

Object Agreement in Hungarian

∞ In Defense of a Semantic Solution ∞

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Objective vs. subjective conjugation

- (1) Lát-**om** *a madar-at*
 see-1.SG.O the bird-ACC
 'I see the bird'
- (2) Lát-**ok** *egy madar-at*
 see-1.SG.S a bird-ACC
 'I see a bird'
- (3) Vár-**ok**
 wait-1SG.S
 'I'm waiting'

Objective conjugation tracks definiteness

Definite, trigger objective:

- proper names
- *a/az* 'the', *ez* 'this', *az* 'that', *melyik* 'which', *bármelyik*, 'whichever', *hányadik* 'which number', and *valamennyi* 'each'
- third person [-wh] personal pronouns (both overt and null)
- reflexive and reciprocal pronouns

Indefinite, trigger subjective:

- *néhány* 'some' and *sok* 'many', numerals, and the indefinite article *egy* 'a'

Person plays a role

3rd person triggers objective:

(4) Lát-**ják** őt/őket.
see-3.PL.O him/them
'They see them/them.'

(5) Lát-**om**.
see-1.SG.O
'I see it/him.'

But 1st and 2nd person generally triggers subjective:

(6) Lát-**nak** engem/téged/minket/...
see-3PL.S me/you/us/...
'They see me/you/us/...'

1st person object, 2nd person subject

- (7) Szeret-**lek**.
love-1SG/2
'I love you.'

Exception to exception: Reflexive 1st/2nd person object

- (8) (Én) szeret-**em** magam-at.
I love-3SG.O myself-ACC
'I love myself.'
- (9) (Te) szeret-**ed** magad-at.
You love-2SG.O yourself-ACC
'You love yourself.'
- (10) Lát-**ják** egymás-t.
see-3PL.O each_other-ACC
'They see each other.'

wh- words

- (11) Hány-at kér-*sz*?
how.many-ACC want-2SG.S
'How many do you want?'
- (12) Mi-t kér-*sz*?
What-ACC want-2SG.S
'What do you want?'
- (13) Hányadik-at kér-*ed*?
which.number-ACC want-2SG.O
'Which one do you want?'
- (14) Melyik-et kér-*ed*?
which-ACC want-2SG.O
'Which one do you want?'

Strong determiner that triggers subjective

- (15) Eltitkol-*ok* minden találkozás-t
 keep.secret-1SG.S every meeting-ACC
 'I keep every meeting secret.'

Minden is a strong determiner:

- (16) *Van minden könyv.
 is every book
 'There is every book.'

Strong determiner that triggers subjective

Bartos (2001, 314): “there is absolutely no definiteness or specificity difference” between:

(17) Eléget-**em** a től-ed kapott minden level-et.
burn-1SG.O the from-2SG.P received every letter-ACC
'I burn every letter received from you.'

(18) Eléget-**ek** minden től-ed kapott level-et.
burn-1SG.S every from-2SG.P received letter-ACC
'I burn every letter received from you.'

Szabolcsi (1994, 210): “whereas the presence of the article is required in one of the examples and prohibited in the other, this makes no difference for interpretation”.

Exception to the exception: possessed *minden*

- (19) a. Ismer-**em** minden titk-od-at.
 know-1SG.O/know-1SG every secret-2SG.P-ACC
 'I know your every secret.'
- b. %Ismer-**ek** minden titk-od-at.
 know-1SG.S/know-1SG every secret-2SG.P-ACC
 'I know your every secret.'

(Bartos, 1999, 100)

Possessed NPs with *valaki* 'someone'

- (20) a. Lát-**ok**/***Lát-om** valaki-t
 see-1SG/see-1SG.DEF someone-ACC
 'I see someone.'
- b. Lát-**om** valaki-d-et
 see-1SG.DEF someone-2SG.P-ACC
 'I see someone of yours.'
- c. Lát-**ok** valaki-d-et
 see-1SG.DEF someone-2SG.P-ACC
 '[something less specific]'

(Bartos, 1999)

Possessed NPs with *egy* 'a/one'

Gerland & Ortman (2009):

- (21) Egy könyv-em-et olvas-om.
 a book-1SG.P-ACC read-1SG.O
 'I'm reading a book of mine.'

