

# Free choice and focus: the distribution and quantificational force of FCIs in Hungarian

Tamás Halm

Doctoral School of Linguistics

Pázmány Péter Catholic University

([halm.tamas@gmail.com](mailto:halm.tamas@gmail.com))

This paper concerns the behaviour of free-choice items (FCIs) in Hungarian and puts forward the main claim that these items have the capacity to display both universal and existential quantification, depending on their exact syntactic position, especially their optional location in the focus position.

FCIs such as *any* have been at the forefront of research interest in the several past decades (e.g. Ladusaw 1979, Kadmon-Landman 1993; see Vlachou 2007 for an overview). Some of the most vexed questions has been the characterization of the quantificational force (if any) of these items (e.g. Lee-Horn 1994, Giannakidou 2001, Chierchia 2006), and the exact status of free relatives with a free-choice reading (*wh-ever* words) in relation to simple FCIs (such as *any*) (e.g. Dayal 1997, von Stechow 2000).

Similarly to unrelated languages such as Japanese or Lithuanian (Kratzer-Shimoyama 2002), FCIs in Hungarian are morphologically made up of the morpheme *akár-* ('even') or *bár-* ('even though') and a *wh*-indefinite (such as *-ki* 'who'), yielding the FCI: *akárki/bárki* ('anyone') (Abrusán 2007, Lahiri 1998). While in many respects, FCIs in Hungarian behave similarly to their peers in other languages (e.g. availability in modal, negative, imperative contexts); their optional location in the so-called focus position (a much-studied phenomenon in Hungarian, see É. Kiss 2010a for a recent overview) produces unique effects.

In general, syntactic tests indicate that FCIs occupy the canonical position of quantifier phrases (QPs) via adjunction in Hungarian (É. Kiss 2010b) and display a corresponding quasi-universal quantificational force (1). While FCIs and more generally, universals are usually taken to be non-focusable; it will be shown that FCIs in Hungarian can in fact be focused in certain constructions. In such cases, two presuppositions arise (both standardly associated in the literature with the identificational focus position): one of existence and another of exhaustivity (maximality); and a reading similar to English free relative (*wh-ever*) constructions is elicited (2).

The sentences below display the FCI *bárki* 'anyone' in a non-focused (1) and in a focused (2) position; the relative order of the (resultative) verbal particle and the verb being one of the standard diagnostics of the identificational focus construction in Hungarian:

- (1) (Ha) bárki meg jön, üdvözöld őt.  
[<sub>AspP</sub> bárki [<sub>AspP</sub> meg jön... ]]  
(if) anyone PRT come-S3P, greet-S3P-IMP him.  
*If anyone comes, greet him.*
- (2) (\*ha) bárki jön meg, üdvözöld őt.  
[<sub>FocP</sub> bárki jön<sub>i</sub> [<sub>AspP</sub> meg t<sub>i</sub>... ]]

(\*if) anyone come-S3P PRT, greet-S3P-IMP him.

*Whoever comes, greet him.*

Paraphrase: ‘No matter who will be the person that comes, greet him when he comes.’

Existential presupposition: ‘There will be someone that comes.’

Exhaustivity inference: ‘There will be exactly one person that comes.’

These results present a useful contribution to the general debate on FCIs in many ways: 1) they present a clear-cut case of the universal/existential reading of an FCI being constructed compositionally on the sentence level, and 2) show that the free relatives with an FCI flavour (*wh-ever* words) can either be encoded in the lexicon separately from general-purpose FCIs (a strategy employed by English) or can be brought about compositionally, by using the focus construction and exploiting the presuppositions of existence and exhaustivity (maximality) associated with it.

### Works cited

- Abrusán, Márta. 2007. *Even and free-choice any in Hungarian*. Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 11, 1-15.
- Chierchia, Gennaro. 2006. *Broaden your views: Implicatures of domain widening and the “logicality” of language*. Linguistic Inquiry 37:535–590.
- Dayal, Veneeta. 1997. *Free choice and ever: Identity and free choice readings*. In: Proceedings of SALT 7, 99–116.
- É. Kiss, Katalin. 2010a. *Structural focus and exhaustivity*. In: Malte Zimmermann – Caroline Féry (eds.) Information Structure. Theoretical, Typological and Experimental Perspectives. Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 64-88. (2010)
- É. Kiss, Katalin. 2010b. *An adjunction analysis of quantifiers and adverbials in the Hungarian sentence*, Lingua 120 (2010) 506-526.
- von Stechow, Kai. 2000. *Whatever*. In Proceedings of SALT 10, 27–40.
- Giannakidou, Anastasia. 2001. *The meaning of free choice*. Linguistics and Philosophy 24:659–735.
- Kadmon, Nirit, and Fred Landman. 1993. *Any*. Linguistics and Philosophy 4:353–422.
- Kratzer, Angelika, and Junko Shimoyama. 2002. *Indeterminate pronouns: The view from Japanese*. In The Proceedings of the Third Tokyo Conference on Psycholinguistics, 1–25.
- Ladusaw, A. William. 1979. *Polarity sensitivity as inherent scope relations*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, reproduced by IULC, 1980.
- Lahiri, Utpal. 1998. *Focus and negative polarity in Hindi*. Natural Language Semantics 6:57–123.
- Lee, Young-Suk, and Laurence Horn. 1994. *Any as indefinite plus even*. Ms. University of Yale.
- Vlachou, Evangelia. 2007. *Free Choice in and out of Context: Semantics and Distribution of French, Greek and English Free Choice Items*. PhD dissertation, University of Utrecht.