paraphrased roughly by existential quantification. The *corporate reading* (6.IV) is characterised by the fact that it is dependent on a predicate such as *deliver the mail, operate patients, raise taxes* that presupposes a particular group as a subject (e.g. postmen, doctors and governments).

The *universal reading* differs from the corporate reading in that it is possible with all types of predicate, but depends on the presence of a locative expression.

(6) (I) **specific existential reading (temporally anchored)**:

    a. Tocan a la puerta.
       "(They) knock.3pl at the door." (=someone is knocking...)

 (II) **vague existential reading (not temporally anchored)**:

    b. Han encontrado una motocicleta en el patio.
       "(They) have.3pl found a motorbike in the courtyard."

(III) **inferred existential reading (inferred from a result)**:

    c. Aquí han comido mariscos.
       "Here, (they) have.3pl eaten seafood." (=someone)

(IV) **corporate reading (predicates with a designated subject)**: (Kärde (1943))

    d. Volvieron a aumentar el IVA.
       "(They) raised the VAT again."

    e. Planean convocar elecciones.
       "(They) plan.3pl to call elections."

 (V) **universal reading (licensed by a locative)**:

    f. En España hablan español.
       "In Spain, (they) speak.3pl Spanish."

The first three readings of the classification are existential readings. *Specific existential readings* are anchored to a particular point in time while *vague existential readings* only imply that an event of the type described has taken place (see Casielles Suárez (1996)).

Data from French support the distinction between these two readings since the French 3pl pronoun *ils* cannot have a specific existential interpretation while the vague existential reading is possible:

(7)   **specific existential reading:**

   a. Ils nous attaquent.   (Fr)
     *"Someone is attacking us."
     ok "They.anaphoric are attacking us."

   vague existential reading:

   b. Ils ont trouvé une moto dans la cour.
     "They have found a motorbike in the courtyard."

As pointed out by (Tóth 2000), the antecedentless existential reading of type III is characterised by inference of an event from its perceivable result. Like the vague existential reading the *inferred existential reading* does not imply an anchoring of the event to a precise point in time. Evidence from French again suggests that the two readings have to be distinguished: while the vague existential reading is possible for French 3pl *ils*, the inferred existential reading is not. The closest equivalent to an inferred existential reading involves the use of the impersonal pronoun *on*.

(8) a. *Ici ils ont mangé des fruits de mer.   (Fr)
     "Here they have eaten seafood."   (inferred existential*)

    b. ok Ici on a mangé des fruits de mer.
     "Here ON has eaten seafood."

The following table summarises the differences between French and Spanish with respect to the three existential readings.

(9)

3PL **possible for**	sp-ex	vg-ex	inf-ex
Fr *ils*	no	yes	no
Sp 3pl *pro*	yes	yes	yes

In Spanish, the inferred existential reading is subject to more restrictions than the specific and vague existential readings since it systematically appears with a locative and the perfect *haber*, "have" + past participle. Evidence from Moroccan and Syrian Arabic also clearly distinguishes the specific existential from the inferred existential reading: the specific existential reading is (at least marginally) possible, while the examples corresponding to the inferred existential reading were rejected by my informants. The inferred reading is closely linked to properties of the perfect within the given language needing some further investigation beyond the scope of this paper. For this reason I will leave this reading aside in the analysis.

The term *corporate* was proposed by Pesetsky (1995) to refer to *[a] pronoun [that] picks out some socially designated group of people, prototypically governments, bosses, criminals, or shopkeepers*. While Pesetsky proposed that the existential *arbitrary* readings are in fact corporate readings I assume that the corporate reading is distinct from the existential antecedentless readings.

In French the corporate and the specific existential reading are dissociated. As we have seen in (7a), the Fr 3pl pronoun *ils* cannot have a specific existential interpretation while the corporate reading is possible (see Kleiber (1994)[2]):

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[2]Kleiber calls the corporate reading *collective* (Fr. *collectif*).

