

Two splits – one common rationale?

Hungarian displays two inflectional asymmetries which pertain to verb agreement and possessor agreement, respectively (see table →).
Our goals:
• to provide a thorough description and analysis of both splits
• to suggest a common rationale of the two splits, namely the expression of the presence or absence of a pragmatic component in the anchoring of the object and of the possessor, respectively.

| | objective | subjective | Possessor agreement |
|-----|-----------|------------|---|
| 1SG | lát-om | lát-ok | ablak-om 'my window' |
| 2SG | lát-od | lát-sz | ablak-od 'your window' |
| 3SG | lát-ja | lát | ablak-a/-ja 'its window' (inal.)/ 'his/her window' (al.) |
| 1PL | lát-juk | lát-unk | ablak-unk 'our window' |
| 2PL | lát-játok | lát-tok | ablak-otok 'your window' |
| 3PL | lát-ják | lát-nak | ablak-uk/-juk 'their window' (inal./al.) |

Data

Analysis

1. A split in the possessor agreement morphology

(1) Alienability split for *ablak* 'window'

| | inalienable (semantic) | ablak-a window-P'OR3SG 'its window' | ablak-uk window-P'OR3PL 'their window' |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| alienable (pragmatic) | ablak-ja window-ALIEN_P'OR3SG 'his/her window' | ablak-juk window-ALIEN_P'OR3PL 'their window' | |

(2) (taken from Elekfi 2000)

| inalienable | alienable |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <i>üveg-e</i> 'its glass (of a window)' | <i>üveg-je</i> 'his/her glass' |
| <i>zseb-e</i> 'its pocket (of a coat)' | <i>zseb-je</i> 'his/her pocket' |
| <i>keret-e</i> 'its frame (of a picture)' | <i>keret-je</i> 'his/her frame' |
| <i>anyag-a</i> 'its material (of something)' | <i>anyag-ja</i> 'his/her material' |
| <i>talp-a</i> 'his/her sole (of a person)' | <i>talp-ja</i> 'his/her sole' |
| <i>küszöb-e</i> 'its threshold (of a house)' | <i>küszöb-je</i> 'his/her threshold' |
| <i>gép-e</i> 'its machine' | <i>gép-je</i> 'his/her machine' |
| <i>fonal-a</i> 'thread (of a ball of wool)' | <i>fonal-ja</i> 'his/her thread' |

Alienability dichotomy: opposition of **semantic** and **pragmatic possession**.

Semantic possession: relation between possessor and possessum is inherent in the lexical semantics of the head noun, the argument structure of which accordingly contains the possessor.

Pragmatic possession: POSS relation is contextually established, thus coming about from world knowledge or from the speech situation.

(3) non-alternating nouns

- most body-parts and kinship-terms
- only *-j*-less variant: stems ending in one of the strident or palatal consonants [s, z, ʃ, j, n, ɲ]
- only *-j*-full variant: stems ending in a vowel require the *-j* as an epenthetic segment in the suffix (Siptár & Törkencsi 2000).

Only the following Hungarian nouns display the alienability split:

- Semantic condition: The noun is relational; specifically, it denotes a meronymous artefact.
- Phonological condition: The noun ends in a consonant other than strident or palatal consonant, or in vowel other than [a].

2. A split in the verbal conjugation

Distribution of **subjective** and **objective conjugation**

(4) Definite indefinite direct objects, 3rd person objects

a. *Lát-játok a kutyá-t.* see-2PL.OBJ def dog-ACC 'You (pl.) see the dog.'

b. *Lát-játok ő-t.* see-2PL.OBJ PRON3SG-ACC 'You (pl.) see him/her.'

c. *Lát-tok.* see-2PL.SUBJ 'You (pl.) see.'

d. *Lát-tok egy kutyá-t.* see-2PL.SUBJ INDEF dog-ACC 'You (pl.) see a dog.'

(5) Local person objects (1st and 2nd person)

a. *Engem lát-sz/*-od.* PRON1SG see -2SG.SUBJ/2SG.OBJ 'You see me.'

b. *Téged lát/*-ja.* PRON1SG see -3SG.SUBJ/2SG.OBJ 'S/he sees you.'