Bárányi & Szalontai (2015):

- (22) a. Mari lát-ja egy kutyá-m-at
 Mary see-3SG.O a dog-1SG.P-ACC
 'Mary sees a dog of mine.'
- b. %Mari lát-∅ egy kutyá-m-at
 Mary see-3SG.S a dog-1SG.P-ACC
 'Mary sees a dog of mine.'

Possessed NPs with *öt* 'five'

- (23) a. Lát-**ok** öt ember-t
 see-1SG.S five man-ACC
 'I see five men.'
- b. Lát-**om** öt ember-ed-et
 see-1SG.O five man-2SG.P-ACC
 'I see five of your men.'
- c. Lát-**ok** öt ember-ed-et
 see-1SG.O five man-2SG.P-ACC
 '["a different [non-specific] interpretation"]'

(Bartos, 2001)

Indefinite possessors

Objective conjugation when the possessor and the possessum are both indefinite (É. Kiss 2002: 173, ex. (50)):

(25) Csak *egy diák-nak két dolgozat-á-t talál-t-a*
 only one student-DAT two paper-3SG.P-ACC find-PST-3SG.O

jutalom-ra méltón-ak a zsűri.
 prize-to worthy-PL the jury.NOM

'The jury found only one student's two papers worthy of a prize.'

Bare possessed NPs

- (26) a. Látt-uk/*látt-unk a kutyá-d-at
 see-1PL.O/see-1PL.S the dog-2SG.P-ACC
 'We saw your dog.'
- b. *Látt-uk/%látt-unk kutyá-d-at
 see-1PL.O/see-1PL.S dog-2SG.P-ACC
 'We saw a dog of yours.'
 'We saw your dog [OK for some speakers]'

(Bartos, 1999, ex. (14), cf. also footnote 8)

Summary: Not exactly definiteness

Definite, yet trigger subjective:

- Non-reflexive local pronouns
- *minden* 'every'

Non-definite, yet trigger objective:

- Possessed NPs with *valaki* 'someone', *néhány* 'some', *öt* 'five'

Specific object / subjective conjugation

Specificity isn't it, either:

- (27) Minden nap egy görög énekes-t hallgatt-ak/*-ák.
 every day a Greek singer-ACC listened-3PL.S/-3PL.O
 Mária-nak hív-ják.
 Maria-DAT call-3PL.O
 'Every day, they listened to a Greek singer. Her name is Maria.'

(Coppock & Wechsler 2012, ex. (52))

DP-hood hypothesis

DP-hood hypothesis

The objective conjugation is used if and only if the object is a DP (or larger).

(Bartos 2001, building on Szabolcsi 1994, adopted in É. Kiss 2000 and É. Kiss 2002, 49,151–157)

Successes of the DP-hood hypothesis

Explains most of the data, under following assumptions:

- *minden* sits below DP.
- Nominative possessors sit just below D, but a DP layer is “invariably” projected above them (p. 318).
- A deleted definite article may or may not accompany *pro*-dropped possessors.
- Dative possessors sit in Spec,DP *if they form a constituent with the following nominal*. They can also escape.

CP complement clauses

- (28) János mond-t-a [hogy holnap érkez-ik]
 John.NOM say-PST-3SG.O that tomorrow arrive-3SG.S
 'John said that he is arriving tomorrow.'

CP complement clauses

- (30) János mond-t-a [hogy holnap érkez-ik]
 John.NOM say-PST-3SG.O that tomorrow arrive-3SG.S
 'John said that he is arriving tomorrow.'

Bartos (1999) assumes following Kenesei (1994) that CPs are linked to DPs, as in:

- (31) János az-t mond-t-a [hogy holnap érkez-ik]
 John.NOM it-ACC say-PST-3SG.O that tomorrow arrive-3SG.S
 'John said (it) that he is arriving tomorrow.'

Challenges for the DP-hood hypothesis

Coppock & Wechsler (2012):

- Some pronouns (\Rightarrow DPs) trigger subjective, including 1st/2nd person non-reflexive pronouns and most *wh* NPs.
- Complement clauses are CPs rather than DPs.
- Both *minden* and *valamennyi* sit below D, but *valamennyi* triggers objective, unlike *minden*.

(32) Eltitkol-**om** valamennyi találkozás-t
 keep.secret-1SG.O each meeting-ACC
 'I keep each meeting secret.'

Why complement clauses are not DPs

Inserting *azt* creates an island:

- (33) János holnap mond-t-a (*az-t) [hogy érkez-ik].
 John.NOM tomorrow say-PST-3SG.O it-ACC that arrive-3SG.S
 'It is tomorrow that John said it, that he is arriving.'