(10)　Ils ont encore augmenté les impôts.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Fr)
　　　　"They raised taxes again."　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(corporate reading ok)
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(ex in Kleiber 1994)

The corporate reading also clearly differs from the vague existential reading. First, the corporate reading appears with predicates that presuppose a designated group carrying out the activity while the vague existential reading does not. Secondly, the corporate reading cannot be felicitously rendered by using a subject corresponding to *someone* ((11a)≠(11b)), while the vague existential reading can ((12a)≃(12b)):

(11)　a.　Trajeron el correo a las seis.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Sp)
　　　　　　"(They) brought the mail at six o'clock."　　　　　　　　(corporate)

　　　b.　Alguien trajo el correo a las seis.
　　　　　　"Someone brought the mail at six o'clock."

(12)　a.　Encontraron una moto en el patio.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Sp)
　　　　　　"(They) found a motorbike in the courtyard."　　　　(vague existential)

　　　b.　Alguien encontró una moto en el patio.
　　　　　　"Someone found a motorbike in the courtyard."

Finally, the *universal reading* is clearly different from the three existential readings but also has to be distinguished from the corporate reading since the universal reading needs a locative, while the corporate reading does not.

Before turning to the analysis of the five readings that I have distinguished above, I will briefly review the properties of the five antecedentless readings.

3　Properties of 3pl antecedentless readings

The feature [+human] As is well-known, antecedentless 3pl necessarily refers to humans: even if the selectional properties of the predicate force a non-human subject, the only possible interpretation is with a [+human] subject.

(13)　a.　Aquí ladran en la mañana.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Sp)
　　　　　　"Here, (they = people) bark in the morning."

　　　b.　Te van a atacar.
　　　　　　"(They = people) are going to attack you."

Exclusion of speaker and hearer A second property of antecedentless 3pl is that it excludes speaker and hearer[3] as pointed out by, e.g. Suñer (1983) for Spanish, Kitagawa and Lehrer (1990) for English *they*, and Kleiber (1994) for French *ils*. This property crucially distinguishes 3pl arbitrary interpretation from the impersonal uses of the 2nd person as English *you*, Spanish pro_{2sg}/ *tú*, that do not exclude the speaker ((Hernanz 1990), (Kitagawa and Lehrer 1990)). Notice that arbitrary PRO does not exclude the speaker or the addressee either.

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[3]This property seems to be dependent on the 3rd person marking. In thefollowing Modern Hebrew example, the antecedentless plural includes the speaker and hearer.

(i)　be-Savu'ot 'oxlim givna.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Modern Hebrew)
　　　in-Pentecost eat.benoni.mpl cheese
　　　"One eats cheese in Pentecost." (ex in (Borer 1998))

In Modern Hebrew the present (benoni) is only marked for gender and number and not for person.

(14) [PRO to roll down the hill] is dangerous.

These differences suggest that the antecedentless readings of 3pl pronominals should be treated separately from the antecedentless readings of 2sg pronouns and PRO respectively.

The interpretation of the feature [plural] The feature [plural] with the 3pl arbitrary readings does not necessarily impose a plural interpretation: the existential readings do not imply a plurality (see e.g. Suñer (1983) for Spanish, Cinque (1988) for Italian):

(15) a. " ¡Que me matan!" Así clamaba una liebre infeliz que se miraba   (Sp)
en las garras de un águila altanera.   (Samaniego, Fábulas I,5 quoted in Bello (1847))
"That they kill me! So lamented an unhappy hare that found itself in the claws of a haughty eagle."

b. Lo hanno cercato: era un signore anziano.   (It)
"They have been looking for him: it was an elderly man."   ((Cinque 1988))

Lexicalisation of the pronoun In languages where the 3pl can be null, the only the null 3pl pronoun in subject position can be arbitrary, the lexical pronoun is necessarily referential (see Jaeggli (1986) for Spanish, the same restriction holds for Russian (Ora Matushansky pc) and Moroccan Arabic (Adil El Ghali, pc)).

(16) a. Ellos tocan a la puerta.   (Sp)
"They.anaphoric are knocking at the door."   (* specific existential)

b. Ellos vienen a recoger la ropa usada.
"They.anaphoric come to pick up used clothes."   (* vague existential)

c. Aquí ellos viajan mucho al extranjero.
"Here, they.anaphoric travel abroad a lot."   (* universal reading)

This property further distinguishes the antecedentless readings of 3pl from the antecedentless readings of 2sg since in Spanish the antecedentless 2sg reading is possible for the lexical unstressed pronoun *tú* (see (Hernanz 1990)).

