

Minä-pronoun in literary translation:
Observations on a Finnish-Italian translation

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Abstract

This paper examines the utilization of first-person (singular) subject pronouns in a Finnish literary text and its translation into Italian. A crucial distinction between Finnish and Italian lies in the null subject parameter, but it is noteworthy that first-person pronouns in subject position is expected to be null in both languages when not motivated by discourse function. The study addresses four primary aspects: (i) the occurrence of overt pronouns in the Finnish source text; (ii) their analysis concerning Topic and Focus categories; (iii) the examination of whether, in the Italian translation, the corresponding pronouns are realized as overt or null; and (iv) the assessment of whether the discourse function is retained or compromised. The examination of overt first-person pronouns extends beyond the classification under discourse functional categories, incorporating an analysis of the impact of interference in the translator's interlanguage.

Keywords

Finnish; interlanguage; pronouns; Topic categories; translation

1. Introduction

This case study explores the use of first-person (singular) subject pronouns in a Finnish literary text and its translation into Italian. We analyze data from Pajtim Statovci's (b. 1990) novel *Kissani Jugoslavia* (2014; English translation by David Hackston, *My Cat Yugoslavia*, 2017) and its Italian translation by Nicola Rainò, *L'ultimo parallelo dell'anima* (2016). One key difference between Finnish and Italian lies in the null subject parameter.



Notably, in both languages, first-person pronouns in subject position are expected to be null when not motivated by discourse function.

Statovci's narrative is particularly conducive to our investigation as it predominantly employs a first-person perspective, often taking the form of an internal monologue, seamlessly transitioning into a stream of consciousness. Our study focuses on four main aspects: (i) the prevalence of overt pronouns in the Finnish source text; (ii) their analysis in relation to Topic and Focus categories; (iii) determining whether, in the Italian translation, the pronoun is overt or null; and (iv) assessing whether the discourse function is maintained or compromised. In addition to categorizing within discourse functional frameworks, we address the impact of interference in the translator's interlanguage. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the realization and functions of pronouns in Finnish and Italian as the languages crucially differ as for the so-called *pro-drop* parameter, and in 2.3 an overview of some of the main issues related to pronouns in translation when the languages differ as for the realization of overt/null subject pronouns. Section 3 discusses the different word order permutations in Finnish and Italian, Section 4 presents the corpus under investigation and the categories created for the analysis, Section 5 discusses the main results and Section 6 concludes the paper¹.

2. Pronoun realization and functions

In the following sections we present how subject pronouns are realized in Finnish and in Italian. Their realization as overt or null depends on syntactic and discourse-functional factors, and it crucially diverges in the two languages. In the last section we will present an overview of translation studies dealing with pronouns.

¹ Author contributions: Conceptualization, EY; methodology, EY; formal analysis, EY; investigation, LDP; resources, LDP; data curation, LDP; writing—original draft preparation, LDP and EY (Sections 1, 2.1, 5, 6); LDP (Sections 2.2-2.3, 3.2); EY (Sections 3.1, 4.1, 4.2); writing—review and editing, LDP and EY. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

2.1 Subject pronouns in Finnish

Standard Finnish is known to be a partial null subject language (Holmberg 2005; Holmberg *et al.* 2009). In finite sentences, first- and second-person subject pronouns, i.e., *minä* (1sg), *sinä* (2sg), *me* (1pl), and *te* (2pl), are phonologically null in most contexts, while third-person pronouns necessitate overt realization, as illustrated in (1a-b). Third-person subject pronouns (*hän* (3sg)/*he* (3pl) or the corresponding [-human] forms *se/ne*) can only be null if bound by a higher argument, as exemplified in (1c)².

- (1) a. (Minä) mene-n Suomeen kesällä.³
 (I.nom) go-1sg to Finland in summer
 ‘I go to Finland in summer.’
 b. *(Hän) mene-e Suomeen kesällä.
 (s/he.nom) go-3sg to Finland in summer
 ‘S/he goes to Finland in summer.’
 c. Pekka kerto-i että *pro* lähte-e Espanjaan.
 (Pekka.nom) tell-past.3sg that go-3sg to Spain
 ‘Pekka told [me] that he will go to Spain’

As mentioned above, in the majority of unmarked sentences in standard Finnish, first- and second-person subject pronouns are realized as null, while overt subject pronouns carry a marked reading, aligning with the Avoid Pronoun Principle as reformulated by Frascarelli (2007). An overt subject pronoun introduces a new referent, is present in coordination, or serves a specific discourse function, while null forms are used in discourse to maintain Topic continuity in a similar way to what is observed in null subject languages such as Italian (2018; cf. also Holmberg *et al.* 2009).

² The abbreviations used in this article are the following: ACC (accusative case), FOC (Focus), NEG (negative auxiliary), NOM (nominative case), O (Object), PART (partitive case), PL (plural), PAST (past tense), PTC (participle), S (Subject), SG (singular), V (verb).

³ We will use regular font in the sample sentences and excerpts, and italic font for inner speech or thoughts, as in the original text, and to indicate the presence of *pro*.

- (2) a. Kesällä minä mene-n Lappiin vaeltamaan,
 in summer I.nom go-1sg to Lapland to hike
 mutta Ville jää Helsinkiin.
 but Ville.nom stay.3sg in Helsinki
 ‘In the summer I will go hiking in Lapland but Ville will stay in Helsinki.’
 b. Kesällä *pro* mene-n Lappiin vaeltamaan.
 in summer go-1sg to Lapland to hike
 ‘In the summer I will go hiking in Lapland.’

In (2a), the overt pronoun is justified at discourse level because it is in contraposition with the subject of the coordinated clause, whereas in (2b), an overt pronoun would be redundant in an unmarked context.

From a syntactic point of view, null subjects in finite clauses are allowed under more restricted conditions with respect to a consistent null subject language such as Italian (Vainikka, Levy 1999; Holmberg 2005; Frascarelli 2007; Holmberg *et al.* 2009; Holmberg 2010; Roberts, Holmberg 2010; Holmberg, Roberts 2014). In particular, third-person null subjects are allowed (i) when the subject is a generic pronoun corresponding to English ‘one’, as in (3a); (ii) when the subject is non-thematic, e.g. with weather verbs, as in (3b); and (iii) when the subject is controlled by an argument of a higher clause, as exemplified in (1c) (cf. Holmberg *et al.* 2009, see also third-person null forms in topical chains in Frascarelli 2018).

- (3) a. Sisääkäynnin lähellä ei saa polttaa.
 of entrance near neg.3sg may smoke
 ‘It is not allowed to smoke near the entrance’
 b. Helsingissä sata-a tänään.
 in Helsinki rain-3sg today
 ‘It is raining in Helsinki today’
 (Adapted from Dal Pozzo, Ylinärä 2020, 6)

Finnish can be categorized into two primary varieties: standard and colloquial (cf. ISK 2004, 19, among others). Standard Finnish serves as the normative form of the language, taught in schools mostly for writing purposes and is, in fact, predominantly employed in written contexts such as newspapers, textbooks, administrative texts, and narrative texts. It is also generally used in formal speeches, often prepared and written in advance. On the other hand, colloquial Finnish is typically the first variety that Finnish children learn to speak. It finds its primary usage in spontaneous oral or written situations, whether formal or informal.

As mentioned above, in standard Finnish, first- and second-person subject pronouns are generally phonologically null, while, in most instances, third-person subject pronouns are obligatorily overt. Colloquial Finnish, however, shows a peculiarity in this regard: subject pronouns are typically overt with finite verbs (across all personal forms)⁴. Consequently, they bear a resemblance, at least in their overt realization, to non-null subject languages like English or Swedish. Null pronouns are indeed quite rare in colloquial Finnish, and when they do appear, their usage seems to represent a hybridization between the two varieties (for more on colloquial Finnish, cf. Palander 1991; Hakulinen 2003; Lappalainen 2004, 2006; Duvallon 2006; Karlsson 2013; Helasvuori 2014; Väänänen 2015; Ylinäätä, forthcoming).

2.2 Subject pronouns in Italian

Italian is a consistent null subject language (Rizzi 1982, 1986, and subsequent literature). This implies that overt subject pronouns are syntactically 'optional' in nearly all instances. The simplified distinction between null and overt pronouns lies in that null pronouns typically reference known entities, while overt ones may introduce new referents.

