Chapter 7

On pronominal uses of *geral* in Brazilian Portuguese

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This paper analyzes the impersonal use of *geral* 'general' in Brazilian Portuguese, in the light of investigations dealing with impersonalization strategies in the generative literature. I will show that *geral* behaves as a φ-featureless impersonal pronoun with regard to agreement patterns and to generic/arbitrary interpretation, but as a pronoun with φ-features if we take its syntactic distribution into consideration. Despite this incongruity, I will argue that *geral* must be analyzed as an item that is devoid of φ-features, similarly to *man* in Swedish, *si* in Italian and *on* in French, according to Egerland's (2003) proposal. The analysis provides evidence in favor of the hypothesis that the distribution of impersonal pronouns in different sentential positions is better captured in terms of case marking instead of syntactic function (Fenger 2018). I will also show that *geral* can be used as a first-person plural pronoun, which seems to depend on strictly pragmatic factors, as a result of the lack of φ-features.

1 Introduction

This study approaches the occurrence of *geral* 'general' in Brazilian Portuguese in cases in which its use can be analyzed as an impersonalization strategy (i.e., denoting an indefinite human referent). *Geral* is originally an adjective, but the examples in (1) below illustrate its use as a generic pronoun (corresponding to generic 'you' in English – see 1a–1b) or as an arbitrary pronoun (corresponding to referentially undetermined 'they' in English – see 1c–1d).[1]

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[1]Please see Appendix A for links to the internet sources for all examples.

(1) a. *Geral* sabe   que esporte gera   renda.
         GERAL knows.PRES that sport   generates money
         'Everyone knows that sports generate income.'

     b. Bom mesmo era na   idade média que *geral* morria   de sífilis
         good really   was in-the age middle that GERAL died.3SG of syphilis
         e   ninguém tava nem aí.
         and nobody   was unconcerned
         'Things went really well in the Middle Ages, when everyone/you died
         from syphilis and nobody cared.'

     c. de noite fomos   pro   baile e   depois *geral* foi
         at night went.PAST.1PL to-the prom and after   GERAL went
         chegando e   curtindo pra caramba
         arriving   and enjoying very much
         'in the evening we went to the dance and many people/some people
         kept on coming and enjoyed it a lot'

     d. Olha aí   a   galera dos   comes e   bebes da   festa que
         look there the people of-the foods and drinks of-the party that
         geral ficou alucinado!
         GERAL was   crazy
         'These are the guys who took care of the party's foods and beverages
         that got many people/lots of people crazy!!!'

Based on the Minimalist version of the Principles and Parameters Theory (Chomsky 1995), this study aims at analyzing the behavior of *geral* in the light of investigations dealing with impersonal pronouns in the generative literature. I approach in greater detail the works of Egerland (2003) and Fenger (2018), who pursue the hypothesis that impersonal pronouns fall into two groups with regard to the presence or absence of the so-called φ-features (which codify information related to grammatical categories such as gender, number and person): those that exhibit φ-features and those that are devoid of φ-features. The presence or absence of φ-features has syntactic and pragmatic implications, since they determine the syntactic positions in which impersonal pronouns may occur and, at least in part, also condition their readings in a given context. Although *geral* behaves in a way that is apparently inconsistent with what would be expected in terms of φ-features, I will argue that it must be analyzed as an item that is devoid of such features. I shall further argue that, under specific pragmatic circumstances, *geral* may gain a referentially definite reading, equivalent to the personal pronouns *nós* and *a gente* 'we', which refer to the first-person plural in Brazilian Portuguese.

This study will be carried out from an exclusively qualitative perspective. In addition to resorting to my own intuition (a common expedient in generative investigations), the analysis was based on data collected from webpages, informal writing on blogs, social networks, forums and commercial advertisement. The database currently consists of around 150 occurrences of *geral* as an impersonalization strategy and has been gathered since 2018. In most cases, it is not possible to identify the author of each utterance nor their regional provenance, which at this point prevents me from engaging in more detailed sociolinguistic considerations regarding the relevant use of *geral*.

This chapter is structured as follows: in §2, I present other uses of *geral*, i.e., as an adjective, a noun and an adverb, in which this item also conveys the meanings of indetermination or intensification; in §3, I present the proposals of Egerland (2003) and Fenger (2018) for dividing impersonal pronouns into two large groups – those that exhibit φ-features and those that are devoid of φ-features; in §4, I analyze the behavior of *geral* with regard to the expected properties of each of those types of pronouns, with the purpose of establishing in which group it belongs; in §5, I present some occurrences of *geral* in which it refers to the first-person plural; in §6, I summarize the conclusions of this study.

2 Adjectival, nominal and adverbial uses of *geral*

The use of *geral* as an impersonalization strategy has been associated with the speech of younger individuals (below 30 years of age) living in urban areas in different regions of Brazil. Nevertheless, a systematic and in-depth sociolinguistic study on the distribution of *geral* in Brazilian Portuguese remains to be conducted so as to enable a precise mapping of occurrences according to geographic, social and age criteria. Although it is commonly associated with spontaneous utterances of younger individuals, *geral* may be observed in different age groups, including the author of this paper, who is currently in his forties.

As an adjective, the *Dicionário Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa* gives the following definitions of *geral*: 'that which applies to an array of cases or individuals' (2a), 'that which embraces the totality or the majority of a group of persons or things' (2b) and 'universal, widespread' (2c), among others. The examples are presented in the online version of *Dicionário Houaiss*.

(2) a. lei *geral*   'general statute'
         assembleia *geral*   'general assembly'
         busca o bem *geral*   '(s)he seeks the general good'

    b. tendências *gerais*   'overall tendencies'
         o desejo *geral* da população   'the population's overall desire'
         greve *geral*   'general/mass strike'

    c. o conceito de animal é mais *geral* do que o de inseto.
        'the concept of animal is more general than that of insect'

The *Dicionário* also has entries for this item as a noun, with definitions such as 'the greater number; the main part; generality, majority' (3a), 'that which is ordinary, usual; common' (3b) and 'a part of the stadium, without benches nor roofing, from which a game or show can be watched standing, at the same level as the arena; the audience in such places' (3c). In the first two cases, *geral* is a masculine noun, whereas it is a feminine noun in the third entry.