(17) Si *tú* no eres feliz no te ilusionas por nada.   (Sp)
if you.sg are not happy (pro) not you.dat enthuse for nothing
"If you are not happy you do not get enthusiastic about anything."   (antecedentless 2sg ok)

In the preceding discussion of the properties of 3pl antecedentless readings we have seen that these readings differ from antecedentless PRO and from antecedentless 2sg readings.

The following table summarises the properties of the 5 antecedentless 3pl readings as compared to antecedentless (*"arb"*) 2sg and PRO.

(18)

3PL **Properties**	sp-ex	vg-ex	inf-ex	univ	corp.	2sg arb	PRO arb
episodic	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	?
generic	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
group associated with predicate nec.	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no
locative defining a group	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
anchoring the event	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no
+human	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
speaker/hearer excluded	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
lexical (in pro-drop lgs)	no	no	no	no	no	yes (Sp)	–

4   The analysis

As pointed out by Hakulinen and Karttunen (1973) in their discussion of antecedentless pronouns in Finnish, the antecedentless readings in isolation and unspecific readings that cooccur with other pronouns with the same reading have to be kept separate, since in the presence of a pronoun with an antecedentless reading may by itself license another pronoun with the same interpretation.

This phenomenon can also be observed for antecedentless 3pl readings in Spanish, as the following example illustrates:

(19) a. En este campamento trabajan mucho.   (Sp)
     pro Despiertan a las 5 y media, **pro** salen a las 6 de la mañana y **pro** regresan a las 8 de la noche, y si **pro** llegan más tarde, el capataz se enfada con **ellos**. Y a fines del mes **les** pagan una miseria.

   "In this camp they work a lot. **(They)** wake up at 5 o'clock, **(they)** leave at 6 in the morning and come back at 8 at night, and if **(they)** arrive later, the supervisor gets annoyed with **them**. And at the end of the month they pay **them** a misery."

                                                                              (univ reading ok)

   b. Salen a las 6 de la mañana y regresan a las 8 de la noche.
     "(They.anaphoric) leave at 6 in the morning and come back at 8 at night."

                                                                              (univ reading *)

The locative that licenses a universal reading is only present in the first sentence; nevertheless the same reading appears for the boldface pronouns in the later sentences even though the necessary locative is not present locally. In isolation such examples do not receive an arbitrary reading. Notice that even complements of pronouns (*ellos*) and object pronouns (*les*) can take up the unspecific reference of the antecedentless subject in the first sentence.

The boldface pronouns in (19a) are not instances of antecedentless 3pl pronouns. These pronouns are parallel to the lexical pronouns *he* in the following example:

(20) Alguien/ un sicópata asesinó a Holmes. Lo esperó aquí, le disparó y despúes llevó el cadáver hasta el río, donde lo encontró la policía.

> "Someone/a madman killed Holmes. He waited for the victim here, shot him at point blank and then dragged the body to the river, where the police found it."

In this example the instances of the pronoun *he* refer to an unspecific individual since they are coreferent with the subject of the first sentence. As the comparison of (19a) and (19b) shows , pronouns that cannot have an antecedentless reading in isolation can receive a comparable interpretation by coreference.

In order to exclude these readings that have an antecedentless flavour but are not antecedentless, I will only consider isolated examples of antecedentless readings.

4.1   The analysis of antecedentless readings

I propose to locate the difference between anaphoric and non-anaphoric 3rd person pronouns on the level of the agreement they appear with, namely

(21) (i) anaphoric 3rd person pronouns arise with an agreement morpheme carrying the full set of phi-features and

   (ii) non-anaphoric 3rd person pronouns arise with deficient agreement and depend on the local linguistic context for their interpretation.

In section 4.2 I discuss the nature of this deficient agreement.

In order to account for the different readings that arise for antecedentless 3pl, I propose that 3pl pronouns can be translated either as denoting a unique maximal group, comparable to a definite plural, or as a variable, comparable to an indefinite.

The different readings are due to different mechanisms of content identification. If the 3pl pronoun is translated as a unique maximal group, the corporate or universal reading depending on the mechanism of content identification (see section 4.3.1). If the 3pl pronoun is translated as a variable, the different existential readings arise through existential closure (see section 4.3.2).