In other cases, the utilization of overt pronouns is associated with the discourse features of the sentence. Specifically, following Cinque's seminal work in 1977, overt subject pronouns have been extensively examined for

⁴ In colloquial Finnish, subject pronouns occur in different forms according to the geographical area, communicative context, or speaker idiosyncrasy. However, considerations on different phonological variants are not relevant for the present study.

their function to convey «contrast» or «emphasis». In a finite sentence, a null pronoun imparts an unmarked reading, while an overt form is marked—indicating the addition of discourse-functional value.

- (4) a. Domani andiamo in biblioteca.
 tomorrow go.1pl to library
 'Tomorrow we go to the library.'
- b. Domani noi andiamo in biblioteca. E voi che fate?
 tomorrow we go.1pl to library and you what do.2pl
 'Tomorrow we'll go the library. And you, what will you do?'

As shown in the examples in (4a-b), the overt subject pronoun *noi* 'we' is pragmatically acceptable as it is contrasted with the subject of the following sentence, *voi* 'you'. The use of an overt form without another constituent which it could be opposed to, or coordinated with, would result in a grammatical, though discourse-functionally inappropriate sentence. In null subject languages, a null pronoun is preferred over an overt one whenever possible (Avoid Pronoun Principle, Chomsky 1981). A typical instance is that of Topic continuity in contexts in which the null pronoun refers to a 'known entity', that is, an element which has already been introduced in the discourse or is known to the interlocutors. It follows that a null subject pronoun generally receives unmarked reading whereas an overt pronoun most often conveys markedness.

The interpretation of null pronouns has been extensively investigated in anaphoric chains in L1 and L2 Italian. Psycholinguistic studies show that (third-person) null subjects retrieve an antecedent in a prominent syntactic position, i.e. the preverbal subject position, whereas overt subjects can also have a clause-external referent (cf. Carminati 2002). This is in line with the basic consideration on the division of labour between null and overt subject pronouns hinted at above.

From a discourse-functional point of view, in addition to contrast, overt subject pronouns can co-occur with or instantiate a Topic shift. In particular, the use of an overt form can be related to a switch from background to foreground information (Li, Thompson, 1979). In his study

on Italian spontaneous speech Duranti (1984) points out that personal pronouns tend to be used as short definite descriptions for a referent that has already been established as part of the discourse frame ('current narrative frame' in the author's terms) but cannot be assumed to be in the interlocutor's "working memory". The author suggests that prior mention is not a necessary condition for a referent to be old or shared information, in fact he observes that in his data pronouns are used despite the referent being just mentioned.

Additionally, Renzi (2000) notes an increased prevalence of non-marked overt subject pronouns in colloquial Italian. Thus, these studies suggest the potential emergence of two distinct interpretations for overt subject pronouns in colloquial Italian: either a marked or an unmarked reading. This proposal based on empirical results is theoretically sustained in Cardinaletti (1998) and Cardinaletti and Starke's (1999) classification of Italian pronouns into three types, i.e., strong, weak and clitics, on the basis of morphological, syntactic, semantic, prosodic and referential criteria. Strong forms include all overt realizations (*io, tu, lui, noi, voi, loro*), whereas weak forms include null pronouns and the third-person *egli/esso* forms, which are peculiar to a more formal register. Based on a series of syntactic tests, the authors propose that strong pronouns have the main function of introducing a new referent and can appear in specific syntactic contexts such as coordination, focalization and in predicative and isolated structures. On the other hand, weak pronouns are preferred in anaphoric contexts.

Adapting this terminology to describe the results in Duranti (1984) and Renzi (2000), it is a process in act for which overt pronouns can also be considered as weak. Note however, that this is restricted to colloquial Italian, or to some varieties of it.

2.3 Pronouns in translation

Numerous works in translation studies have been dedicated to interference phenomena. Interference encompasses various types, including lexical, semantic, cultural, and syntactic interference. A common observation is that interference does not occur randomly; instead, it tends to

be systematic. In light of this consideration, it has been suggested that the so-called 'translationese' is comparable to a sort of interlanguage (Selinker 1972). Interlanguage theory assumes that learners' (in our case translators') L2 is in fact an intermediate language system between the L1 and the L2.

Our study deals with a specific phenomenon, i.e., the overt *vs.* null realization of first-person singular subject pronouns in the Finnish source text and in the corresponding Italian translation in syntactic and discourse-functional terms. Previous studies indicate that the translation process may involve interference from the source language to the target language. Specifically, it has been suggested that this is comparable to the attrition effects attested in L2 acquisition and, in particular, in near-native speakers (Cardinaletti 2004, 2005, 2012; for the definition of near-nativeness, refer to White, Genesee 1996; Sorace 2000), and late-bilinguals.

In literature on L2 acquisition, 'attrition' is defined as the changes observed in the L1 grammar resulting from contact with the L2 grammar (cf. Tsimpli *et al.* 2004). Crucially, attrition does not impact the core syntax; instead, it affects certain aspects at the interfaces between syntax and other cognitive modules, such as discourse (see the Interface Hypothesis, Sorace, Filiaci 2006; Tsimpli, Sorace 2006; Sorace 2011). The realization and comprehension of overt/null pronominal subjects in consistent and partial null subject languages is a typical interface phenomenon. Results on very advanced L2 and bilingual speakers show that their pronominal system includes a wider set of accepted realizations than that of monolingual speakers (Serratrice *et al.* 2004; Tsimpli *et al.* 2004; Sorace, Filiaci 2006; Sorace *et al.* 2009, among others). Advanced L2 speakers and bilinguals generally produce and accept overt subjects more often than monolingual controls. Overt subject pronouns are accepted in contexts in which a null form would be pragmatically more appropriate, including Topic continuity: pronouns are interpreted as co-referent with a topical antecedent at a higher rate among advanced L2 and bilingual speakers than among the monolingual control group, where a null pronoun is by far preferred in topical chains.

As introduced above, attrition results from prolonged and intensive contact between the L1 and L2. Translation, viewed as a special case of language contact, lacks geographical connotations; rather, it takes place within the

mind of the translator (Cardinaletti 2005, 60). Consequently, the translator's L1, the language into which they translate, may undergo attrition effects from the L2, the source language they are translating from. In her study on the translation of subject pronouns from English and German, Cardinaletti (ivi) observes that the use of overt pronouns is extended to different contexts from those typically considered as pragmatically appropriate. This extended use is always optional and does not interfere with the use of null pronouns that do not undergo such a switch. The author explains attrition in terms of reanalysis of interpretable features and thus it can only involve interface phenomena (Chomsky 1995), such as the overuse of overt pronouns and the position of the subject in the clause. More specifically, it is suggested that overt pronouns lose the [+referential] (interpretable) feature and, thus, become underspecified for this feature and are reanalysed from strong to weak. Consequently, weak pronouns have two forms: overt and null. This implies that speakers undergoing attrition exhibit distinct semantic-pragmatic restrictions. Additionally, in anaphoric contexts, overt pronouns may be used by these speakers, whereas monolingual speakers, guided by pragmatics, would prefer null forms. The phenomenon is illustrated in (5a-c), adopted from Cardinaletti (2005, 60)⁵.

- (5) a. He'd never been more nervous, never, not even when he'd had to take a school report home to the Dursleys saying that he'd somehow turned his teacher's wig blue. (*PhS*, 86)
- b. Non era mai stato nervoso in vita sua, mai, neanche quando era tornato a casa con una nota della scuola in cui si diceva che, non si sa come, **lui** aveva fatto diventare blu la parrucca dell'insegnante. (*PF*, 111)

⁵ The title of the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and that of its Italian translation *Harry Potter e la pietra filosofale* are abbreviated in the sample extracts as *PhS* and *PF*, respectively.

- c. Non era mai stato nervoso in vita sua, mai, neanche quando era tornato a casa con una nota della scuola in cui si diceva che, non si sa come, *pro* aveva fatto diventare blu la parrucca dell'insegnante.

In the above, (5a) represents an extract from the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling 1997), with overt third-person pronouns as per English grammar, and (5b) its Italian 'attrited translation' resulting in a superfluous overt third-person pronoun, while (5c) illustrates the 'expected' Italian standard, realized with a null pronoun (see Mauranen, Tiittula 2005 for similar findings on Finnish translations). In the present study we narrow down on syntactic and discourse-functional interference leaving other phenomena aside. More specifically, we will investigate from a quantitative and qualitative point of view the use of overt first-person singular pronouns in the Italian translation of the Finnish novel *Kissani Jugoslavia* and the context in which they appear.