(3) a. o   geral   da   população não se alimenta adequadamente
         the.MASC general of-the population not eat   properly
         'the majority of the population does not eat properly'

     b. o   *geral* é a   casa possuir   duas entradas
         the.MASC general is the house to-possess two   entrances
         'in most cases, a house has two entrances'

     c. a   *geral* fez   uma algazarra ensurdecedora
         the.FEM general made a   hullabaloo deafening
         'the audience made a deafening hullabaloo'

The *Dicionário* further mentions the use of *geral* in composite expressions, such as *dar uma geral* (4a) and *em geral* (4b), respectively meaning 'to clean thoroughly' and 'in most cases'.

(4) a. o sábado é o   dia em que   a faxineira dá   uma *geral*
         the Saturday is the day in   which the cleaner   gives a   general
         na   casa
         in-the house.
         'on Saturdays, the maid cleans the house thoroughly'

     b. em *geral* vai ao   sítio duas vezes por mês
         in general goes to-the ranch two   times by   month
         '(s)he usually goes to the ranch twice a month'

The *Dicionário* does not register two fairly common uses of *geral*: its occurrence as an impersonal pronoun, with which this study is directly concerned, and cases such as those in (5), in which *geral* may be classified as an adverb.

In the latter case, *geral* works as an intensifier, as *muito* 'very, much', *demais* 'too much', *tudo* 'everything', *todo lugar* 'everywhere', among other possibilities. The adverbial use of *geral* is quite common even among speakers that find the impersonal use of *geral* odd and/or do not resort to it.

(5)   a.   Bebeu   *geral*   e   o   que serviam   ele tomava
            drank.3sg general   and the that served.3pl he took.3sg
            'He drank a lot and took whatever was being served.'

      b.   Choveu *geral*   nos   últimos sete   dias, mas em volumes
           rained   general in-the last   seven days but in volumes
           diferenciados
           different
           'It has rained heavily in the past seven days, but in different volumes.'

      c.   A   coisa não funcionou legal e   [ele] se machucou *geral*
           the thing not worked   well and he   injured   general
           'It didn't work out well and he was badly injured.'

The cases this study is more directly concerned with are those presented in (1), in which *geral* is used as an impersonalization strategy. It is not clear how this item came to be used as a pronoun, but it is possible that this usage represents an advanced stage of its grammaticalization in certain varieties of Brazilian Portuguese. However, I will not concern myself with this question in the present study.

3 Impersonal pronouns and φ-features

3.1 Agreement patterns, interpretation and syntactic distribution

In this section, I approach the studies of Egerland (2003) and Fenger (2018), who explore the idea that impersonal pronouns may be described with regard to the presence or absence of φ-features. Other generative studies adopt similar perspectives or introduce different approaches (Cinque 1988, D'Alessandro & Alexiadou 2003, Hoekstra 2010, among others), but I restrict myself to these two contributions because the analyses they put forward deal with aspects that are more directly pertinent to a formal comparison with properties observed in the use of *geral*.

Based on these authors' proposals, the structures of impersonal pronouns with and without φ-features may be represented as in (6a) and (6b) respectively: in (a),

we see what I will term ɪᴍᴘ pronouns here, i.e., impersonal pronouns devoid of φ-features; in (b), we see what I will term φ-ɪᴍᴘ pronouns, i.e., impersonal pronouns with φ-features.

(6) a. ɪᴍᴘ: [$_{NP}$ N]

b. φ-ɪᴍᴘ: [$_{φP}$ φ [$_{NP}$ N]]

In short, ɪᴍᴘ pronouns are bare, in the sense that there is no functional projection associated with N, whereas φ-ɪᴍᴘ pronouns have at least one projection (φP), a phrase headed by specified φ-features. Egerland (2003) analyzes impersonal pronouns in Romance and Scandinavian languages to show that *man* in Swedish, *on* in French and *si* in Italian are of the ɪᴍᴘ type, whereas *maður* in Icelandic and *du* in Swedish (as *you* in English) are of the φ-ɪᴍᴘ type. The author seeks to derive some grammatical and pragmatic properties from the opposition in (6) above. I will address three such properties here, which shall be relevant for an analysis of the behavior observed in *geral*: (i) agreement patterns, (ii) generic and/or arbitrary readings, and (iii) its syntactic position.

3.1.1 Agreement patterns

According to Egerland, φ-ɪᴍᴘ pronouns display previously specified φ-features and therefore always trigger the same agreement mark. The Icelandic pronoun *maður*, exemplified in (7), is just such a pronoun: adjectives related with it must be marked as singular, as *stoltur* 'proud' in (7a) and *sannfærður* 'convinced' in (7b); the use of the plural form of these adjectives (*stoltir* and *sannfærðir* respectively) is ungrammatical.

(7) Icelandic (Egerland 2003: 78)

a. Í hernum   er maður stoltur   / *stoltir   af henni.
    in the army is ᴍᴀðᴜʀ proud.ꜱɢ / proud.ᴘʟ of her
    'People in the army/they are proud of her.'

b. þrátt fyrir sannanirnar   var maður ekki alveg
    in spite of the evidence was ᴍᴀðᴜʀ not completely
    sannfærður / *sannfærðir   um sekt hans.
    convinced.ꜱɢ/convinced.ᴘʟ about guilt his
    'in spite of the evidence, people/they were not convinced.'

In contrast with φ-ɪᴍᴘ, ɪᴍᴘ may be associated with different agreement markings. According to Egerland, this is due precisely to the fact that this kind of

pronoun has no φ-feature, which makes it possible for it to occur along with items bearing different agreement markings. The Swedish cases in (8) exemplify this property: in (8a) the pronoun *man* occurs with the singular and plural forms of the adjective corresponding to *proud* in English (*stolt* and *stolta* respectively); the same occurs with the form corresponding to *convinced* (*övertygad* and *övertygade* respectively) in (8b).