4.2   Deficient agreement and the feature [+human]

In the previous sections we have discussed antecedentless readings of 3rd person plural pronouns. Antecedentless readings are also possible with 3rd person singular pronouns: this is the case with expletive pronouns and weather subjects for example.

Given the hypothesis in (21) above, that 3rd person pronouns appearing with full agreement are anaphoric, this means that there are two types of deficient agreement.

The 3sg agreement-form is uncontroversially the proto-typical deficient agreement form that appears as a default with weather predicates (22a), extraposition (22b) and also with nominal agreement morphology, e.g. non-agreeing participles (22c):

(22) a. Llueve.   (Sp)
     (it) rains.**3sg**

   b. parece que Juan no quiere venir.
     (it) seems.**3sg** that Juan not wants come.inf

   c. Tus amigas han venido.
     your friends.3fpl have.3pl come.**msg**

The 3rd person singular agreement appearing in these examples does not contribute any semantic content.

The deficient agreement that allows the antecedentless readings of 3pl subjects is of a different type since it contributes two elements to the interpretation: (i) the subject is unspecific but [+human] and (ii)the subject is 3rd person in that it excludes speaker and hearer.

A similar type of nominal agreement can be found with the examples in (23) that have similar properties in that (i) without an antecedent the interpretation is human and (ii) the morphological features are 3pl.

(23) a. los grandes, los chicos, los inteligentes, los fuertes (los = mpl)   (Sp)

b. die Grossen, die Kleinen, die Intelligenten, die Starken (die =pl)   (Ge)

c. les grands, les petits, les intelligents, les forts (les =pl)   (Fr)

  "the big (ones), the small (ones), the intelligent (ones), the strong (ones)"

If two different agreement markings with two types of antecedentless subjects are possible, and if antecedentless subjects depend on deficient agreement marking, as assumed here, there have to be two types of deficient agreement marking.

I propose that both deficient forms of 3rd person agreement have a deficient specification for number. The difference between the deficient 3sg and 3pl lies in the fact that 3sg deficient agreement is uncountable, corresponding to a mass noun, while 3pl deficient agreement is countable, corresponding to count noun.

This proposal is supported by the fact that in forms that are not marked for gender singular and plural are systematically associated with mass/inanimate and count/human interpretation respectively:

(24) a. Beaucoup a été dit.   (Fr)
     "Much has.**3sg** been said."   (sg, inanimate)

b. Beaucoup ont été tués.
     "Many have.**3pl** been killed."   (pl, human)

(25) a. Poco se sabe de él.   (Sp)
     little *refl* know.**3sg** of him
     "Little is known of him."   (sg, inanimate)

b. Pocos vinieron a verlo.
     "Few came.**3pl** to see him."   (pl, human)

(26) a. Much has been done.   (sg, inanimate)

b. Many have been killed.   (plural, human)

More precisely, I propose that the two deficient agreement forms differ with respect person and number features.

Since the 3pl antecedentless readings exclude speaker and hearer, the 3pl default has to be specified for 3rd person. On the other hand, if the deficient 3sg agreement gives a mass interpretation, this automatically excludes speaker and hearer since mass interpretation is inanimate.

I therefore propose that the 3sg default agreement that appears with extraposition and weather predicates is not marked for personal all.

I further propose that the difference between count and mass status of the pronoun associated with the agreement is reflected in the number feature. While the 3pl deficient agreement has an underspecified number feature, the 3sg deficient agreement has no number feature at all. This means that for the 3pl the slot for the number feature is present but the value has to be retrieved from the context, while for the 3sg the number feature is simply absent and therefore never assigned a value.

Given the preceding discussion, the 3pl deficient agreement is more complex than the 3sg agreement on two counts: it has a value for person, [3], and it is underspecified for number, while in the 3sg deficient agreement both features are absent, the only feature being the characteristic feature of nominals, presumably [+N].

Summarising, I propose two types of deficient agreement that crucially differ in their mass vs count status. The feature [+human] is not exclusive to antecedentless 3pl pronouns but falls under a wider generalisation that antecedentless 3pl forms being countable are interpreted by default as referring to humans, while the antecedentless 3sg is not countable and interpreted as inanimate.