3. Word order

Languages vary in terms of how freely constituents can move within a clause/sentence. For instance, Finnish is commonly described as language that exhibits a relatively 'free' word order. Italian, on the other hand, though not as flexible as Finnish, still allows for some permutations. It is important to note that changes in constituent order are never arbitrary; rather, they are regulated by discourse factors.

3.1 Word order in Finnish

Thanks to its rich inflectional system, Finnish exhibits a relatively flexible word order. In simple finite clauses, all word order permutations are grammatically possible due to easily identifiable syntactic functions (except in cases of homonymy), determined by case and agreement morphology in each sentence. Consequently, the choice of a specific word order is primarily guided by discourse-functional factors; for further reading, the reader can refer to Vilkuna 1989, 1995, 1996; VISK § 1367; Ylinärä 2021,

among others. The canonical and, at the same time, the most common word order is SV(X), where X can be a direct or indirect object, a predicative or an adverbial constituent (Hakulinen *et al.* 1980), and it conveys different discourse-functional interpretations according to the context. The word order permutations induce different interpretive effects, which will be illustrated through sample sentences for those word orders that are relevant for the present study, i.e. the verb-final orders XSV and SXV.

In a discourse-marked context in Finnish, the postverbal constituents receive a Focus reading, in which a specific constituent conveys ‘new’ information, or more specifically, information assumed by the speaker, but not shared by the interlocutor (following the definition of Focus in Jackendoff 1972), and can be interpreted contrastively. In particular, two main types of Focus have been observed in this position, namely Information and Contrastive Focus (cf. Holmberg, Nikanne 2002; Brattico *et al.* 2013; Ylinäjä *et al.* 2023).

As largely discussed in the literature, different interpretations associated with each Focus arise from the way the set of alternatives is pragmatically exploited (cf. e.g. Rooth 1985 and subsequent works; Krifka 2007; Cruschina 2012, 2021). Hence, Information Focus, which (cor)responds to the *wh*-phrase in the previous assertion, operates within a contextually open set, while Contrastive Focus merely contrasts the previous assertion by adding another proposition to the Common Ground. Also, Corrective Focus, which is considered one of the subtypes of Contrastive Focus (cf. Bianchi, Bocci 2012, among others), can occur in the postverbal position. This Focus type has the function to correct explicit alternatives given in the previous assertion by rejecting them (cf. Bianchi, Bocci 2012; Cruschina 2021; Ylinäjä *et al.* 2023).

As for the preverbal area of the Finnish clause, which is more interesting for the present study, there are two positions dedicated to discourse-functional elements, the leftmost for operator-like elements such as contrastive phrases, interrogative and relative pronouns, while the immediately preverbal position typically hosts topical constituents (for more discussion on the left periphery of Finnish, cf. Vilkkuna 1989, 1995; Holmberg, Nikanne 2002; Huhmarniemi 2019; Brattico 2020; Ylinäjä, Frascarelli 2021), as shown for object Focus below.

XSV

- (6) a. A: Luulin, että luit lehteä.
 'I thought that you were reading a newspaper.'
 B: KIRJAA minä luin.
 '(It was) a book I was reading.', lit. 'A book I read.'
- b. A: Kuulin, että kävit kaupassa.
 'I heard that you went to the supermarket.'
 B: APTEEKISSA minä kävin.
 '(It was) to the pharmacy I went.', lit. 'To the pharmacy I went.'

The fronted constituent [in small caps] represents the salient information and induces a corrective reading, which is often translated through a cleft-construction in languages such as Italian or English, where such construction is employed. The immediately preverbal position hosts a topical element, here *minä* pronoun, which must be explicit.

However, it is interesting to notice that the largely preferred position for object Focus in a corrective context is actually *in situ* (SVX) rather than fronted (XSV), as shown in the experimental study in Ylinärä *et al.* (2023)⁶.

In the same way, also the subject can be hosted in the leftmost operator position, where it receives a corrective reading, as illustrated below.

⁶ The acceptability test comprised a series of images depicting everyday life situations. Each image was associated with a brief dialogue involving three speakers (A, B, and C), wherein a target sentence with Contrastive Focus was presented as C's reply. Informants were instructed to assess the acceptability of the target sentence using a 7-point Likert scale. All items featured a focused object in the target sentence, presented in three different versions: (i) *in situ*, (ii) fronted, and (iii) with an alternative Focus strategy (which is not pertinent to the present study and thus will not be presented below).

SXV

- (7) a. A: Liisa luki kirjaa.
 ‘Liisa was reading a book.’
 B: MINÄ sitä luin.
 ‘(It was) me (who) was reading it.’, lit. ‘I it read.’
- b. A: Liisa kävi kaupassa.
 ‘Liisa went to the supermarket.’
 B: MINÄ siellä kävin.
 ‘(It was) me (who) went there.’, lit. ‘I there went.’

The examples (6) and (7) above show that when the leftmost preverbal position host a constituent (here nominal), the immediately preverbal element is realized as explicit.

3.2 Word order in Italian

In what follows we discuss the notions of Topic and Focus in relation to linear word order abstracting away from a detailed discussion of their structural positions. In broad terms, we call ‘Topic’ the information that is given, and dependent from the discourse, whereas we use ‘Focus’ to indicate an information that is newly introduced or contrasted, and that is independent from the discourse.

Italian is a canonical SV(X) language. This means that the unmarked subject position is preverbal and the object surfaces to the right of the verb (Benincà *et al.* 2001, among others), as evident from a sentence-focus context such as (8).

- (8) A: Che cosa è successo?
 ‘What’s happened?’
 B: Maria ha fatto un incidente.
 ‘Maria had an accident.’

Non-canonical word orders, on the other hand, reflect discourse markedness, but the permutation possibilities in Italian are more limited than in Finnish. The most common non-canonical word order is (X)VS and the possibility of realizing the subject in postverbal position is indeed part of the Null Subject Parameter (Rizzi 1982; Burzio 1986; Belletti 2001, 2004; Biberauer *et al.* 2010), in fact the null subject nature of the language directly correlates with the possibility of instantiating VS order. Thus, Italian allows subjects to surface either pre- or postverbally (Rizzi 1982; Burzio 1986; Jaeggli, Safir 1989). This is a major strategy for subject focusing in a pro-drop language like Italian (Belletti *et al.* 2007), as exemplified in (9).

- (9) A: Chi ha tossito?
 who has coughed
 ‘Who coughed?’
 B: Ha tossito Maria.
 has coughed Maria
 ‘Maria coughed.’

Nevertheless, this type of inversion is not entirely unrestricted; rather, it is influenced by argument structure and discourse factors. In a VS order, the subject is commonly interpreted as new information Focus (Belletti 2001, 2004, 2007). This kind of focus is also typical in cleft and pseudo-cleft structures, as in (10).

- (10) A: Chi ha aperto la porta?
 ‘Who opened the door?’
 B: È stata Lucia (che l’ha aperta).
 ‘It was Lucia (that opened it).’

Postverbal subjects cannot be null, but, as we have seen, preverbal subjects can be and when overt they receive a marked reading. As a result, in Italian the discourse-functional information is strictly related to the alternation of overt and null pronominal subjects, in turn related to the possibility to have postverbal subjects.

In general, we can say that a focalized constituent can appear either preverbally or post-verbally depending on its discourse-functional value and each sentence can only have one focus (different from Topics, which can be recurrent, cf. Rizzi 1997, and subsequent literature). Contrastively focalized constituents are generally observed in the left-periphery of the clause, in preverbal position and before Topic(s), as in (11a), but with the right intonational contour sentence-internal and sentence-final positions are also possible, whereas less contrastive (i.e. new information) Foci occur after the verb, as in (9) above (Rizzi 1997; Zubizarreta 1998; Belletti 2004, among others; cf. Cruschina 2021 for a unitary proposal in terms of different Focus types and their degree of contrast).

(11) a. Hai dato il libro a Gianni?

‘Did you give the book to Gianni?’

- b. A MARIA ho dato il libro (non a Gianni).
 to Maria have.1SG given the book (not to Gianni)
- c. Ho dato il libro a MARIA (non a Gianni).
 have.1SG given the book to Maria (not to Gianni)
- ‘I gave the book to Maria, not to Gianni.’