(8) Swedish (Egerland 2003: 78)

    a. Inom   armén   är man stolt/stolta   över henne.
       within the army is MAN proud.SG/proud.PL of   her

    b. Trots   bevisföringen var man inte helt
       in spite of the evidence   was MAN not completely
       övertygad / övertygade   om   hans skuld.
       convinced.SG / convinced.PL about his   guilt

Egerland shows that the lack of uniformity in the agreement patterns may also be observed in the case of gender markings. In Italian, for example, the pronoun *si* in copular constructions usually requires the third-person singular to be marked in the verb, with the adjective in the masculine plural, as in (9a). However, the adjective may be used in the feminine if *si* refers to a group of women, as in (9b).

(9) Italian (Egerland 2003: 79)

    a. Quando si è   giovani,...
       when   SI is.SG young.PL.MASC
       'When people are young...'

    b. Quando si è donne, si è disposte   a rinunciare a molte cose
       when   SI is women SI is ready.PL.FEM to renounce   to many things
       per i   propri figli.
       for the children

In short, the relevant distinctions between Icelandic *maður*, on the one hand, and *man* in Swedish and *si* in Italian, on the other, are a result of the presence or absence of φ-features: whereas *man* and *si* are IMP pronouns (allowing them to occur with items bearing different φ-feature specifications), *maður* is φ-IMP (limiting their occurrence to items agreeing with their φ-features).

3.1.2 Generic and arbitrary readings

Another relevant distinction between IMP and φ-IMP is their compatibility with generic and/or arbitrary interpretations. Egerland takes pronouns that have a generic reading to refer to "a quasi-universal set of individuals" whereas those that

have an arbitrary reading describe "a non-specific group of individuals". The author argues that IMP can have generic and arbitrary readings, as in the examples of Swedish *man* in (10a) and (10b) respectively. In contrast, the φ-IMP Icelandic pronoun *maður* only licenses the generic reading, as can be seen in the grammaticality contrast in (11): in (11a) the meaning is generic, but the only possible reading in (11b) is that it is arbitrary because of the choice of verbal tense (a form of past simple that is usually not compatible with the generic interpretation).

(10) Swedish (Egerland 2003: 76; 80)

    a. Man måste arbeta till   65.
        MAN must   work   until 65
        'People have to work until the age of 65.'

    b. Man arbetade i   två månader för att lösa problemet.
        MAN worked   for two months   to solve   the problem
        'Some people/they worked for two months to solve.'

(11) Icelandic (Egerland 2003: 81)

    a. Maður vinur til   65 ára   aldurs.
        MAÐUR works until 65 years age

    b. * Maður hefur unnið   að því í tvo mánuði að leysa vandamálið.
        MAÐUR has   worked for two months   to solve the problem

Taking into consideration this contrast between Swedish *man* (as well as Italian *si* and French *on*) and Icelandic *maður*, Egerland comes to the generalization that φ-IMP pronouns can only be generic, whereas IMP pronouns can have both generic and arbitrary readings. In order to account for this distinction, the author assumes that the generic reading is defined by the presence of a generic operator (see Krifka et al. 1995 and Chierchia 1995) that can have either a φ-IMP or an IMP pronoun under its scope. In contrast, the arbitrary reading is only triggered when a pronoun is devoid of lexical content (which the author sees as equivalent to not having φ-features) beyond the trait [+human] and is not under the scope of a generic operator. According to Egerland (2003: 89),

> By and large, the meaning of such an element amounts to nothing but a [+human] entity in an episodic context. Whether the subject is understood as a single individual or a group of people is entirely determined by the discourse context and is not restrained by any syntactic restrictions. Essentially, this amounts to saying that the notion "arbitrary" […] has no theoretical status and that there is no natural class of "arbitrary pronouns". Also, there is no "arbitrary" feature to be appealed to in syntactic derivations.

Therefore, according to Egerland's proposal, a pronoun's ability to bear both readings (generic and arbitrary) or only one of them depends on whether it has or does not have φ-features: those that are devoid of φ-features (IMP) are naturally interpreted as arbitrary in the absence of a generic operator; those that have φ-features (φ-IMP) will only be interpreted as impersonal if they are under the scope of this operator and, since they have lexical content, they will never be interpreted as arbitrary.

3.1.3 Syntactic function

Egerland (2003) also notes that a distinction between IMP and φ-IMP lies in their syntactic functions: IMP can only appear as syntactic subjects, whereas φ-IMP can appear syntactically as both subjects and objects. This distinction may be observed in comparing (12) and (13): in (12), the syntactic object is an IMP pronoun (*man*, *si* and *on* in Swedish, Italian and French, respectively) and the resulting sentences are ungrammatical; in (13), the object pronouns are the non-nominative versions of *maður* and *du* (which can work as a φ-IMP pronoun in Swedish) and, in this case, sentences are grammatical.

(12) (Egerland 2003: 91)
    a. Swedish
        * Det har   sett man.
          they have seen MAN
    b. French
        * Ils   ont   vu   on. / *Ils on ont vu.
          they have seen ON
    c. Italian
        * Loro si   hanno visto.
          they have seen   SI.

(13) (Egerland 2003: 91)
    a. Icelandic
        Svona tölur   segja manni að   eitthvað   sé í ólagi.
        such   figures tell   MANNI that something is   wrong
    b. Swedish
        Om de   litar på dig får   du inte göra dem besvikna.
        if   they rely on YOU must YOU not make them disappointed

According to Egerland, IMP cannot be syntactic objects because, in the absence of φ-features, their semantic role as an internal argument cannot be properly evaluated. In favor of this analysis, Egerland (2003) draws attention to the distinction

between Swedish nominative *man* and accusative/oblique *en*, in sentences such as (14): the relation between these two pronouns is the same that can be observed between English *he* and *him*, and the morphological distinction is due to case-marking.

(14) Om de   litar på en ᵢ får   manᵢ inte göra dem beskivna.
      if   they rely on one must MAN not make them disappointed

Because *en* is a numeral, it bears inherent number marking, which makes it possible to classify it as φ-IMP and thus allows it to occur in a non-nominative position. From an interlinguistic perspective, Egerland notes that *man*-impersonals may not occur in an object position, whereas *one*-impersonals suffer no such restriction.

