

## The Hungarian subjective paradigm and possessed DOs

Recent work on Hungarian verb paradigms (cf. Coppock and Wechsler 2012, Coppock 2012) stresses interpretive effects of direct objects (DOs) correlating with paradigm choice. On Coppock's (2012) account, the objective paradigm (OBJ in (1a)) co-occurs with familiar DOs. With the subjective paradigm (SUBJ in (1b)), however, the referent of the DO does not have to be familiar, it is rather non-specific, as in (1b).

- (1) a. Pál-nak olvas-t-uk vers-é-t.  
P.-DAT read-PAST-1PL.OBJ poem-3SG.POSS  
'We read Pál's poem.'
- b. %Pál-nak olvas-t-unk vers-é-t.  
P.-DAT read-PAST-1PL.SUBJ poem-3SG.POSS  
'We read any poem by Pál.' (cf. Bartos 1999: 99ff., Coppock 2012: 6)

The subjective paradigm has been claimed to co-occur only with non-specific readings of possessed direct objects (cf. Szabolcsi 1994, Bartos 1999). Also, the non-specific interpretation of possessives has been argued to depend on possessor extraction. This, if correct, provides a structural argument against Coppock and Wechsler (2012) and Coppock (2012), who argue that only the lexical features of the object trigger both verb paradigms, viz. that a feature [DEF] triggers the objective paradigm.

**1 Proposal** I argue that syntactic considerations are in fact crucial to account for the distribution of the paradigms with possessed direct objects in particular. Coppock's (2012) semantic insights can be complemented by structural considerations. **Problem 1:** Coppock makes wrong predictions w.r.t. the distribution of presuppositions, cf. (2). Coppock treats the possessive suffix as a presupposition trigger, predicting wrongly that (2b) presupposes (2c), since presuppositions are constant under negation (in (2a), '>> X' means *X is presupposed*).

- (2) a. macskája<sub><e,<e,t>></sub> 'cat'  $\sim \lambda x.\lambda y.[ :>> [y : \text{CAT}(y) \wedge \text{POSS}(x, y)]]$  (Coppock 2012: 21)
- b. Mari-nak nincs macská-ja.  
M.-DAT NOT.is cat-3SG.POSS  
'Mari doesn't have a cat.'  $\sim \neg \exists y[\text{CAT}(y) \wedge \text{POSS}(m, y)]$
- c. *Mari has a cat.*

**Problem 2:** Following Szabolcsi (1994) and Bartos (1999), I argue that structure, i.e. the choice of possessor, *does* play a role. The subjective paradigm is only possible with extracted dative possessors, (1b), similar to other non-specific possessive constructions which are ungrammatical with a local dative or nominative possessor, cf. (3a,b).

- (3) a. {\*Pál} olvas-t-unk {\*Pál} vers-é-t.  
P.-NOM read-PAST-1PL.SUBJ P.-NOM poem-3SG.POSS-ACC  
intended: 'We read any poem by Pál.'

- b. \*Csak Mari-nak macská-ja nincs.  
 only Mari-DAT cat-3SG.POSS NOT.IS  
 intended: ‘Only Mari doesn’t have a cat.’ (cf. Szabolcsi 1994)

These issues can be resolved if the formal feature specification of the direct object depends on the structure in the left periphery of the possessed noun phrase, i.e. the presupposition trigger is not necessarily introduced lexically but is dependent on the syntactic configuration. Local configurations, i.e. nominative and non-extracted dative possessors, require a familiar or specific interpretation by triggering the feature [DEF], which is located in D, not on the possessive suffix, *contra* Coppock and Wechsler (2012), Coppock (2012). (4a) illustrates a local possessor, triggering [DEF], while (4b) shows an extracted possessor, not triggering [DEF].

- (4) a. [DP Pál [D' [DEF] [POSSP Pál [NP vers-é-t ]]]]  
 P. P. poem-3SG.POSS-ACC  
 ‘Pál’s poem’  
 b. [DP Pál-nak] ... [D' ∅ [POSSP Pál [NP vers-é-t ]]]  
 P.-DAT P. poem-3SG.POSS-ACC  
 ‘a (non-specific) poem by Pál’ or ‘(non-specific) poems by Pál’

**2 Predictions** This approach does not run into problems like (2c) and makes strong predictions. **Prediction 1:** There should be non-specific direct objects with the subjective paradigm and quantifiers like *minden* ‘every’, explicitly ruled out by Coppock (2012). Such examples do in fact exist (cf. also Bartos 1999: 100):

- (5) Minden problémá-já-t meg-old-unk ...  
 every problem-3SG.POSS-ACC VM-solve-1PL.SUBJ  
 ‘We solve all your [polite form] problems.’ (http://bit.ly/RC1jnH, 20/03/13)

**Prediction 2:** If the subjective paradigm and non-specific readings are closely related, this approach makes strong predictions about where non-specific DOs can appear in the clause. Thus, relocating Coppock’s (2012) feature [DEF] to D and making it dependent on syntactic structure accounts for a wider range of data and makes testable predictions about the structure of the Hungarian clause.

## References

- Bartos, Huba. 1999. *Morfoszin-taxis és interpretáció: A magyar inflexiós jelenségek szintaktikai háttere*. Doctoral Dissertation, ELTE, Budapest.
- Coppock, Elizabeth, and Stephen Wechsler. 2012. The objective conjugation in Hungarian: agreement without phi-features. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 30:699–740.
- Szabolcsi, Anna. 1994. The Noun Phrase. In *The Syntactic Structure of Hungarian*, ed. Ferenc Kiefer and Katalin É. Kiss, volume 27 of *Syntax and Semantics*, 179–274. New York: Academic Press.