Also, Topics can surface in different positions in the sentence. In linear terms, a Topic on the left of Focus correspond generally to clitic left dislocation, and conversely to clitic right dislocation when it appears at the rightmost-hand of the sentence.

In Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007) three different kind of Topics are identified on the basis of their discourse function (mainly based on the definitions proposed in Givón 1983): a) Aboutness-shift Topic (what the sentence is about including Topic shift); b) Contrastive Topic (a constituent that creates alternatives with other Topics); and c) Given Topic (a given element that is generally pronominal and used for referential continuity).

Furthermore, the authors suggest the following hierarchy for these Topics (ivi, 88):

Aboutness-shift Topic > Contrastive Topic > Familiar Topic

On the basis of the intonational contours and the tonal analysis the hierarchy represents the order of occurrence when two or more Topics of different kind occur in the same sentence. The Topic types will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.

4. Data and methodology

In the following sections, we present the literary corpus utilized in this study and outline the various categories created based on the context in which overt pronominal first-person subjects were employed.

4.1 Data

The present case study investigates linguistic data extracted from the novel *Kissani Jugoslavia* (2014) by the Finnish author Pajtim Statovci. In particular, we examined the occurrences of overt first-person singular subject pronouns (*minä* 'I') in the novel, and their overt and null realization in the Italian translation (*L'ultimo parallelo dell'anima*, 2016). The prose is predominantly characterized by first-person narration, presented in the form of an internal monologue. This often transforms into a rhapsodic stream of consciousness, where paragraph-long sentences alternate with short ones, creating a favourable environment for the abundant use of pronouns. While the register of the narration (and dialogues) remains close to standard, the frequent and syntactically, as well as discourse-functionally redundant use of first-person subject pronouns contributes to the distinctive voice of inner speech. For further discussion regarding the high frequency of personal pronouns in spoken Finnish, cf. e.g. Hakulinen (2003); and on the concept of 'illusion of speech' Tiittula and Nuolijärvi (2013).

We observed 182 overt first-person singular pronouns (*minä*) in subject function in the novel. In the Italian translation, these pronouns were realized either overtly (*io*) or as null (*pro*), as illustrated in (12) and (13), respectively, or, in few cases, the translation was provided through an alternative strategy, such as in (14)⁷.

⁷ The authors of the present study have exclusively provided the English translations for explanatory purposes.

- (12) a. He siirtyivät olohuoneen puolelle, missä äitini piti heille seura-a sillä aikaa kun **minä** odotin vielä keittiössä. (*KJ*, 71)
 b. Si spostarono nel soggiorno dove la mamma tenne loro compagnia, mentre **io** ero ancora in cucina. (*UPA*, 75)⁸
 ‘They went to the living room where my mother kept them company while **I** was still waiting in the kitchen.’
- (13) a. Sinä olet teistä vahvin, **minä** tiedän sen, näen sen sinusta. (*KJ*, 47)
 b. Tu sei più forte di tutti, **pro** lo so, lo vedo. (*UPA*, 50)
 ‘You are the strongest of you all, **I** know it, I can see it in you.’
- (14) a. Mutta **minä** osasin tämän pelin ja sanoin... (*KJ*, 7)
 ‘But I knew this game and I said...’
 b. Ma era un giochetto che **pro** conoscevo, per cui gli dissi ehi, davvero... (*UPA*, 10)
 ‘But it was a game that **I** knew, which is why I said to him hey, really...’

The discourse-functional aspects relative to the above and other sample sentences will be discussed in the following sections.

Table 1 below reassumes the number of overt *minä* pronouns observed in the novel and their counterparts in the Italian translation.

Finnish original		Italian translation	
overt <i>minä</i>	182	overt <i>io</i>	83
		null (<i>pro</i>)	80
		other	19

Table 1 – Number of *minä* pronouns and their translation counterparts.

⁸ The title of the novel *Kissani Jugoslavia* and that of its Italian translation *L'ultimo parallelo dell'anima* will be abbreviated in the sample extracts as *KJ* and *UPA*, respectively. The page numbers refer to the digital editions of the novel.

4.2 Methodology: context categories

The preliminary phase of this study consisted in the extrapolation of all occurrences of overt *minä* pronouns in subject function, holding to the basic formal definition of subject as the constituent that bears nominative case and determines number and person agreement with the verb in a finite clause. Hence, oblique subject-like arguments (also defined as ‘quirky subjects’) and their relative constructions are considered incompatible due to their syntactic divergence (for further discussion on the syntax of oblique ‘subjects’, cf. e.g. Sigurðsson 1992; Ylinärä, Frascarelli 2021). Finnish employs a variety of oblique ‘subject’ constructions, where the ‘subject’ constituent can bear the genitive or the partitive case, but also some locative cases are possible. Examples of two types of oblique ‘subject’ clauses, namely possessive and deontic, excluded from the present analysis, are given in (15).

- (15) En ollut koskaan asunut yksin, vaikka olin toivonut sitä monta kertaa, ja nyt tunsin oloni araksi, alastomaksi, **minulla** ei ollut mitään tekemistä, ei mitään paikkaa jossa **minun** olisi pitänyt olla tiettyyn aikaan.

Minulla oli liikaa aikaa miettiä. (*KJ*, 219)

‘I had never lived alone, although I had had hoped for it many times, and now I felt myself timid, naked, **I** had nothing to do, no place where **I** should be at a certain time.

I had too much time to think.’

The boldfaced forms of *minä* pronoun above represent instances of oblique ‘subjects’. In particular, *minulla* is marked by adessive case and is the possessor of the possessive construction, while *minun* bears genitive case and is the logical ‘subject’ of the deontic construction. In these constructions the overt realization of the pronoun is syntactically motivated, hence obligatory.

The Finnish data was divided into two main categories based on the obligatoriness—or, more precisely, the ‘degree’ of obligatoriness—of overt realization of the nominative pronoun *minä* in the context, from both syntactic and discourse functional points of view. In other words, pronouns

are deemed obligatory if their overt realization is syntactically motivated or if they serve a specific discourse function in the sentence, such as Topic shift, contrast, or Focus. Overt subject pronouns are also employed in cases where the Focus function falls on another constituent elsewhere in the sentence, as we will see through examples in the further on.

By contrast, overt pronouns are considered non obligatory if they can be realized as null without affecting the discourse import of the sentence. The latter category includes contexts in which the overt realization of the pronoun is syntactically redundant and lacks a specific discourse function. While the obligatoriness is not a straightforward phenomenon due to the literary nature of our data and the absence of prosodic evidence, we propose a continuum or hierarchy of obligatoriness based on the available data. This will be elaborated on in the following section.

Let us now observe the following literary passages to illustrate the subdivision of the abovementioned discourse-functional categories and contexts under examination:

(i) Focus

The most manifest context that requires explicit realization of the subject is when it has the discourse function of Focus. Focus is a discourse category, generally defined as the part of an utterance that conveys new or inactive information (cf. Halliday 1967; Jackendoff 1972; Lambrecht 1994; among others). From a semantic point of view, «Focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions» (Krifka 2008, 247; cf. also Rooth 1985, 1992). Both definitions are compatible with the different types of Focus identified in the literature, such as Information Focus, Contrastive Focus, Corrective Focus, Exhaustive Focus and Mirative Focus (cf. Krifka 2007; Bianchi *et al.* 2012; Cruschina 2012, among others). In a traditional view, the difference between the syntactic realization of different Focus types lies on a binary distinction between contrast and non-contrast (Vilkuna 1995; Rizzi 1997; Zubizarreta 1998).

A novel view is proposed by Cruschina (2021), who suggests that Focus types should rather be distinguished in terms of ‘degrees’ of contrast

and analysed as conventional implicatures. According to his view, all Focus types are associated with contrast, but to a different degree and, consequently, can be ordered along a scale of contrast. Since all Focus types are explicitly realized, a fine-grained distinction of Focus types is not relevant for the purposes of our analysis.

Our data contained two different types of contexts in which *minä* is Focus, one with a distinct contrastive import, such as given in (16), and the other without, or with a significantly low degree of contrast.

a. Contrastive Focus

- (16) **Minä** en ole kasvattanut teistä tuollaisia. Olette valmiita pistämään minut ja äitinne nukkumaan olohuoneeseen, niinkö? (KJ, 158)
 ‘I have not raised you to be like that. You are ready to put me and your mother to sleep in the living room, aren’t you?’