Egerland's analysis thus establishes a relation between the presence or absence of φ-features and a set of grammatical and pragmatic properties in the use of impersonal pronouns: IMP pronouns, precisely because they lack φ-features, have different agreement patterns and are only possible in nominative position, where they license both a generic and an arbitrary reading; φ-IMP pronouns, in turn, have a fixed agreement pattern and may present different syntactic functions, but only license a generic reading.

3.2 Case-marking, φ-features and syntactic distribution

Fenger (2018) analyzes the behavior of the so-called "dedicated impersonal pronouns" (i.e., those that are exclusively used as impersonal pronouns) in eight Germanic languages, and argues that, differently from what Egerland (2003) had stated, it is not the syntactic function that restricts the distribution of these pronouns, but rather the presence of a case projection in their internal configuration. The author assumes that only pronouns with φ-features may have case projection (KP), as represented in (15b), whereas pronouns devoid of φ-features cannot have such projection (15a). As a result, the distinction between IMP and φ-IMP presented in the previous section can be translated as a distinction between NP (noun phrase) and KP (Kase phrase), the latter of which has φ-features in its internal constitution.

(15) a. IMP: $[_{NP}$ N $]$
      b. φ-IMP: $[_{KP}$ K $[_{\varphi P}$ φ $[_{NP}$ N $]$ $]$ $]$

From a theoretical perspective, in the light of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995), Fenger's proposal (2018) is easily motivated by the assumption that case-marking results from the agreement between the (interpretable) φ-features of a noun constituent and the (non-interpretable) φ-features of a given functional head: the agreement with φ-features present, for example, in T(ense), V(erb) and P(reposition) results in nominative, accusative and oblique markings, respectively, on a noun constituent.

In line with other studies on case-marking (for instance, Bittner & Hale 1996, Neeleman & Weerman 1999, among others), Fenger assumes nominative to be a non-case, which implies that nominative constituents bear no KP, differently from, e.g., accusatives and obliques. Fenger derives the syntactic distribution of IMP and φ-IMP pronouns from this property: since they bear no KP, IMP pronouns may only occur in nominative positions; φ-IMP pronouns may in turn occur in positions associated with other cases, precisely because they bear a KP.

One advantage of Fenger's (2018) over Egerland's (2003) proposal is related to the distribution of IMP and φ-IMP in ECM-constructions: the latter can be a subject of such constructions (provided its reading is generic), whereas the former cannot, irrespective of their generic or arbitrary reading. The distinction is illustrated in (16) and (17) below, with Icelandic and Swedish examples presented by Fenger (2018: 299–300). If the distribution of impersonal pronouns depended exclusively on syntactic function, the Swedish sentences in (16b) and (17b) should be grammatical, since *man*, an IMP pronoun, is the subject in both cases; because the sentence is an ECM-construction, the position of *man* within the embedded clause is marked with the accusative, not the nominative case, which is easily explained if we assume that this pronoun has no KP, a mandatory projection for enabling the occurrence of noun constituents in positions other than the nominative. In Icelandic, as expected, *mann*, the accusative form of *maður*, can appear in this position because it is a φ-IMP pronoun, as can be seen in (16a). The ungrammaticality of (17a) results from the fact that *mann* cannot be read arbitrarily, irrespective of the position in which it occurs.

(16) Context: He is a station master.
      Intended: 'Therefore he always sees *people* leave for the holidays.'

      a. Icelandic (φ-IMP, generic)
          Þess vegna   sér hann mann   alltaf fara í frí.
          that because see he   IMPERSONAL always leave in holiday

      b. Swedish (IMP, generic)
          * Därför   see han man   alltid   åka på semester.
            therefore see he   IMPERSONAL always go   on holydays

(17) Context: I lay awake all night.
      Intended: 'I heard *someone* work on the road.'

    a. Icelandic (φ-IMP, arbitrary)
            * Ég heyrði mann   vinna vegavinnu.
              I   heard IMPERSONAL work road.construction

    b. Swedish (IMP, arbitrary)
            * Jag hörde man   arbetade ute på gatan.
              I   heard IMPERSONAL work   out in the.street

Fenger believes that the generic reading is achieved through the presence of a generic operator [GEN] that can bind both IMP and φ-IMP pronouns. As for φ-IMP, the author states that "its feature specification includes the speaker and the addressee, and this is not contradictory to the requirements of [GEN]. It does not mean that [GEN] always needs to have an element which necessarily includes [speaker] and [addressee], but the element cannot have features that are contradictory with [GEN]" (Fenger 2018: 310).

As for the arbitrary reading, Fenger departs from Egerland regarding the idea that the arbitrary reading stems naturally from the absence of both lexical content (φ-features in this case) and a generic operator. For Fenger, at least two possibilities can be entertained: (i) the presence of an existential operator or (ii) the local relation between the pronoun and the Asp(ect) head. The author does not commit herself to either proposal, but regards both as superior to Egerland's hypothesis because they predict the occurrence of φ-IMP pronouns that may be read arbitrarily, such as German *wer* and English *they*, as in (18) below.

(18) a. Ich habe die ganze Zeit *wen*   auf/an der Strasse arbeiten hören.
            I   have the whole time INDEF on   the road   work   hear
            'I heard someone work on the road.'
    b. *They have called for you, but I don't know what is about.*

I shall here assume Fenger's proposal regarding the presence of KP in φ-IMP and the absence of this projection in IMP. As I will argue, this proposal is quite advantageous in the attempt to locate the occurrences of *geral* within the set of properties of the Brazilian Portuguese pronominal system. As for the conditions for the generic and/or arbitrary reading, I shall not commit myself to any approach here, since, from a purely formal perspective, there are no relevant consequences for the properties of *geral* that I will be considering.

3.3 Comparative perspective

The table below summarizes the set of properties that have been addressed in this section according to the distinction of impersonal pronouns as IMP and φ-IMP. In the next section, I will analyze *geral* according to these properties in an attempt to determine the best characterization of this item when used as an impersonal pronoun.

