



2.

Uli Sauerland – ZAS, Berlin

German plural negatives with Plural-Individual-Level Predicates

uli@alum.mit.edu

Kratzer (1995:146) observes that in German plural negative indefinites can combine with a stage-level predicate as in (1), but not an individual-level predicate as in (2).

- (1) a. ... weil keine Ärzte zugegen sind.
... since no physicians present are.
'... since no physicians are present.'
- b. ... weil uns keine Freunde helfen. (Kratzer 1995:(47))
... since us no friends help.
'... since no friends are helping us.'
- (2) a.* ... weil keine Ärzte altruistisch sind. (Kratzer 1995:(51))
... since no physicians altruistic are.
- b.* ... weil das keine Kandidaten wissen. (Kratzer 1995:(52))
... since this no candidates know.

Kratzer provides the following explanation for (1): She assumes that stage-level predicates have an external event argument position and therefore the subject can be realized VP-internally. Individual-level predicates, expressing permanent properties, lack an event argument position, and therefore the subject must be realized VP-externally. Furthermore, she assumes with Bech (1955) that *keine* is the result of morphological merger of *nicht* and immediately following *eine*. If furthermore *nicht* is adjoined to VP, it then follows that this merger can only take place when the subject occurs in a VP-internal position. Therefore, *keine* cannot occur with individual-level predicates.

In this snippet, I consider group predicates that express permanent properties of pluralities such as “be related by blood” or “genetically identical.” I use the term “Plural-Individual-Level Predicates” for these. (3) shows that these behave in several respects like other individual level predicates: (3a) must be interpreted generically, and they lead to ungrammaticality (or strong pragmatic oddity) with “when”-clauses ((3b)) and “there-be” existentials ((3c)).

- (3) a. Royals are related by blood.
b. *When John is related by blood to Mary, he is her brother.
c. *There are royals related by blood.
-

Surprisingly, plural-individual-level predicates can occur with plural negative indefinites:

- (4) a. ... weil keine Ärzte miteinander blutsverwandt sind.
... since no doctors with-one-another blood-related are.
'... since no doctors are related by blood'.
- b. ... weil keine zwei Zebrafische genetisch identisch sind.
... since no two zebra fishes genetically identical are.
'... since no two zebra fishes are genetically identical'

The examples in (4) pose a problem for Kratzer's analysis of (1) and (2): Her analysis would lead one to assume that plural-individual-level predicates do allow VP-internal subjects; but then all of the other typical individual-level predicate properties illustrated in (3) must be independent of the syntax Kratzer proposes for individual-level predicates.

References

- Bech, G. (1955) "Studien über das deutsche Verbum infinitum." *Historisk-filologiske Meddelelser* 35 and 36, Copenhagen: Det Kangelige Danske Videnskaabernes Selskabs.
- Kratzer, A. (1995) "Stage-level and individual-level predicates." In *The Generic Book*, ed. G.N. Carlson and F.J. Pelletier. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 125-175.