In (16), the pronoun bears Focus associated with contrastive import and hence, must be explicitly expressed. The clause would be grammatical with a null subject, but the discourse import would be different, in other words, the clause would receive an unmarked reading. Thus, explicit realization of the pronoun is considered ‘obligatory’.

b. Focus particles *-kin/-kAAn*

The second type of contexts in which overt realization is syntactically motivated and, as such, expected, consists of pronouns with the clitic Focus particles *-kin* ‘also’, ‘too’ and *-kAAn*⁹ ‘(n)either’, as given in (17a) and (17b), respectively.

⁹ The capital vowels in *-kAAn* stand for the allomorph variants *-kaan* and *-kään*.

- (17) a. Kun hän saapui tielle, **minäkin** huomasin hänet ikkunasta. (KJ, 228)
 'When he arrived on the street, I_i noticed him through the window, **too**_i.'
- b. Sanoin naiselle, etten **minäkään** välitä kissoista. (KJ, 156)
 'I said to the woman that I_i don't like cats **either**_i.'

As shown above, the additive clitic particles *-kin* in (17a) and *-kAAn* in (17b) convey Focus reading of the hosting constituents which, consequently, must be explicitly realized. This Focus type does not convey a (strong) contrastive reading, at least not to the extent of (16) above and, thus, it can be analysed as an instance of Information Focus¹⁰. This Focus type is not of particular interest for the present study because it does not allow null realization. Consequently, it will be excluded from the analysis.

(ii) Topic

We adopt the definition of the notion Topic as the discourse category which has the function to indicate what the sentence is about (cf. Reinhart 1981; Gundel 1988; Lambrecht 1994; Molnár 1998; Bianchi, Frascarelli 2010).

¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that *-kin/kAAn* particle may convey a higher degree of contrast in some contexts, such as below.

- (i) A: Kuka on jo palauttanut esseen?
 who has already submitted essay
 'Who has already submitted the essay?'
- B: Maija.
 Maija
 'Maija'
- C: **Minä-kin** olen palauttanut!
 I-FOC have submitted
 'I have, **too**!'

However, our data did not contain any occurrences of *-kin/kAAn* with this reading, hence this category will not be discussed further here.

It is (correlated with) a nominal constituent, which often has the subject function (Puglielli, Frascarelli 2007), it can be recursive (Rizzi 1997) and convey the known part of information, introduce new, or reintroduce known information in the sentence (Reinhart 1981; Givón 1983; Lambrecht 1994).

Our data contained a substantial number of explicit *minä* pronouns in different Topic functions. In particular, we observed the following Topic types discussed in the literature, namely Contrastive Topic (C-Topic), Aboutness-Shift Topic (A-Topic) and Given Topic (G-Topic). Topics have different functions in conversational dynamics and in relation to Common Ground management (Krifka 2007; Bianchi, Frascarelli 2010). In particular, A-Topic and C-Topic pertain to the Common Ground management in that they implement a conversational move, or provide instructions that help the interlocutor/reader to determine in which way the Common Ground content develops and is organized (Bianchi, Frascarelli 2010), while G-Topics do not affect the conversational dynamics.

a. A-Topic

Let us first illustrate the discourse context in which overt *minä* pronouns have the Topic shift function. To this purpose, we adopt the term A-Topic proposed in Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007). The A-Topic connects Reinhart's (1981) aboutness ('what the sentence is about') to the 'shifting' property of the Topic. In other words, an A-Topic introduces or reintroduces and changes the aboutness within the discourse.

- (18) Sitten hän sammutti valot ja poistui huoneesta. Ja **minä** aloin odottaa, että hänen sydämensä lakkaisi lyömästä. *pro* Tarkkailin häntä, *pro* tarjosin hänelle jatkuvasti savukkeita ja *pro* laitoin hänen voileivälleen runsaasti margariinia ja suolaa, enkä minä koskaan kertonut hänen lähestyvistä kuolemastaan kenellekään, *pro* en sisaruksilleni enkä äidilleni. (KJ, 47)

'Then he switched off the lights and left the room. And I started to wait that his heart would stop beating. I watched him, I offered him cigarettes all the time and I put a lot of margarine and salt on his bread, and I never told anyone about his approaching death, not to my siblings nor to my mother.'

In the second sentence of (18), a new Topic, namely *minä*, is introduced in the passage, and the explicit realization is required for purely discourse functional reasons, that is to say, to convey A-Top reading.

b. C-Topic

C-Topic is defined as the topical constituent which creates oppositional pairs with respect to other Topics, having no impact on the Focus value of the sentence (Kuno 1972; Büring 1999, 2003). Whenever a clause is associated with contrastive import the subject pronoun is explicitly expressed, as illustrated below.

- (19) **Minä** pidin meitä valkoisina, mutta heidän silmissään me emme olleet valkoisia samalla tavalla... (KJ, 142)
 'I thought we were white but in their eyes we were not white in the same way.'

In (19), the pronoun *minä* itself is clearly the contrastive element of the clause, specifically Contrastive Topic, creating an opposition pair with *heidän* 'them'.

c. G-Topic

G-Topic conveys given, familiar, or accessible information, used for the continuity function with respect to a pre-established A-Top, or to resume background information (cf. Givón 1983; Chafe 1987; Pesetsky 1987; Frascarelli, Hinterhölzl 2007). G-Topics express givenness which is calculated on the basis of the Common Ground content, and they do not affect the conversational dynamics, or instantiate a conversational move, unlike A-Topics and C-Topics.

- (20) Me_{Top1+2(+i)} olimme yhdessä nyt, istuimme sohvalla. Me kaikki halusimme yhtä ja samaa, ja me kaikki aistimme sen toisistamme.

Vaikka kuinka *pro*_{Top1} olisin halunnut jäädä siihen, kylpeä ajatuksessa paremmista ajoista, *pro* avasin suuni. *pro* En usko tähän, *pro* en usko että hän paranee, *pro* en halua valehdella teille.

Ja silloin Bajram_{Top2} katsoi minua, kuten hän aina katsoi minua niinä hetkinä, kun *pro* en ollut hiljaa vaikka olisi pitänyt. Bajram oli varannut kokonaisen katseen niitä hetkiä varten, ja hän käytti sitä nyt: hänen huulensa kovettuivat aukinaiseen asentoon, ja sekä alemmat että ylemmät etuhampaat vilahtivat esiin kuin majavalla, ja hän nosti viiksensä nenäänsä asti kiristäen koko kasvojensa ihoa ja kääntyi katsomaan minua, ja siitä *minä*_{Top1} tiesin, mitä tapahtuisi sen jälkeen, kun imaami olisi lähtenyt. (*KJ*, 164)

‘We were together now, sitting on the sofa. We all wanted the same thing, and we all sensed it from each other.

No matter how much I wanted to stay there, bathing in the thought of better times, I opened my mouth. I don’t believe in this, I don’t believe he’ll get better, I don’t want to lie to you.

And then Bajram looked at me, as he always did at those moments when I wasn’t silent even though I should have been. Bajram had reserved a whole look for those moments, and he used it now: his lips hardened into an open position, and both upper and lower incisors flashed out like a beaver’s, and he raised his moustache up to his nose, tightening the skin of his whole face, and turned to look at me, and from that, I knew what would happen after the imam had left.’

In (20), the A-Top is *me* ‘we’, including the narrator and her husband Bajram (and their children), the former is then repeated as null and the latter as Bajram/*hän* ‘he’ for Topic continuity. At the end of the passage the first-person pronoun *minä* is expressed explicitly to re-establish the aboutness of the narrator after a longer sequence of clauses about Bajram. The overt pronoun has therefore the discourse function of G-Topic.

In addition to the aboutness reassuming function of the overt pronoun, it is worth noting the XSV word order, which focuses the indirect object *siitä* ‘(from) that’ in the leftmost position. As we will see below, if there

is a focused constituent in the clause, different from the subject, then the subject is often explicitly expressed to take up its Topic function.

The word order can also determine the obligatoriness of the explicit realization of the pronoun, specifically SXV, if the clause is preceded by some independent emphatic particles conveying Focus reading of a constituent in the clause, such as *kyllä* 'indeed' or clitic particles, such as *-hAn*¹¹, which can also occur together.