Table 1: Properties of IMP and φ-IMP pronouns

Properties	IMP	φ-IMP
Is associated with a single form of agreement.	no	yes
May have either a generic or an arbitrary reading.	yes	no
Only occurs in nominative positions.	yes	no

4 Properties of *geral* in Brazilian Portuguese

4.1 Agreement patterns

As far as agreement is concerned, *geral* behaves as an IMP pronoun, since it does not trigger fixed agreement marking in verbs and adjectives. Particularly in the case of verbal agreement, *geral* can occur with verbs both in the third-person singular, as in (19), and in the third-person plural, as in (20), although the former is more frequent.

(19) a. eu não consigo entender   pq *geral* não gosta   de mim
          I   not can   understand why GERAL not like.PRES.3SG of mine
          'I cannot understand why nobody likes me.'

      b. Alguém   postou no   Facebook uma lista com curiosidades sobre
          somebody posted in-the Facebook a   list   with curiosities   about
          a   série Vaga-Lume, aquela   que *geral* conhece
          the series Vaga-Lume that one that GERAL know.PRES.3SG
          'Someone has posted on Facebook a list of curious facts about the book series Vaga-Lume, the one everybody knows.'

(20) a. nao gosto   de la,   me sinto   como se *geral*
          not like.PRES.1SG of there me feel.1SG as   if   GERAL
          tivessem   me observando
          had.PAST.SNJ.3PL me observing
          'I don't like that place, I feel like everyone was observing me.'

    b. sabemos   que *geral* curtem   os bonés da   nossa
          know.PRES.1PL that GERAL like.PRES.3PL the caps   of-the our
          coleção
          collection
          'we know everyone likes the caps in our collection'

As for adjectives, variation can be observed both in gender, with masculine (21a) and feminine (21b) forms, and in number, with singular (21) and plural (22).

(21) a. que   delícia *geral* deixando de ser   otário   e
          what delight GERAL leaving   of to-be douchebag.SG.MASC and
          respeitando a   opinião alheia
          respecting   the opinion of-other
          'what a delight to see everyone quitting being a douchebag and respecting each other's opinions'

    b. mas o   que *geral* ficou interessada   mesmo foi na
          but the what GERAL was   interested.SG.FEM actually was in-the
          receita do   meu bolo de morango
          recipe of-the my   cake of strawberry
          '[...] but what everyone was actually interested in was my strawberry cake recipe'

(22) a. CAPCOM sabe   que *geral* ficaram no   mínimo
          C.   knows that GERAL were   in-the minimum
          frustrados
          frustrate.MASC.PL
          'CAPCOM knows that everyone was at least frustrated'

    b. [estou] chocada que *geral* tao passados   pq
          be.1.SG shocked that GERAL are astonished.MASC.PL because
          a médica [...] combinou   as perguntas com os governistas
          the doctor   combined-3SG the questions with the governmentists
          '[I'm] shocked that everyone is astonished that the doctor [...] previously agreed on the questions with government supporters'

Therefore, with regard to agreement patterns, *geral* behaves as an IMP pronoun, with no φ-features demanding a fixed agreement marking.

4.2 Generic and arbitrary readings

As already noted in the introduction, *geral* may occur with both the generic and the arbitrary readings. Occurrences in (23) exemplify the generic reading. More particularly, in (23a) *geral* occurs with other pronominal forms (*todo mundo* 'everyone', *todos* 'all', *você* 'you') that are also interpreted as generic in Brazilian Portuguese. In (24), we find some cases of *geral* taking on arbitrary interpretation.

(23) a. Todo mundo tem aquele autor   ou autora   que *geral*
         everyone   has that   author.MASC or author.FEM that GERAL
         conhece bem e   todos falam   bem, mas você nunca
         knows   well and all   speak.PRES.3PL well but you never
         chegou   a pegar qualquer uma de suas obras pra ler
         arrived.3SG to take any   one of their books for to-read
         'Everyone has a male or female author that everyone knows well and praises, but you never actually got to reading one of their works.'

      b. Quem vai perder o   mercado muito em breve é a   Samsung, que
         who goes to-read the market very soon   is the Samsung that
         acha   que *geral* não acompanha a   evolução
         thinks that GERAL not follows   the evolution
         'Samsung will soon be out of the market, for they think people do not keep up with innovation.'

(24) a. Nem preciso   dizer que *geral* ficou boquiaberto ao   ver   nós
         not need.1SG to-say that GERAL was   agape   when to-see we
         dois juntos
         two together
         'I don't even have to say that everyone was agape when they saw us together.'

      b. rolou   um pipoco [e] *geral* correu achando que era o   bope
         happened an uproar and GERAL ran   thinking that was the bope
         'there was an uproar, everyone ran thinking it as the BOPE [a division of the police]'

Therefore, as regards generic and arbitrary readings, *geral* also behaves as an IMP pronoun, exhibiting patterns that are similar to Swedish *man*, French *on* and Italian *si*, in line with the properties presented in Egerland (2003).

4.3 Syntactic distribution

As far as its distribution within the sentence is concerned, *geral* is compatible with different syntactic functions and may occur in positions associated with the nominative, accusative and oblique cases. In addition to the cases hitherto presented, in which *geral* occurs in a nominative position, it may also appear in an accusative position, as in (25), and in oblique positions, as in (26–28).

(25) a. falaram que ele é uma simpatia e atendeu *geral* com o
          said.3PL that he is a nice person and received.3SG GERAL with the
          maior carinho
          biggest gentleness
          'they said he is really nice and received everyone with the utmost gentleness'

  b. Quando aquela pessoa que elogia *geral*, vem e te elogia, não
      when that person that praises GERAL comes and you praises not
      rola emoção
      happen emotion
      'When someone who praises everybody comes and praises you, you can't feel touched.'

  c. ensinei *geral* a como jogar R6
      taught.1SG GERAL to how play R6
      'I have taught everyone how to play R6.'

