

## Plural agreement within possessive constructions in three varieties of Hungarian

The morphological agreement between the possessor expression and the possessed noun in Hungarian is fully expressed except for the third person plural, where two anti-agreement phenomena can be observed: on the one hand, in internal possessive constructions, the *possessum* has plural agreement with pronominal possessors only; on the other hand, unlike in subject positions of finite clauses, third person nominative pronominal possessors only occur in one invariable form within the noun phrase (*ő*, but *\*ők*). Marcel den Dikken (1999) provides a complex analysis to account for these phenomena also taking into consideration varieties of three groups of speakers. The paper aims to present at least two more varieties of Hungarian, which are not directly connected to present-day standard Hungarian and for which den Dikken's analysis cannot hold in several respects. One of them is provided by a historic corpus from the Old Hungarian language stage, while the other presents a rather exceptional synchronic variety, the dialect spoken by southern Csango people (Bacău County, eastern Romania).

In standard Hungarian, plural agreement with a non-pronominal nominative/unmarked possessor is not grammatical, while it is possible with dative-marked possessors for some speakers. Constructions with dative marked and with the unmarked (nominative) possessors also behave differently inasmuch as only dative-marked possessors can be extracted and in this case person/number agreement on the possessed noun is a true option (or even preferred by some speakers).

- (1) a szerzetes-ek-nek elveszett a könyv-e / könyv-ük  
the monk-PL-DAT got-lost the book-POSS / book-POSS.3PL  
'The book of the monks got lost.'

The source of the disconnected possessor can be either an operation of extraction from an originally noun phrase internal position (2a), or it may be assumed that the possessor expression is generated externally and is coindexed with an internal *pro* (2b). The difference can be observed in the case of plural possessors, where only one of the derivations involves agreement on the possessed noun.

- (2) a. a szerzetes-ek-nek elveszett a ~~a szerzetes-ek-nek~~ könyv-e  
the monk-PL-DAT got-lost the book-POSS
- b. a szerzetes-ek-nek<sub>i</sub> elveszett a pro<sub>i</sub> könyv-ük  
the monk-PL-DAT got-lost the book-POSS.3PL

Such an agreement is not preferred with internal possessive constructions and is accepted by a group of speakers only (the 'liberal' dialect C in den Dikken 1999). According to his explanation the anti-agreement effect with plural nominative possessors follows from configurational reasons (impossibility of Num-to-Agr movement), while the optional agreement with dative-marked possessors always involve a resumptive pronoun strategy. Moreover, the possessor associated with the null pronominal element must as a rule be a dative. (For further details, cf. den Dikken 1999 and Bartos 2000)

Although this analysis covers most of the facts for present day Hungarian, taking a diachronic look at the same constructions inevitably modifies the picture. In the first half of the 15th century, based on data gained from two early codices (Vienna and Munich Codex), plural agreement was a true optional feature in Old Hungarian not only with dative-marked

possessors, but with nominative/unmarked possessors as well. The preliminary investigations suggest a ratio of 25% within the relevant contexts (i.e. non-pronominal internal possessives). It is to be noted, however, that simultaneous marking of the plurality of the *possessum* and that of agreement with the possessor was impossible since the sufficient morphological form (*könyve-i-k*) did not exist. Consequently, in the case of agreeing constructions number specification of the possessed noun remains suppressed. This could have been in itself a good reason for the (supposedly) newer, anti-agreeing construction to emerge, where the number of the *possessum* can easily be specified (*könyve* vs. *könyve-i*). At the same time, the plurality of the possessor is always clearly expressed with a nominal possessor, thus abandoning the agreement suffix even appears to be quite economic. Anti-agreement with dative-marked possessors is less attested in this early period, which might support the claim that dative-marked possessors are secondary and originates from external possessive structures involving (overt or null) resumptive pronouns.

What is remarkable is that the southern Csango dialect (generally considered to have preserved many archaic features of the language) developed a very particular system of (anti-) agreement in plural possessives, which is much more innovative than the one observed in Old Hungarian, but is completely different from standard Hungarian. Csango speakers equally accept the plural agreement on the *possessum* and the lack thereof both with pronominal and with nominal possessors (dative as well as nominative/unmarked). The latter suggests that involving agreement operation in nominal possessive constructions is entirely optional in this variety. Furthermore, the third person plural pronominal possessors is marked for number (*ők*, but *\*ő*), that is to say, unlike standard Hungarian, it bears a plural marker suffix. Anti-agreement arises with pronominal possessors (*az ők kutyája/kutyái*, see the table below), just the opposite way as it does in standard Hungarian. One might suppose that in this case pronouns are treated on a pair with full nominals and may be considered to have the structure of a DP rather than a NumP.

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| a gyerek-ek /az ő-k<br>the child-PL / the pron:3PL | kutyá-juk / kutyá-ja<br>dog-POSS.3PL / dog-POSS      |
| a gyerek-ek /az ő-k<br>the child-PL / the pron:3PL | kutyá-i-k / kutyá-i<br>dog-POSS.PL-3PL / dog-POSS.PL |

#### References:

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