- (21) "Nimi on enne", kissa sanoi. "Tiesitkö sitä? Nimi on enne, heh heh."

Ja minä sanoin, että kyllähän **minä** nyt *sen* olin kuullut ja että se nyt on vain joukko kirjaimia ja että minun nimeni tarkoittaa muuten suomeksi siunausta. (*KJ*, 55)

'«Nomen est omen», the cat said. «Did you know it? Nomen est omen, heh heh.»

And I said that of course **I** had heard *that*, and that it's just a bunch of letters, and that my name means blessing in Finnish, by the way.'

In (21), it can be deduced from the preceding discourse context (for lack of prosodic evidence) that the Focus falls indeed on the object *sen* 'that' [small caps indicate Focus in (21)]. *Minä* clearly conveys given information (and has the function of G-Topic, cf. *infra*) in the sentence. It is also syntactically motivated because the emphasizer must occur with an overt subject; a null realization is indeed overruled, as shown in (22) (cf. also Section 3.1).

- (22) *... Ja minä sanoin, että kyllähän *pro* nyt *sen* olin kuullut...

¹¹ The clitic particle *-hAn* is a syntactic marker which has a variety of functions illustrated and discussed widely in literature, cf. e.g. Karttunen 1974, 1975; Hakulinen 1976; Nevis 1986; Välimaa-Blum 1987; Palomäki 2016; Ylinä *et al.* 2023. When the particle is associated with Focus function, it conveys Focus reading on the hosting constituent or the Focus can occur elsewhere in the clause; for further discussion on the Focus function of *-hAn*, cf. Palomäki 2016; Ylinä *et al.* 2023.

The data contained a significant number of overt *minä* pronouns which did not fall into the abovementioned categories, resulting syntactically and discourse-functionally ‘redundant’. Their function is indeed expressive and stylistic, contributing to the flow of consciousness and (internal) monologue with self-reference¹². For the purpose of the present study, this subcategory will be labelled as ‘redundant’. The overt realization of the *minä* pronoun in these contexts is syntactically acceptable, but not relevant in terms of discourse function, as illustrated below.

- (23) Vaikka isäni yski meidän edessämme terävästi kuin viimeisen hengvetonsa äärellä, *pro* halusin hänen nauttivan viimeisistä kuukausistaan. Ja *minä* odotin ja odotin, *minä* odotin ensin kuukausia ja *pro* täytin kaksitoista, ja sitten *minä* odotin vielä vuoden ja *pro* täytin kolmetoista, ja sitten *pro* odotin toisen vuoden ja kolmannen... (KJ, 47)

‘Even though my father coughed sharply in front of us as if at the brink of his last breath, I wanted him to enjoy his last months. And I waited and waited, I waited for months first, and I turned twelve, and then I waited another year, and I turned thirteen, and then I waited for another year and the third...’

- (24) Pahinta oli, että *pro* aloin miettiä samanlaisia asioita kuin he. *pro* Mietin, millaiseen työhön *pro* voisin vielä päätyä ja kuinka paljon ja mitä *minun* pitäisi tehdä, että urani olisi nousujohteinen. *pro* Mietin, minkä arvosanan *pro* saan pro gradu -tutkielmastani, *pro* menetin yöuneni pohtiessani, olisiko järkevämpää tehdä muutama vuosi töitä ja sen jälkeen palata opintojen pariin. Ja *minä* mietin, kannattaisiko minun... (KJ, 35)

¹² A detailed analysis of the semantic and philosophical nature of the concept of self-reference (*de se*, indexicality, self-ascription attitude) is not relevant for the present study, but the interested reader is referred to Shoemaker 1968; Perry 1979; Lewis 1979 for further reading.

‘The worst part was that I began to ponder similar things to them. I pondered what kind of job I could still end up in and how much and what I should do for my career to be on an upward trajectory. I wondered what grade I would get for my master’s thesis, I lost sleep pondering whether it would be wiser to work for a few years and then return to studies. And I wondered, should I...’

The overt *minä* pronouns in (23) and (24) are not functional in terms of Topic shift, contrast, or continuity, and convey no Focus reading. In (23), explicit and null forms alternate without formal logic, but creating an intensifying and accumulating literary effect, while in (24), a long series of null pronouns (with an overt, syntactically obligatory, genitive form *minun* in between) is followed, ‘unexpectedly’ from a formal point of view, at the end by an overt *minä*, obtaining a sequence effect.

5. Analysis of explicit pronouns in translation

As mentioned above, the novel *Kissani Jugoslavia* contained 182 explicit first-person subject pronouns (cf. Table 1). The following table resumes the distribution of *minä* pronouns across different discourse-function categories according to the classification presented in Section 4.2.

Original (Finnish)	Number of occurrences of overt <i>minä</i> (percentage)
Contrastive Focus	15 (8,2 %)
A-Top	29 (15,9 %)
C-Top	40 (22,0 %)
G-Top	54 (29,7 %)
Redundant	44 (24,2 %)

Table 2 – *Minä* pronoun across discourse function categories in *Kissani Jugoslavia*.

In this section we will focus on the realization of first-person subject pronouns in the Italian translation, examining whether they appear overtly or as null forms. We will also observe whether their discourse functions

are preserved in translation or if they serve another function. Furthermore, we will illustrate other linguistic means employed in the translation.

5.1 Contrastive Focus

Contrastive Focus resulted as the discourse category with less occurrences in our data, the numerical data is presented in Table 3.

Finnish original	Italian translation
overt <i>minä</i> 15	overt <i>io</i> 9
	null (<i>pro</i>) 2
	other ¹³ 4

Table 3 – Contrastive Focus Finnish to Italian.

Due to the nature of this Focus type, the highest number of *minä* pronouns were translated with an overt pronoun in Italian (9/15) and the discourse function was thus maintained, as expected. When a null pronoun was used in the target text, the translation resulted in a different discourse import.

The text samples below illustrate occurrences of Contrastive Focus in the source text and the corresponding translation. Samples (25) and (26) show how the discourse function is maintained in the target text.

Overt in translation, unmarked order

- (25) a. "**Minä** en kuullut mitään pilliä", hänen ystävänsä sanoi
I not heard any whistle his friend said
tynesti. (KJ, 195)
calmly

¹³ The term includes different syntactic strategies employed in the translation, including different sentence types or the use of a passive form instead of an active one.

- b. "Io non ho sentito nessun fischio", aveva detto l'amico.
 (UPA, 199)
 I not have heard any whistle had said the friend
 '«I didn't hear any whistle», his friend said calmly.'

Overt in translation, marked order

- (26) a. *Niin minä olisin tehnyt.* (KJ, 7)
 that way I would have done
 b. *Così avrei fatto io.* (UPA, 10)
 that way would have done I
 'I would have done it that way.'

As we can notice, the text samples in (25) and (26) represent two different word orders, an unmarked and a marked one, respectively, which are maintained in the corresponding translations, as well as the discourse functions.

In (25) and (26) we see two instances of sentences in which the discourse-function is not preserved in translation.

(i) Null in translation, discourse function not maintained

- (27) a. "Sinäkö määrää, kuinka minä kasvatan lapseni?"
 you tell how I educate my child
 hän huusi [...]. (KJ, 155)
 he yelled
 b. "Sei tu che decidi come pro
 is you that decide how I
 educo mio figlio?" mi urlò [...]. (UPA, 157)
 educate my son at me yelled
 '«Is it you that tells me how I should educate my child?»
 he yelled.'

(ii) Different syntactic construction

- (28) a. "Sillä **minä** en pelkää vankilaa, [...]" (KJ, 43)
 because I not fear prison
 b. "Non avendo paura della prigionia, [...]" (UPA, 46)
 not having fear of prison
 '«Because I'm not afraid of prison...»'

In (27) a null pronoun is used instead of an overt one, and (28) represents an example of a different syntactic strategy, namely a gerund construction instead of the indicative form.

5.2 A-Topic

A-Topics were predominantly translated with an overt pronoun and the discourse function was maintained except in two cases. When a null pronoun is adopted in the translation, the discourse function is still preserved.

Finnish original	Italian translation
overt <i>minä</i> 29	overt <i>io</i> 20
	null (<i>pro</i>) 7
	other 2

Table 4 – A-Topic Finnish to Italian.

As expected, most occurrences of A-Topic are realized with an overt pronoun in the target text, but null realizations are also possible, as illustrated in (29) and (30), respectively.