(26) ele já tirou print e já enviou pra *geral*
      he already took print and already sent to GERAL
      'he has already taken a screenshot and sent it to everyone'

(27) Hoje não me interessa a aprovação de *geral* apenas a minha
      today not me interest the approval of GERAL only the my
      felicidade
      happiness
      'Currently I don't care about being approved by everyone, but only about my happiness.'

(28) *Geral* sabe   que ela fica cm *geral* pega o   bonde todoooooo
      GERAL knows that she stays with GERAL takes the tram   entire
      'Everyone knows she picks up everybody, she fools around with
      everybody!!!'

As for its syntactic distribution, *geral* therefore behaves as a φ-IMP pronoun, therefore contradicting what has been established concerning its agreement pattern and its reading, criteria that would rather align *geral* with IMP pronouns.

Table 2 illustrates the behavior of *geral* in comparison with that of IMP and φ-IMP pronouns.

Table 2: Properties of IMP, φ-IMP and *geral*

Properties	IMP	φ-IMP	*geral*
Is associated with a single form of agreement.	no	yes	no
May have either a generic or an arbitrary reading.	yes	no	yes
Only occurs in nominative positions.	yes	no	no

At first sight, we are thus facing a problem for the precise characterization of *geral*, since, if it were an IMP (i.e., devoid of φ-features and of Case projection), it ought to be licensed only in nominative positions. In the next section, however, I shall argue that this apparently contradictory behavior of *geral* regarding case marking is to be expected in view of the properties of the Brazilian Portuguese pronominal system.

5 Placing *geral* within the Brazilian Portuguese pronominal system

We have seen that *geral* behaves as IMP with regard to agreement patterns and to interpretation, but as φ-IMP with regard to the syntactic positions in which it may occur. As I will argue for, this inconsistent behavior is expected if we take into consideration that the impersonal version of *geral* is integrated into the Brazilian Portuguese pronominal system.

The paradigm of Brazilian Portuguese personal pronouns, especially in its vernacular varieties, licenses the occurrence of typically nominative pronouns in accusative and oblique positions (cf. Carvalho 2008, Galves et al. 2016, among others). This property is widely observed for the third-person nominative pronouns *ele/ela* ('he/she'), which are frequently used in the object position, instead

of *o/a* ('him/her'), both in the singular and in the plural (29–30). The forms *você* 'you' (31) and *a gente* 'we' (32), which are typically nominative position pronouns, are also frequent in the accusative position, instead of *te* ('you') and *nos* ('us') – cf. Lopes 2003, Vianna & Lopes 2012, Lopes et al. 2013, Lopes & Rumeu 2015, among others.[2]

(29) testemunhas confirmam que viram   *ele* no   local do   crime
      witnesses   confirm.3PL that saw.3PL he in-the place of-the crime
      'witnesses confirm that they saw him in the crime scene'

(30) eles levaram *ela* pro   veterinário
      they took.3PL she for-the vet
      'they took her to the vet'

(31) eu conheço *você* desde os seis anos de idade
      I know.1SG you since the six years of age
      'I have known you since you were six years old'

(32) todos cumprimentaram *a gente*
      all.PL greeted.3PL   we
      'everyone greeted us'

Although less frequently, the first-person singular (*eu*, 'I') and first-person plural (*nós*, 'we') nominative forms also occur in typically accusative positions in-

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[2]One of the reviewers of this chapter made the following remarks: "The fact that *a gente* (and other "pronouns" that derived from NPs, such as Colloquial Brazilian Portuguese *o pessoal*, *as pessoas* and *o povo* but also Standard European and Brazilian Portuguese *o senhor*) may appear in object position could be due to them still being felt as NPs (or NP-like). *Geral* as a pronoun can be related to a noun as well; this would be an alternative explanation". Even if this alternative explanation is correct, it does not exclude the need for an additional explanation, given that, unlike *o pessoal*, *as pessoas* and *o povo*, the items *geral* and *a gente* do not trigger any specific mark of agreement with verbs and adjectives (cf. §4). In Brazilian Portuguese (at least in my variety, spoken in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro), *o pessoal* and *o povo* always trigger the masculine singular mark, whereas *as pessoas* triggers the feminine plural. These items have previously specified φ-features and, if analyzed as impersonal pronouns, should be treated as φ-IMP. It is not surprising that they can occur as direct objects, regardless of whether they are nouns or pronouns. What is surprising in this picture is that *geral* and *a gente* occur as direct objects (even though they derive historically from nouns), as they behave like items without φ-features and, as such, should occur only as subjects. The explanation I propose in this chapter is that the Brazilian Portuguese pronominal system, in contrast to the system of the languages exemplified in Egerland (2003) and Fenger (2018), allows typically nominative pronouns (including φ-featureless impersonal pronouns) in any syntactic function/position, regardless of such pronouns still being felt as NPs (or NP-like). Therefore, my proposal is not incompatible with the alternative explanation suggested by the reviewer.

stead of *me* ('me') and *nos* ('us'), either as subjects of ECM-constructions (see 33) or as direct objects (see 34).

(33) muitas que não viram *eu* jogar falam como se me
      manyFM that not saw.3PL I to-play talk.3PL as if me
      acompanhassem
      follow.PAST.SBJ.3PL
      'many [fem.] who didn't see me play talk as if they had been following my career'

(34) os funcionários […] atenderam *nós* com muita gentileza
      the employees helped.3PL we with much attention
      'the employees helped us with the utmost attention'

These data make it clear that any typically nominative pronoun in Brazilian Portuguese may also occur in non-nominative positions, in contrast with European Portuguese. It is not yet clear how to account for the licensing of nominative pronouns in non-nominative positions. Avelar & Galves (2016), for example, argue that noun constituents in Brazilian Portuguese, including personal pronouns, may or may not exhibit case marking; in the specific situation of pronouns, one of the consequences of this variation would be precisely the use of the morphological nominative when the pronoun is not marked for case and, as such, is licensed for any syntactic position.