Kenesei (1994): *holnap* raises into ACC focus position. But:

- (34) Két ember-rel szeret-né-m [hogy Péter találko-z-on].
 two men-INST like-would-1SG.O that Peter meet-COND-3SG.S
 'I want Peter to meet with *two men*.'

(Coppock & Wechsler, 2012)

Lexical Familiarity Hypothesis

If the referential argument of a phrase is *lexically specified* as familiar, then the phrase triggers the objective conjugation.

(Coppock, 2013)

Lexical specification of [+DEF]

Principle of lexical definiteness

A lexical item is [+DEF] if it specifies that its referential argument is familiar.

Lexically-specified familiarity

A lexical item specifies that its referential argument is familiar if it requires either (i) that the referential argument is among the discourse referents in the common ground, or (ii) that the referential argument is connected to a discourse referent with such a requirement via a part-whole relation.

Lexical entries

az/the $\rightsquigarrow \lambda p . \lambda q . q(\mathbf{u}) \otimes [: \ggg [\mathbf{u} : \mathbf{u} = \Sigma_{u'} ([u' :] \otimes p(u'))]]$

minden/every $\rightsquigarrow \lambda p . \lambda q . [: ([\mathbf{u} :] \otimes p(\mathbf{u})) \Rightarrow q(\mathbf{u})]$

néhány/some $\rightsquigarrow \lambda p . \lambda q . ([\mathbf{u} :] \otimes p(\mathbf{u}) \otimes q(\mathbf{u}))$

valamennyi/each $\rightsquigarrow \lambda p . \lambda q . [: [\mathbf{u} : \mathbf{u} \in \mathbf{y}] \Rightarrow q(\mathbf{u})]$
 $\ggg [\mathbf{y} : \mathbf{y} = \Sigma_{y'} ([y' :] \otimes p(y'))]$

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familiarity

Lexical entries

az/the $\rightsquigarrow \lambda p . \lambda q . q(\mathbf{u}) \otimes [: \ggg [\mathbf{u} : \mathbf{u} = \Sigma_{u'} ([u' :] \otimes p(u'))]]$

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 $\ggg [\mathbf{y} : \mathbf{y} = \Sigma_{y'} ([y' :] \otimes p(y'))]$

partitive specificity

Lexical specification of $[-DEF]$

Principle of lexical indefiniteness

A lexical item is $[-DEF]$ if it lexically specifies its referential argument as new.

Lexically-specified novelty

A lexical item specifies its referential argument as new if it introduces the discourse referent into the common ground.

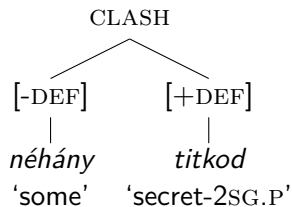
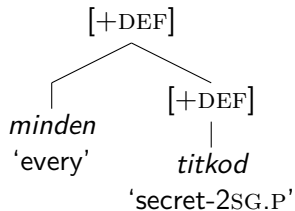
Lexical features

Determiners:

- *néhány* 'some', cardinal numerals: [-DEF]
- *valamennyi* 'each': [+DEF]
- *minden* 'every': no DEF feature specification

Possessives are [+DEF].

Feature interactions



Accounting for the person effect

- 1st and 2nd person non-reflexive pronouns are not *anaphoric* but rather *purely indexical* \Rightarrow not [+DEF]
- 3rd person pronouns and all reflexive and reciprocal pronouns are *anaphoric* \Rightarrow [+DEF]

Great, we're done!

Not so fast

Bárány (2013, 2015) lists a number of challenges for the lexical familiarity hypothesis.

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I will present the challenges along with my responses.

1: Fake indexicals

Bárány (2015):

(35) Csak te hisz-ed, hogy
 only you believe-2SG.O that

téged fog-**nak** megválaszt-ani.
 you.ACC will-3PL.S vote_for-INF

‘Only you believe that they will vote for you.’

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‘Only you believe that they will vote for you.’

Semantically the object is a bound anaphor (Kratzer, 2009).

Indeed. It always felt a bit too cute.

2: Possessives in the *mihi est* construction

- (38) Mari-nak nincs macská-ja.
 Mari-DAT NEG.COP cat-3SG.P
 'Mari doesn't have a cat.'

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 Mari-DAT NEG.COP cat-3SG.P
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No presupposition of existence here.