(i) Overt in translation, discourse function maintained

- (29) a. Hän laskeutui polvilleen, tarttui hartioihini ja pyysi minua heräämään. Ja **minä** katsoin isääni mutten nähnyt hänen kasvojaan [...] (*KJ*, 46)
- b. Si piegò sulle ginocchia, mi afferrò per le spalle e mi chiese di svegliarmi. E **io** guardai verso di lui [...] (*UPA*, 55)
 ‘He bent down on his knees, grabbed my shoulders and asked me to wake up. And **I** looked at my father but didn’t see his face...’

(ii) Null in translation, discourse function maintained

- (30) a. Vihdoin se laskeutui päälleni, sen tassut tömähtivät kainalojeni alle, koko lattia tärisi, ikkunatkin. Se tarttui hetkessä leukaani, jonka ihoa sen varpaista työntyneet kynnet raapivat. Toisen tassunsa se oli sijoittanut kaulalleni, ja **minä** tunsin veitsen ohuen terän, miten hienovaraisesti, kuin tuore tulostuspaperi, se leikkasi kurkkuani. (*KJ*, 114)
- b. Alla fine atterrò su di me, le zampe mi batterono sotto le ascelle, cigolò tutto il pavimento, anche le finestre. Per un attimo mi afferrò il mento, che gli artigli mi graffiarono. L’altra zampa l’avevo sul collo, e **pro** sentii la lama affilata del coltello che, con quanta delicatezza, come il margine di un foglio di carta, mi incideva la gola. (*UPA*, 118)
 ‘Finally he landed on me, his paws dug under my armpits, the whole floor shook, even the windows. In an instant he grabbed my jaw, the skin of which was scratched by the claws protruding from his toes. He had placed his other paw on my neck, and **I** felt the thin blade of the knife, how subtly, like fresh printing paper, it cut my throat.’

Interestingly, in the following passage the overt pronoun is not expected in the translation resulting thus redundant: in fact, the overt realization conveys a contrastive reading.

(iii) Overt in translation, discourse function not maintained

- (31) a. Katselimme toisiamme pitkään, minä ja hän, sanaakaan sanomatta, minä kosketin hänen alastonta rintakehäänsä ja hän silitti alaselkääni ja sanoi sen samalla tavalla kuin hän ensimmäisellä kerralla sen sanoi: **minä** rakastan sinua, niin hän sanoi – haluan olla sinun kanssasi. (*KJ*, 223)
- b. Ci guardammo a lungo, io e lui, senza dirci una parola, io toccai il suo petto nudo e lui mi accarezzò il fondoschiena dicendomi esattamente come la prima volta: **io** ti amo, così disse – “Voglio stare con te [...]”. (*UPA*, 225)
- ‘We looked at each other for long, me and him, without saying a word, I touched his bare chest and he stroked my lower back and said it the same way he had said it the first time: **I** love you, that’s what he said – I want to be with you.’

5.3 C-Topic

C-Topics are quite frequently employed in the novel and the high number of explicit realizations in the target text reflects the nature of this discourse category in which an overt realization is necessary in order to create a contrast with another element.

Finnish original	Italian translation
overt <i>minä</i> 40	overt <i>io</i> 35
	null (<i>pro</i>) 0
	other 5

Table 5 – C-Topic Finnish to Italian.

(i) Overt in translation, discourse function maintained

(32) a. *pro*_{i+k} Aloimme elää rutinoitunutta elämää, ja yhtäkkiä *me*_{i+k} tunsimmekin toisemme joniin hyvin, että meiltä loppuivat kysymykset, joita esittää toisillemme. Kissa_i ymmärsi olla puhumatta minulle puoleen tuntiin kun tulin ovesta sisään, *se*_i antoi minun lukea rauhassa ja *pro*_i piti televisiota hiljaisella, kun *pro*_k menin ennen sitä nukkumaan, ja *minä*_k puolestani ymmärsin ottaa sille valmiiksi esille vaatteet, jotka *se*_i pukisi seuraavana aamuna ylleen, sillä kissa_i oli huono aamuissa ja *minä*_k olin niissä erinomainen. (KJ, 104)

b. La nostra vita acquistò un po' alla volta aspetti di routine, e di colpo *pro*_{i+k} ci accorgemmo di conoscerci così bene, che non ci ponevamo più delle domande. Il gatto_i sapeva che non doveva rivolgermi la parola per mezz'ora quando facevo ritorno a casa, *pro*_i mi lasciava leggere in pace e *pro*_i teneva basso il volume del televisore se *pro*_k andavo a letto prima di lui, mentre *io*_k da parte mia avevo imparato a tirare fuori i vestiti che avrebbe indossato il mattino seguente, poiché lui era poco attivo di mattina, e *io*_k l'esatto contrario. (UPA, 108)

'We started to live a routine-like life and suddenly we knew each other so well that we ran out of questions to pose to each other. The cat realized it was better not to talk to me for half an hour when I came home, he let me read in peace and kept the TV at low volume when I went to sleep before him, and I, for my part, figured to prepare his clothes that he would wear the following morning as the cat was bad at mornings and I was great at them.'

In (33) the contrasted elements are located in two coordinated clauses. In the source text the first-person *minä* pronoun is in the second, elliptic clause whereas in the Italian translation the corresponding *io* pronoun is in the first, non-elliptic clause. Nevertheless, the discourse function is maintained.

(ii) Overt in translation, different construction, discourse function maintained

- (33) a. Kai tajuat, että sinä olet tuollainen ja **minä** tällainen, ja että yhdessä se tekee ei minkäänlainen? (KJ, 108)
- b. Di sicuro lo capisci che **io** sono fatto così e tu cosà, e che insieme non siamo né una cosa né l'altra. (UPA, 109)
- ‘For sure you understand that you are like that and **I** am like this, and together it makes like nothing.’

The sample text (33) illustrates the case in which the forms of the subjects do not correspond due to a different syntactic realization of the comparative constructions in the two languages.

(iii) Different construction

- (34) a. Mutta sitäkin enemmän pelkäsin sitä, että hän pelkäisi yhtä paljon kuin **minä** [ø]. (KJ, 39)
- b. Ma ciò che di più temevo era che lui potesse avere paura quanto me. (UPA, 43)
- lit. ‘But more than that I was afraid that he might be as afraid as **I** [was].’

5.4 G-Topic

G-Topic category displays the highest number of null occurrences with respect to the other categories in our data. This is not surprising since G-Topics may be null in Italian.

Finnish original	Italian translation
overt <i>minä</i> 54	overt <i>io</i> 8
	null (<i>pro</i>) 39
	other 7

Table 6 – G-Topic Finnish to Italian.

For G-Topics, differently from the other categories presented above, null forms are expected in the Italian translation and, in fact, they occur frequently in our data. A few occurrences of overt first-person pronouns were observed in the translated text, but in most cases they convey a different reading from a discourse-functional point of view, as illustrated in (35).

(i) Overt in translation, discourse function not maintained

(35) a. Ajattelin, että olisimme yhdessä ikuisesti, minä ja se. Emme koskaan lakkaisi rakastamasta toisiamme. *Kukaan ei saa koskaan tietää tästä – varjelen tätä kuin omaa henkeäni*, ajattelin. Annan sille kodin, kaiken minkä se tarvitsee, ja se tulee olemaan kanssani onnellinen, koska tiedän mitä se haluaa. Opin tuntemaan sen niin hyvin, ettei sen tarvitse sanoa minulle sanaakaan, ja **minä** syötän sitä ja katson kun se sulattaa ruokaansa ja seuraan kun se kasvaa ja kasvaa ja kasvaa. (*KJ*, 16)

b. Mi venne da pensare che saremmo rimasti insieme per sempre, io e lui. Non avremmo mai smesso di amarci. Nessuno dovrà mai saperne niente – lo proteggerò come la mia vita, pensai. Gli offrirò una casa, tutto quello di cui avrà bisogno, e con me sarà felice, poiché so che cosa desidera. Imparerò a conoscerlo talmente bene, che non avrà bisogno di dirmi nemmeno una parola, e **io** gli darò da mangiare, starò a osservarlo mentre digerisce il pasto, seguendolo mentre cresce e cresce sempre di più. (*UPA*, 16)

‘I thought we’d be together forever, me and him. We would never stop loving each other. No one will ever know about this – I’ll guard this like my own life, I thought. I will give him a home, everything he needs, and he will be happy with me because I know what he wants. I get to know him so well that he doesn’t have to say a word to me, and **I** feed him and watch him digest his food and watch him grow and grow and grow.’