(27) a. 3sg deficient agreement: +N
        no number feature => mass => inanimate

   b. 3pl deficient agreement:+N, 3rd person, underspecified number
        number feature present => count => human

4.3 Content identification

According to the analysis presented here, antecedentless readings arise with a deficient form of 3pl agreement. Since the content of the pronoun is not given by an antecedent, other mechanisms of content identification have to apply.

As I have proposed above, the 3pl pronoun can be translated either as a unique maximal group or as a variable. In what follows I will discuss the means of content identification for each case separately.

4.3.1 3pl referring to a unique group

In this section I examine the content identification for the translation of the 3pl pronoun as a unique maximal group. This translation gives rise to the two antecedentless readings that are not existential, namely the corporate and the universal reading.

This analysis amounts to assimilating the universal and the corporate reading to definite NPs. Such an analysis is supported by the comparison with lexical NPs in generic sentences. The example (28a) with an antecedentless 3pl *pro* subject has a reading comparable to (28b) with a plural definite NP in that both state a habit, a recurrent pattern unlike (28c) with an indefinite singular subject, that implies an obligation. The example in (28d) shows that this contrast is not dependent on the plural marking since the definite singular patterns with the definite plural in not necessarily implying a modal reading of obligation.

(28) a. En España, se acuestan temprano.   (Sp)
        "In Spain (they) go to bed early."

   b. En España, los niños se acuestan temprano.
      in Spain the children refl lie-down early
      "In Spain children go to bed early."

   c. En España, un niño se acuesta temprano.
      "In Spain a child (should) go to bed early."

   d. En España, el bebé de la familia se acuesta temprano.
      "In Spain the baby of the family goes to bed early."

As we have seen in section 3, the antecedentless readings of 3pl pronouns exclude speaker and addressee. Following Kleiber (1994), I assume that this is the reason that the antecedentless 3pl pronouns cannot get the reading of *people in general*, since this reading would include speaker and addressee.

Under the plausible assumption that that a simple pronoun cannot refer by default to a complex group like *everyone but you and me*, it is therefore necessary to explicitly restrict the reference of the unique maximal group. The corporate and universal readings arise through different restricting mechanisms.

The first possibility is that the group is presupposed by the predicate giving the corporate reading. A second possibility is the identification of the group by a locative expression that functions like an I-level predicate (see (Condoravdi 1989), (Casielles Suárez 1996)) – this results in the universal reading.

As pointed out by Tóth (2001), not any predicate identifying a group is possible; the sentence in (29a), for example, does not have a reading comparable to (29b):

(29) a. De viejos necesitan más ayuda.
        of old.3mpl (they.anaphoric) need more help   (antecedentless reading *)
        "In old age, they need more help."   (ex in (Tóth 2001))

   b. Compare:
      Los viejos necesitan más ayuda.
      "The old need more help."

The adverbial expression *de viejos* in (29a) is interpreted as a restricting when-clause *when (they are) old*. Since this restriction does not give individuals but temporal stages with a certain property that could apply to any individual, in particular the speaker and the addressee, such a restriction does not provide a group that excludes speaker and addressee. Consequently such an expression cannot content-license antecedentless 3pl pro. More generally when-clauses do not provide an appropriate restriction to license antecedentless readings.

Following Kleiber's (1994) analysis, the present analysis treats the collective and the universal arbitrary reading as definites that denote a unique maximal group. The group is unique in the context and identifiable through the locative or the presupposition of the predicate. The unspecific interpretation is due to the fact that the individual members of the group are not identified.

The present analysis of the corporate reading in terms of a definite presupposed group accounts for the fact that these examples cannot be translated felicitously using the indefinite *someone* as a subject (see examples in (11)).

The existential flavour of the corporate reading is due to the fact that it is not necessary that the entire collective entity take part in the event for a sentence like those in (30) to be judged true (see (Kleiber 1994)).