Irrespective of the formal explanation that may eventually account for these observations, the fact is that, in Brazilian Portuguese, typical nominative pronouns are licensed in positions associated with different cases. This must be the exact behavior of *geral* if it has already been integrated to the pronominal system of the language, at least in the grammar of those speakers that resort to it as an impersonalization strategy. If this analysis is on the right track, then *geral* must be characterized as an IMP pronoun (that is to say, a typically nominative pronoun devoid of φ-features), but that, differently from *man*, *on*, *si* and other IMP pronouns, occurs in different syntactic positions as a result of the peculiarities of the personal pronoun system in Brazilian Portuguese. The properties of *geral* therefore provides indirect evidence in favor of Fenger's (2018) perspective, for whom the distribution of personal pronouns in different positions in the sentence is better captured in terms of case marking, and not as a result of the syntactic function of the pronoun.

6 Occurrences of *geral* with specific and inclusive readings

Egerland (2003: 82–83) mentions situations in which Swedish *man* may refer to the first-person singular, as in (35a). French *on* and Italian *si* may also occur with a specific reading, but referring to the first-person plural, as in (35b) and (35c) respectively. Egerland terms these occurrences in Swedish, on the one hand, and in French and Italian, on the other, *specific reading* and *inclusive reading*, respectively.

(35)   a. Swedish (Arbitrary/Specific)
           Man arbetade i   två månader för att   lösa problemet.
           MAN worked   for two months to solve the problem

       b. Italian (Arbitrary/Inclusive)
           Si è   lavorato per due mesi   per risolvere il   problema.
           SI has worked for two months to   solve   the problem

       c. French (Arbitrary/Inclusive)
           On a   travaillé pour deux mois   pour résoudre le   problème.
           ON has worked for   two months to   solve   the problem

  Geral may also occur in a reading that refers to a group of individuals that includes the speaker, as in the case of pronouns *nós* and *a gente* 'we'. In (36a), for example, *geral* refers to a specific group of students in which the speaker is included; in (36b), *geral* also refers to a specific group of people (the speaker's family) that may or may not include the speaker.

(36)   a. Ter   aulas no   sábado é horrivel! Eu preferia
           to-have classes in-the Saturday is horrible I   prefer.PAST.1SG
           ter   aulas até   dezembro! Minha escola ainda não
           to-have classes until December My   school yet   not
           se pronunciou quanto   a isso só falou   que *geral* vai voltar
           pronounce.3SG cregarding to that only said.3SG that GERAL go return
           dia 10.
           day 10
           'Having classes on Saturday is awful! I would rather have classes into December! My school has still not made an announcement about this and only said that we students are back on the 10th.'

b. Minha mãe   ta internada,   ae ontem   tive   que fazer a
   my   mother is hospitalized so yesterday had.1SG that to-do the
   janta, fiz   um macarrão que *geral* comeu horrores, só   não
   dinner did.1SG a   pasta   that GERAL ate.3SG horrors   only not
   falo   como fazer porque to   com pressa
   say.1SG how   to-do because am with hurry
   'My mother is hospitalized, so I had to cook dinner yesterday. I made
   pasta that everyone ate until they were full. I only won't teach you
   how to make it because I'm in a hurry.'

These occurrences raise the question of determining what licenses the specific and inclusive readings, since IMP pronouns do not exhibit φ-features. In other words, in the absence of φ-features, these pronouns ought to exhibit either the generic or the arbitrary readings, since they lack the necessary ingredient for establishing a reference to the first-person. Discussing this kind of data, Egerland argues that there are reasons for believing that inclusiveness may not be predictable:

> [...] whereas there are principled reasons behind the restrictions on generic
> and "arbitrary" readings, it is more doubtful whether there are principles
> deciding whether impersonal pronouns are interpreted as including or ex-
> cluding the speaker. Depending on the function of the message and the com-
> municative strategies of the speaker, the impersonal construction is prag-
> matically open to a variety of uses. Some such uses will be inclusive, others
> exclusive, not for syntactic reasons, but due to contextual (extra-linguistic)
> factors.   (Egerland 2003: 96–97)

In other words, the factors at stake to determine the specific and inclusive readings of impersonal pronouns are not of a grammatical, but rather of a pragmatic nature, and it is altogether impossible to predict one or another reading without taking extralinguistic factors into account.

Egerland acknowledges, however, that there is interlinguistic variation in the conditions for one or another reading to be triggered. The author exemplifies by comparing the Icelandic *maður* and the Swedish *man* impersonal pronouns, as in (37) and (38). In Icelandic, *maður* and *eg* ('I') may be coreferential in (37a), but not in (37b); in contrast, *man* and *jag* ('I') may be coreferential as much in (38a) as in (38b).

(37) Icelandic (Jónsson 1992 *apud* Egerland 2003: 98)

    a. Eg vona að   maður verdði ekki of seinn.
       I   hope that MAÐUR will-be not too late
       'I hope I won't be late.'

    b. Maður vona að   eg verdði ekki of seinn.
       MAÐUR hopes that I   will-be not too late
       'People hope I won't be late.'

(38) a. Swedish (Egerland 2003: 98–99)
       Jag får   hopas att   man inte kommer för sent.
       I   may hope that MAN not comes   too late
       'I hope I won't be late.' / 'I hope they won't be late.'

    b. Man får   hoppas att jag inte kommer för sent.
       MAN may hope   that I   not come   too late
       'I hope I won't be late'
       'They hope I won't be late.'
       'Let's hope I won't be late.'

In his discussion of this difference, Egerland (2003: 98–99) points to a suggestion by Jónsson (1992), according to which "a lower ranked feature cannot bind a higher ranked one". If we consider that the first-person is ranked higher than the third-person, it becomes possible to explain why *eg* may bind *maður* in (37a), producing the specific reading of the impersonal pronoun; the opposite, as in (37b), preserves the generic reading of *maður* (which is a third-person), since, by the same rule, the impersonal pronoun cannot bind a first-person pronoun. In Swedish, however, *man* has no φ-features and therefore escapes the condition set forth by Jónsson, thus enabling it to take on a specific reading referring to the first-person, whether it is or not bound by *jag*.