Interestingly, in this example the Italian pronoun *io* ‘I’ is redundant from a syntactic and discourse-functional point of view, if compared to the original passage. The Italian translation in (35b) could indeed be realized as a null subject pronoun, and in this case it would maintain the G-Topic function that we observe in the original text in (35a). In fact, overt subject pronouns tend to convey an emphatic reading in Italian.

On the other hand, in instances where the translation employed a null pronoun, the discourse function was preserved; this is exemplified in (36).

(ii) Null in translation, discourse function maintained

- (36) a. “Kyllähän minä jos jonkinlaisesta kollista pidän, mutta **minä** vihaan narttuja!” (KJ, 56)
 b. “È chiaro che mi piacciono i gattoni di ogni specie, ma **pro** non sopporto le gattacce!” (UPA, 60)
 ‘«I do like different kinds of tomcats but **I** HATE female cats!»’

5.5 ‘Redundant’ pronouns

Those overt first-person subject pronouns which did not fall into the abovementioned categories are classified as ‘redundant’ from a discourse-functional perspective, although grammatical. In fact, they are employed for stylistic reasons, as will be illustrated in the sample sentences below.

Finnish original	Italian translation
overt <i>minä</i> 44	overt <i>io</i> 11
	null (<i>pro</i>) 32
	other 1

Table 7 – Redundant pronouns Finnish to Italian.

Let us first observe an instance of a ‘redundant’ use of first-person subject pronoun, which is translated with an overt pronoun. It is intere-

sting to notice that the overt expression of the pronoun is redundant also in Italian—we would expect, as a matter of fact, a null realization, aligning with the definition of G-Topic discussed above. We suggest that this is an instance of interference from the source to the target language.

(i) Overt in translation

(37) a. Mutta eihän tämän näin kuulu olla, sanoin itselleni kun olin jatkanut sitä tarpeeksi kauan, joten minä kaivoin eteisen veto-laatikosta aurinkolasit, ja kun laitoin ne silmilleni, astuin ulos ja ilmoittauduin uusille kursseille ja hankin kuntosalikortin, toistelin itselleni, että niinhän se on, asenne ratkaisee, asenne ratkaisee, ja minä sanoin itselleni, että päivä on kaunis ja aurinkoinen ja lumi kimaltelee kuin jalokivipuuteri, ja **minä** jäin bus-sista pois siksi että halusin kävellä loppumatkan enkä siksi että se oli täynnä ja jouduin seisomaan sen käytävällä [...] (*KJ*, 218)

b. Ma non può essere così, mi dissi dopo essere andato avanti in questo modo per un pezzo, per cui dal cassetto del mobiletto dell'ingresso tirai fuori gli occhiali da sole e, una volta indossati, uscii, e mi iscrissi a nuovi corsi e feci l'abbonamento a una palestra, e mi andavo ripetendo che così vanno le cose, quel che conta è l'atteggiamento, e mi ripetevo che era una giornata bella e luminosa, e la neve brillava come polvere di diamante, e **io** scesi dall'autobus perché volevo camminare per il resto della strada, e non perché il veicolo era pieno e mi toccava stare in piedi nel corridoio [...] (*UPA*, 220)

'But this isn't how it's supposed to be, I said to myself after persevering with it for long enough, so I retrieved sunglasses from the hallway drawer, and when I put them on, I stepped outside, enrolled in new courses, and got a gym membership, I kept repeating to myself, that's right, attitude is everything, attitude is everything, and I told myself that the day was beautiful and sunny, and the snow sparkled like jewel powder, and **I** got off the bus because I wanted to walk the rest of the way, and not because it was crowded and I had to stand in the aisle...'

In (38), we observe that while the original passage displays an overt pronoun, which is not discourse-functionally motivated but rather has a stylistic function, in the translation the subject is expressed in a canonical way, i.e., through a null pronoun.

(ii) Null in translation

- (38) a. Mikään ei ollut poissuljettua tai mahdotonta, kunhan valitsi oikein, ja **minä** haaveilin niin, että liikutuin kyyneliin omista kuvitelmistani. (*KJ*, 19)
- b. Tutto sarebbe stato raggiungibile, niente impossibile, se solo avessi scelto la strada giusta, e **pro** fantasticavo tanto fino a piangere per quel che immaginavo. (*UPA*, 21)
- ‘Nothing was ruled out or impossible, as long as one chose wisely, and **I** dreamt so vividly that I was moved to tears by my own fantasies.’

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the first-person pronoun was frequently found in overt form in reporting clauses after direct speech, without any evident discourse-functional motivation, as exemplified in (39) for both languages.

(iii) Reporting clause

- (39) a. “Minun pitää mennä”, hän sanoi tultuaan ulos ja oli kompastua kylpyhuoneen oven edessä olevaan sandaaliinsa. [...] “Lähde vain”, **minä** sanoin. “Minunkin pitää nyt mennä”. (*KJ*, 190)
- b. “Devo andare”, fece poi uscendo dal bagno, e quasi inciampando su un sandalo davanti alla porta. [...] “Va’ pure”, gli dissi **io**. “Anch’io devo uscire”. (*UPA*, 193)
- ‘«I must go», he said when he came out and almost tripped on a sandal in front of the bathroom’s door. [...] «You can go», **I** said. «I must go, too.»’

However, the use of overt forms in translation was not consistent, as null forms were also frequently observed, as in (40).

- (40) a. "Oletko valmis?" Hana kysyi pelokkaan oloisena: hänen he-leä äänensä katkesi kesken kysymyksen [...] "Tietenkin", **minä** sanoin. "Olen onnellinen nyt", jatkoin, nostin huntuni pääni ylitse suukottaakseni häntä otsaan ja laskin sen taas alas. (KJ, 85)
- b. "Sei pronta?" chiese Hana come spaventata: la voce lieta si rup-pe però nel pronunciare quelle parole. [...] "Naturalmente", **pro** dissi. "Adesso sono felice", proseguì, sollevai il velo sulla testa, per baciarla sulla fronte, poi lo riabbassai. (UPA, 88)
- '«Are you ready? » Hana asked looking scared: her clear voice broke in the middle of the question [...] «Of course», **I** said. «I'm happy now», I continued, lifting the veil above my head to kiss her on the front and putting it back down.'

6. Final remarks

In this study, we examined the occurrences of overt first-person singular subject pronouns (*minä* 'I') in the novel *Kissani Jugoslavia* and their overt and null realization in the Italian translation *L'ultimo parallelo dell'anima*. We closely examined the presence of pronouns, both overt and null, focusing on their discourse function and their correlation with interference phenomena noticeable in translation. Such phenomena may manifest during the translation process, potentially leading to an excess of overt forms in situations where a null pronoun would be preferred. This observation was especially notable within the category identified as 'redundant'. For example, in (48) and (50) we observe an overt subject in the Italian translation which has no contrastive, emphatic, or other discourse functional import and it seems that it is transferred from the source language in which an overt realization would receive a less marked reading.

The text fluctuates between dialogues and stream of consciousness with features of colloquiality such a redundant use of *minä* pronouns, abundance

of coordinated sentences, alternation of short and long sentences. Colloquial Finnish is in fact characterized by a high frequency of overt subject pronouns.

Such a high degree of interference from the source language was not observed in the other categories.

As expected, contrastive elements, represented by C-Topics and Contrastive Foci, must be overt by nature. The only null forms that were observed in the translation imply a change in the discourse function. On the other hand, A-Topics and G-Topics show a wider use of pronominal forms. In particular, 74 % of A-Topics are realized through overt pronouns because their main function is to convey a Topic shift while only 17 % of G-Topics surface in an overt form, in line with the fact that they do not affect the conversational dynamics.

The inconsistency in the use of overt and null pronouns aligns with situations where the presence or absence of an element (in this case, the subject pronoun) does not lead to ungrammaticality but rather hinges on pragmatic appropriateness, as observed, for instance, in second language acquisition.

As a final note, we acknowledge that this study is representative of preliminary observations based on a corpus driven by only one novel. Nevertheless, we also think that it could provide new insights and data on a debated issue, the use of subject pronouns in translation in relation to their discourse function. A more extensive study is welcome in the future to provide a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

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