(6) 1st person subject and 2nd person object

a. *Lát-lak.* see-1SG→2 'I see you.'

b. *Lát-lak titeket.* see-1SG→2 PRON.2PL.ACC 'I see you-guys.'

(7) Interrogative and relative pronouns

a. *Ki-t / mi-t lát-sz/*lát-od?* who-ACC what-ACC see-2SG.SUBJ/*2SG.OBJ 'who/what do you see?'

b. *A férfi, aki-t / A ház, ami-t ott lát-sz.* DEF man who-ACC DEF house which-ACC there see-2SG.SUBJ 'the man who / the house which you see over there'

(8) Indefinite pronouns and quantifier

a. *Lát-ok/*-om néhány / minden gyereket.* see-1SG.SUBJ/1SG.OBJ some every child-ACC 'I see some / all children.'

b. *Lát-om/*-ok valamennyi gyereket (az osztály-ból).* see-1SG.OBJ/1SG.SUBJ each child-ACCDEF class-ELATIVE 'I see each child (of the class).'

(9) Infinitival and clausal objects

a. *Tud-ta, hogy Péter csal-t.* know-PRET.3SG.OBJ COMPL peter cheat-PRET.3SG.SUBJ 'He knew that Peter cheated (in an exam).'

b. *János szeret mosogat-ni ebéd után.* John like.3SG.SUBJ wash_dishes-INF dinner after 'John likes to do the dishes after dinner.'

(10) Possessed and specific indefinite objects

a. *egy magyar író könyv-ét olvas-om.* INDEF hungarian author book-P'OR3SG-ACC read-1SG.OBJ 'I read a book of a Hungarian author.'

b. *Bartos (1997: 368) Olvas-tuk Péter (öt) vers-ét.* read-PRET.1PL.OBJ péter five poem-P'OR3SG-ACC 'We have read Peter's (five) poems.'

Special features of local persons

(11) a. *eng-em-et,* PRON1SG-P'OR1SG-ACC, lit.: 'my I/me'
b. *tég-ed-et,* PRON2SG-P'OR2SG-ACC, lit.: 'your you'
c. *ő-t,* PRON3SG-ACC, 's/he'

(12) *Téged(-et) / Engem(-et) szeret.* PRON2SG-ACC PRON1SG-ACC love.3SGSUBJ 'S/he loves you/me.'

(13) *Elveszt-ettem a toll-am(-at) / -ad(-at)* lose-PRET.1SG.OBJ DEF pen-P'OR1SG-ACC/-P'OR2SG-ACC 'I lost my pen / your pen.'

The objective conjugation is obligatorily used when the object is

- a definite lexical noun phrase (4a)
- 3rd person pronoun (4b)
- accompanied by the quantifier *néhány* ('each') (7b)
- clausal (8b)
- possessed indefinite (9a)
- specific indefinite (9b)

Objective agreement is incompatible with

- intransitive verbs (or intransitive verb (4c))
- (unpossessed) objects featuring the indefinite article (4d)
- local person objects (5a,b)
- interrogative and relative pronouns (6a,b)
- indefinite pronouns and quantifier (7a)
- infinitival objects (8b)

See also e.g. Bartos (1997), Coppock (2013), den Dikken (2004)

2.1 Differential object marking (DOM)

We analyse the Hungarian objective conjugation as

- objective agreement
- restricted in terms of DOM, [\pm PARTSPEC] marking lower end

Evidence:

- 1st person: specification of the object is excluded because of the person hierarchy (1st > 2nd > 3rd)
- 2nd person objects: portmanteau *-lak/-lek*
- 3rd person: agreement specification (the objective series indicates that the object is neither 1st nor 2nd person)

2.2 Local objects are „bad“ objects

Local persons are the most marked/unnatural objects (i.e. "bad"), Hungarian is reluctant to treat local persons as direct objects.