2: Possessives in the *mihi est* construction (Response)

Way out: **Local accommodation** (Heim, 1983; van der Sandt, 1992; Beaver & Zeevat, 2007; Elbourne, 2012).

Assumption: presuppositions are accommodated globally by default, and locally only on pain of inconsistency (Heim, 1983).

Aside: Why is this out in English?

(40) *There's your student waiting outside your office.

3: Subjective with possessed objects

- (41) %Látt-**unk** kutyá-d-at.
 see.PST-1PL.S dog-2SG.P-ACC
 'We saw a dog of yours.'
 'We saw your dog [OK for some speakers]'
- (42) %Péter-nek olvas-t-**unk** vers-é-t.
 Peter-DAT read-PST-1PL.S poem-P-ACC
 'We read poems by Peter'

3: Subjective with possessed objects

(44) %Látt-**unk** kutyá-d-at.
 see.PST-1PL.S dog-2SG.P-ACC
 'We saw a dog of yours.'
 'We saw your dog [OK for some speakers]'

(45) %Péter-nek olvas-t-**unk** vers-é-t.
 Peter-DAT read-PST-1PL.S poem-P-ACC
 'We read poems by Peter'

Attested example discussed by author János Arany (Bárány, 2013):

(46) Fi-á-t ismer-**ek**, de lány-á-t nem ismer-**ek**.
 son-3SG.P-ACC know-1SG.S but daughter-3SG.P-ACC not know-1SG.S
 'I know sons of his/hers, but no daughters.'

3: Subjective with possessed objects

(47) %Látt-**unk** kutyá-d-at.
 see.PST-1PL.S dog-2SG.P-ACC
 'We saw a dog of yours.'
 'We saw your dog [OK for some speakers]'

(48) %Péter-nek olvas-t-**unk** vers-é-t.
 Peter-DAT read-PST-1PL.S poem-P-ACC
 'We read poems by Peter'

Attested example discussed by author János Arany (Bárány, 2013):

(49) Fi-á-t ismer-**ek**, de lány-á-t nem ismer-**ek**.
 son-3SG.P-ACC know-1SG.S but daughter-3SG.P-ACC not know-1SG.S
 'I know sons of his/hers, but no daughters.'

No obvious source for [-DEF] here.

3: Subjective with bare possessed objects (Response)

Conflicting evidence from experimental findings of Bárányi & Szalontai (2015) (1-5 acceptability scale; * \approx 1; ? \approx 3):

(50) Context: Petőfi was a famous writer.

- a. *Mari olvas-**ott** (Petőfi-nek) vers-é-t.
 Mari read-PST.3SG.S Petőfi-DAT poem-3SG.P-ACC
- b. ?Mari olvas-t-**a** (Petőfi-nek) vers-é-t.
 Mari read-PST-3SG.O Petőfi-DAT poem-3SG.P-ACC

But to generate this, we might posit a [-DEF] null determiner.

Background: Nominative vs. dative possessors

Bárány (2013):

- (51) a. Mari két fi-a
 Mari.NOM two boy-3SG.P
 'Mari's two sons'
- b. Mari-nak két fi-a
 M-DAT two boy-3SG.P
 'two of Mari's sons'

Nominative possessors seem to enforce a specific reading.

4: Objective only with nominative possessor

Bárány (2013, ex. (23b)):

(52) Olvas-t-a Mari öt könyv-é-t
 read-PST-3SG.O Mary.NOM five book-3SG.P-ACC
 'He read every one of Mary's five books.'

(53) Ismer-i Péter egy-ik barát-já-t
 know-3SG.O Peter one-1K friend-3SG.P-ACC
 'S/he knows a certain friend of Peter's'

Subjective conjugation predicted possible here by Coppock (2013), assuming both *öt* and *egyik* are [-DEF].

4: Objective only with nominative possessor

Bárány (2013): No comparable nominative examples to:

(54) Az egri kávés-nak két lány-á-t ismer-ek.
the Eger.FROM coffee_seller-DAT two girl-3SG.P-ACC know-1SG.S
'I know two of the coffee seller's daughters.'

(55) Petőfi-nek három arckép-é-t ismer-ek.
Petőfi-DAT three portrait-3SG.P-ACC know-1SG.S
'I know three portraits of Petőfi.'

From a Hungarian folk song and discussed by author János Arany, respectively.