(30) a. Les Américains ont débarqué sur la lune en 1969. (Fr)
      "The Americans landed on the moon in 1969."

      b. Jean a touché les feuilles de l'arbre.
      "Jean touched the leaves of the tree." (exs in (Kleiber 1994))

This analysis does not provide an answer to the question why locatives are the priviledged means of defining a group that is not presupposed by the predicate. In principle the following temporal expressions define groups of people that exclude speaker and hearer but these examples are less acceptable than examples with a locative adjunct:

(31) a. En la edad media sólo tomaban cerveza porque el agua estaba contaminada. (Sp)
      "In the Middle ages they only drank beer because the water was contaminated."
                                        (antecedentless reading ?*)

      b. Durante el servicio militar aprenden a utilizar un arma.
      "During the military service (they) learn to use a gun."
                                        (antecedentless reading ?*)

      c. Compare: En la mili aprenden a utilizar un arma.
      "In the military (they) learn to use a gun." (antecedentless reading ok)

It is well-known, however, that locatives share properties with nominal subjects, for example in locative inversion structures (see e.g. Bresnan (1994)), which may provide a key to the restriction to locative adjuncts in the assignment of content to the antecedentless 3pl subject.

4.3.2 3pl translated as a variable

In the present section I propose two mechanisms of content identification for the translation of the 3pl pronoun as a variable.

I have argued above that the specific existential reading and vague existential reading are distinct readings that can be dissociated in a language like French (see the examples in (7)), this implies that the two readings must rely on separate licensing mechanisms.

I propose that both the specific and the vague existential reading arise through existential closure taking scope over the subject. The specific existential reading relies on the existential closure of the VP(Heim (1982)). This reading is only possible if the subject is within VP. The vague existential reading on the other hand relies on existential quantification over the event as a whole, taking scope over Tense.

The difference between French and Spanish with respect to the specific existential reading is due to a syntactic difference: in French subject pronouns occupy a VP-external subject position (spec IP) and therefore they are not in the scope of the default existential closure that applies to the VP. In Spanish null pronouns occupy the VP-internal position and stay in the scope of existential closure at VP-level. If existential closure takes scope over VP, the value for Tense can still be specified, yielding a temporally anchored interpretation.

Given that the present analysis admits that antecedentless 3pl pronoun can be translated as a variable, it may seem puzzling that unselective binding by if/when-clauses or Q-adverbs cannot license a generic reading as with lexical indefinite NPs (a universal antecedentless reading). Notice, however that since speaker and hearer have to be excluded the unselective binding with if/when-clauses or Q-adverbs cannot give an interpretation corresponding to *people in general* (see the discussion in section 4.3.1). Since if/when-clauses and Q-adverbs do not define a

group excluding the speaker and hearer, however, they cannot license a universal antecedentless reading.

Notice that once the variable is existentially closed Q-adverbs or if-when-clauses can be added:

(32) a. A las diez de la noche siempre comienzan a cantar en la casa vecina.   (Sp)
         "At ten o'clock at night (they=*someone*) always start singing in the neighbouring house."   (Q-adverb)
     b. Cuando tocan a la puerta abro.
         "When (they=*someone*) knock.3pl at the door I open."   (if/when-clause)

The same is true for the translation as a unique group: once a group is defined independently, Q-adverbs or if-when-clauses can be added:

(33) a. Cuando traen el correo, ya estoy despierta.   (Sp)
         "When they bring the mail, I am already awake."   (corporate reading ok)

     b. Siempre aumentan el IVA después de las elecciones.
         "They always raise the VAT after the elections."

(34) a. Cuando son viejos, se van a vivir con los hijos.   (Sp)
         "When (they.ref) are old, (they) go to live with their children."   (univ reading *)

     b. En este pueblo, cuando son viejos, se van a vivir con los hijos.
         "In this village, when (they) are old, (they) go to live with their children."
                                                                                     (univ reading ok)

5   Conclusion

In the present paper I have examined antecedentless readings of 3pl pronominals. I have given arguments showing that antecedentless readings of 3pl, 2sg and PRO do not form a natural class.

The analysis proposed rests on two main hypotheses. First, that antecedentless 3pl readings arise with deficient agreement, and secondly that pronouns can be translated either as referring to unique maximal groups or as variables.

As a consequence of the latter, certain antecedentless readings resemble indefinites (specific and vague existential reading), while others definite plurals (corporate and universal reading).

Developing the first hypothesis, I have argued that there are two types of deficient agreement. The deficient 3sg-agreement does not contain number or person features and functions like a mass noun being interpreted as inanimate by default, while the deficient 3pl-agreement is marked 3rd person, underspecified for number, and behaves on a par with count nouns, its default interpretation being [+human].

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