What has been noted for *man* is precisely what happens with *geral*, as can be seen in (39), with the exception of the type of readings (specific in Swedish and inclusive in Brazilian Portuguese). *Geral* may be coreferential with the pronoun *a gente* ('we', which would also apply to the form *nós*, 'we'), both in (39a) and in (39b).

(39) a. A gente tá esperando que *geral* não chegue atrasado
       we   are hoping   that GERAL not arrive late
       'We hope we won't be late.'
       'We hope they won't be late.'

    b. *Geral* tá esperando que a gente não chegue atrasado.
       GERAL are hoping   that we   not arrive late
       'We hope we won't be late.'
       'They hope we won't be late.'

If Egerland's proposal is on the right track, the possibility that *geral* presents an inclusive reading in some contexts is precisely due to the fact that it bears no φ-features (that is to say, it is an IMP pronoun, and not a φ-IMP pronoun). The factors that will determine such a reading are, however, of a pragmatic nature, since they depend on contextual (extralinguistic) factors that interfere in the reading of the sentence.

7 Conclusion

Although the grammatical and/or pragmatic factors that have triggered (or have been triggering) the use of *geral* as an impersonal pronoun demand further study, there is evidence that the process of its impersonalization resulted in the emergence of an IMP pronoun, with a behavior similar to that of *man*, *on* and *si* as described by Egerland (2003). The apparent inconsistency with regard to the syntactic positions it can fill, approximating the pattern of a φ-IMP pronoun, may be easily explained if we take into account the case-marking properties of the Brazilian Portuguese pronominal system, in which nominative pronouns are licensed in non-nominative positions. In other words, *geral* has been gaining ground as an inherently nominative IMP pronoun that is also licensed in accusative and oblique positions, as other nominative pronominal forms in Brazilian Portuguese. Besides the generic and arbitrary readings, *geral* can also have an inclusive reading (when it is the referential equivalent of a first-person plural, just as pronouns *nós* and *a gente*). The inclusive reading seems to depend on strictly pragmatic factors, as a result of the lack of φ-features.

Appendix A Source documents used in the examples

(1)   a. https://votolegal.com.br/em/brunoramos (accessed on 8 Sep 2018)

     b. https://twitter.com/bbcbrasil/status/1020326263335079936 (accessed on 8 Sep 2018)

     c. https://vk.com/topic-73988417_37659003?offset=1380 (accessed on 4 Jul 2019)

     d. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1722931431109561 (accessed on 1 Jul 2019)

(5)   a.   http://armazemdoseubrasil.blogspot.com/2011_07_10_archive.html (accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

       b.   http://diariogaucho.clicrbs.com.br/rs/noticia/2009/01/parana-tem-mais-da-metade-das-lavouras-com-qualidade-media-e-ruim-2357367.html (accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

       c.   https://www.diariodecuiaba.com.br/ilustrado/sobras/416243 (accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(19)   a.   https://twitter.com/isasalviattii/status/928063135046660097 (accessed on 1 Jul 2019)

       b.   https://sonhandocomdarcy.wixsite.com/sonhandocomdarcy/single-post/2015/12/10/Top-5-Autores-Que-Eu-Nunca-Li (accessed on 1 Jul 2019)

(20)   a.   https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20170211204407AA4anTs (accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

       b.   https://gramho.com/explore-hashtag/bonesjs (accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(21)   a.   https://twitter.com/Mandy_Baessa (accessed on 1 Jul 2019)

       b.   https://blogqueideia.wordpress.com/2017/03/20/bolo-de-morango-a-receita/ (acessado em 1 Jul 2019)

(22)   a.   https://beta2.gamevicio.com/noticias/2021/09/resident-evil-3-deve-receber-atualizacao-em-breve/ (accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

       b.   https://twitter.com/Neni66576183 (accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(23)   a.   https://sonhandocomdarcy.wixsite.com/sonhandocomdarcy/single-post/2015/12/10/Top-5-Autores-Que-Eu-Nunca-Li (accessed on 1 Jul 2019)

       b.   https://www.tudocelular.com/samsung/noticias/n142917/analise-samsung-galaxy-a10-review.html (accessed on 4 Jul 2019)

(24)   a.   https://www.wattpad.com/590285161-visão-de-cria-cap%C3%ADtulo-35/page/2 (accessed on 1 Jul 2019)

       b.   https://twitter.com/boombapx/status/772478713963372544 (accessed on 4 Jul 2019)

(25)   a.   https://www.facebook.com/PaparazzoRN/photos/a.517262558616376/773477566328206/?type=3&theater (accessed on 3 Aug 2020)

b. https://twitter.com/nadinerv/status/766251351244414976 (Accessed on 3 Aug 2020)

c. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgWk4Oo7TUU (Accessed on 3 Aug 2020)

(26) https://pandlr.com/forum/22-pan/forum/topic/off-alguem-que-entende-de-twitter-help/?cache=1 (Accessed on 3 Aug 2020)

(27) https://www.picuki.com/tag/quandovivideverdade (Accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(28) https://curiouscat.me/Caralhouuuuuuuuuuuuuu (Accessed on 7 Sep 2021)

(29) https://www.campograndenews.com.br/cidades/capital/rapaz-suspeito-de-matar-a-mulher-tem-habeas-corpus-negado-pela-justica (Accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(30) https://www.vakinha.com.br/vaquinha/ajudem-a-luna-igor-romero-dos-santos (Accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(31) https://www.intrinseca.com.br/paratodososgarotosquejaamei/carta/3195/tentando-me-despedir (Accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(32) https://www.dgabc.com.br/Noticia/2803060/jovens-viajam-por-dez-horas-como-representantes-unicos-de-cidades (Accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(33) https://www.palmeiras.com.br/pt-br/noticias/torcedores-idolatram-evair-em-loja-oficial-do-palmeiras-de-catanduva/ (Accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(34) https://behappyviagens.com.br/depoimento/131 (Accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

(36) a. http://praverpralereouvir.blogspot.com/2009/07/atim-sera-que-estou-com-gripe-suina.html (Accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

b. https://hangarnet.com.br/showthread.php?tid=107803&pid=1340162 (Accessed on 30 Sep 2021)

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