4: Objective only with nominative possessor (Response)

Claim: There is no source of [-DEF] in the examples with nominative possessors, so they are not counterexamples.

In particular, neither *öt* nor *egyik* contributes [-DEF].

(To be fair, they were never presented as counterexamples.)

Cardinal numerals

Rothstein (2017) argues that numerals can have either a cardinal or a quantifier interpretation, related by a type-shifting rule:

- $\lambda x . |x| = 2$ (unspecified for DEF)
- $\lambda Q \lambda P . \exists x [P(x) \wedge Q(x) \wedge |x| = 2]$ [-DEF]

Conjecture: Both are available in Hungarian, but the [-DEF] variant is incompatible with the semantic requirements of the nominative possessor.

egyik

- (56) ... és egy-ik ember-t próbál-t-ák újraéleszteni
and one-1K man-ACC try-PST-3PL.O resuscitate.INF
'... and they tried to resuscitate one guy.'
- (57) ... és egy-ik lány-t sem becsül-i meg.
and one-1K woman-ACC not appreciate-3SG.O PERF
'... and he doesn't appreciate on single woman.'

egyik

(58) ... és egy-ik ember-t próbál-t-ák újraéleszteni
 and one-1K man-ACC try-PST-3PL.O resuscitate.INF
 '... and they tried to resuscitate one guy.'

(59) ... és egy-ik lány-t sem becsül-i meg.
 and one-1K woman-ACC not appreciate-3SG.O PERF
 '... and he doesn't appreciate on single woman.'

I assume [+DEF] due to partitive specificity, like *mindegyik* 'each'.

Why no subjective with nominative possessors?

Assumption (Bartos, 1999): Nominative possessors are preceded by a silent *az*, which introduces not only [+DEF] but also its semantics.

Consequence: Nominative possessors cannot co-occur with [-DEF], so clashes never arise.

Bárány's (2013) hybrid account

- There is a feature [D] located in the DP.
- A noun phrase has [D] when either:
 - a determiner with matching semantics is spelled out in D
 - or DP has a sufficiently local possessor in its specifiers

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 - or DP has a sufficiently local possessor in its specifiers

Note that this alone does not explain the specificity of nominative possessors.

Contrasting prediction of Bárány's (2013) proposal

Both *minden* 'every' and *néhány* 'some' should be equally capable of occurring with the subjective conjugation in possessed NPs.

Neither determiner has semantics matching [D].

Web-attested examples (Bárány, 2013)

- (60) a. Minden problémá-já-t megold-unk, ...
every problem-3SG.P-ACC solve-1PL.S
'We solve all your[polite] problems...'
- b. Minden bánat-od-at elereszt-esz, ...
every problem-2SG.P-ACC let_go-2SG.S
'You let go of all your problems, ...'
- c. ... elfeled-te-t minden bánat-od-at.
forget-CAUS-3SG.S every sorrow-2SG.P-ACC
'... that it makes you forget all your sorrows.'

Web-attested examples (Bárány, 2013)

- (61) a. Minden problémá-já-t megold-**unk**, ...
 every problem-3SG.P-ACC solve-1PL.S
 'We solve all your[polite] problems...'
- b. Minden bánat-od-at elereszt-**esz**, ...
 every problem-2SG.P-ACC let_go-2SG.S
 'You let go of all your problems, ...'
- c. ... elfeled-te-**t** minden bánat-od-at.
 forget-CAUS-3SG.S every sorrow-2SG.P-ACC
 '... that it makes you forget all your sorrows.'

Footnote 11 from Bárány (2013):

An anonymous reviewer points out that “[t]he grammaticality of the examples [here] are rather dubious. It is quite unlikely that a native speaker of Hungarian would utter a sentence like this on purpose.”

A semantic account can be retained

Given certain assumptions:

- Local accommodation is possible when global accommodation yields inconsistency.
- Nominative possessors are accompanied by silent *az*.

... and certain revisions:

- The objective conjugation is specified for 3rd person.
- Certain dialects have a null [-DEF] D^0 , arising in non-nominative possessive constructions.
- Cardinal numbers have a reading that is not [-DEF].

... the lexical familiarity hypothesis can be maintained.

Advantages over hybrid account

In fact it has several small advantages:

- Accounts for CP objects with objective
- Predicts *minden/néhány* contrast
- Predicts squeamishness for clash configurations, rather than full acceptability for both variants

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In any case, we are certainly zeroing in!

Köszönöm szépen a figyelmet!

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