Evidence:

- Hungarian has unusually complex accusative forms of 1st and 2nd person (as opposed to 3rd person accusative pronouns), see (11)
 - The accusative marker is often omitted with 1st and 2nd person, see (12)
 - The accusative marker is often omitted with lexical objects where a possessor suffix of 1st or 2nd precedes, see (13)
- ⇒ Cease of accusative marking with local person objects is an analogy to the person sensitivity of the conjugation split.

- unmarked scenario (i.e. objective conjugation) only if agent is higher on the person scale (cf. 2.1)
- all 'bad' scenarios (3→1, 3→2, 2→1, 1PL→2) are ignored in the objective conjugation.
- Portmanteau *-lak/-lek* as solution for "the best of the worse"

2.3 Two gaps on the scale

Motivations of the absence of objective conjugation

- at the upper end of the definiteness hierarchy: local persons are bad objects
- at the lower end: DOM

Presence of the objective conjugation:

- medium section of the definiteness hierarchy, characterised in terms of a restriction regarding the presuppositional contents in the referential anchoring of the objects, see section 3.1.

Synthesis

3. Questions

- How does the distribution fit with transitivity?
- Why does the objective series align with the alienable variant of possessor agreement?

3.1 Robust Transitivity

Object marking is constrained by

- low saliency (DOM)
- properties of the event denoted by the verb (compare Mordvin (Uralic, object agreement only in the perfective aspect; ergative languages: e.g. Samoan, ergative-absolutive case pattern not available when the verb is taken to denote an activity (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997)

⇒ The internal argument of a two-place verb may fail to fulfil all morphological and syntactic properties of direct objects, or it even may not enjoy the status of a direct object at all.

Scale of referentiality of internal arguments and their presuppositional contents:

| | Status of internal argument in terms of definiteness and referentiality | Example (reference) | Presuppositional contents | |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| subj. | definite | | | indexical |
| | local pronouns | (5) | identifiability only in speech situation | |
| objective | non-local (= 3rd) person pronouns | (4b) | identifiability via coherence in discourse set (previously mentioned) | anchoring via coherence in discourse |
| | unique concepts, proper names | <i>Látom a napot/ánost</i> 'I see the sun / John' | identifiability via utterance-independent common ground and discourse | |
| | anaphoric (including ellipsis) | (4a) | identifiability via coherence in discourse set (previously mentioned) plus some utterance-independent common ground | |
| | indefinite: | | | |
| | possessed | (10a) | existence and coherence; anchoring via superset that contains the referent | |
| | [+PARTSPEC] | (10b), (7b) | | |
| subjective | [-PARTSPEC]: | | | no referential anchoring |
| | epistemically or scopally specific | (4d), (7a) | (existence asserted, not presupposed) | |
| | not referentially anchored: non-specific indefinite | <i>Nem üt (egy) kutyát.</i> 'He doesn't beat dogs.' | (no anchoring, only warranted by speaker) | |
| | (pseudo-)incorporated arguments | <i>fagyaltot eszek</i> 'I ice-cream-eat' | (no anchoring, only modification restriction on verb meaning) | |
| | no genuine exponent: | | | |
| | inherent objects | <i>beszélék</i> 'I speak', <i>szólok</i> 'I call out' | (4c) | |
| | existentially bound arguments | | | |
| | no internal argument (monadic verbs) | <i>megyek</i> 'I walk' | | |

⇒ Objective agreement is restricted by (or, in fact, it signals) the need for discourse coherence in the anchoring of the referent.

3.2 Pragmatic factors in the two splits

The forms of the objective paradigm, most of which feature *-j* as a component, indicate a presupposition pertaining to the relation denoted by the verb and to its internal argument. Much in the same way, the forms of the alienable sub-paradigm, which also regularly involve the ingredient *-j*, indicate that the possessor is in a pragmatically determined relation with the possessum.

Conclusion

The morphological parallels between the two splits are given a semantic rationale by analyzing both the alienable and the objective paradigm as involving a restriction in terms of a pragmatic component in the anchoring of the referent of the internal argument:

- for possessed nouns, in the sense that pragmatic possession presupposes a contextual instantiation
- for transitive verbs, in the sense of including a presupposition concerning the anchoring via discourse coherence.

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