MTA POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME IN HUNGARY
Research plan

Functional structure in Noun Phrases

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1. Introduction

Generative grammar aims to model the human language faculty. It searches for universal principles of human language (Universal Grammar), and the parameters of cross-linguistic variation. This project focuses on the mental representation of noun phrases. The project will investigate the Hungarian noun phrase and will yield both descriptive-empirical and theoretical results in these areas. The results will give greater international visibility to Hungarian linguistics and will be useful for researchers doing cross-linguistic comparative work on noun phrases.

2. Key problems, objectives

The project aims to bridge two knowledge gaps.

1) The latest international research shows that the noun phrase has a more fine-grained functional structure than previously thought, but these results have not been systematically applied to the analysis of the Hungarian DP after the late 90's. Primary objective 1 is to integrate the latest research into the theory of the Hungarian nominal phrase, and publish the results in the form of a monograph in English.

2) While much work has been done on the Hungarian noun phrase, some empirical phenomena are still poorly researched, even on the descriptive level. The relevant areas are: i) the syntax of Hungarian classifiers, ii) the syntax of Hungarian demonstrative reinforcers, iii) the fact that unless they are attributivized, PPs cannot occur prenominally, iv) the fact that most possessors can be either unmarked or Dative marked, but certain possessors cannot be unmarked (data below). Understanding these phenomena will give us a more complete picture of the Hungarian nominal phrase. Primary objective 2 is to investigate these areas and publish the results in articles.

The scientific significance of the project:

i) it breaks new empirical ground in Hungarian descriptive and generative linguistics

ii) it contributes to our understanding of the mental representation of noun phrases and the relevant aspects of Universal Grammar

3. Key hypotheses and methods

3.1. Integrating international results into Hungarian linguistics

The monograph, to be written in English, will be a substantial revision of my PhD thesis. It will incorporate selected aspects of the research for the thesis, the results of my own research since the disseration, and previous work on Hungarian noun phrases by other researchers unavailable in English. This book will be the first monograph-length, non-lexicalist treatment of the Hungarian nominal phrase available in English. (Szabolcsi's 1992 monograph was written in Hungarian, so it is not avilable to an international audience, and Laczkó's 1995 book, while written in English, employs the lexicalist LFG framework.) The book is currently under contract with Springer.

3.2. Underinvestigated areas: Classifiers

Hungarian has about 20 shape and length based classifiers, each of which combines with a small set of common nouns.

(1) ötven szem mazsola/keksz/*golyó/*gyerek
fifty CL(small.spherical) raisin/biscut/bullet/child

(2) ötven szál virág/kolbász/*blúz/*ember/*fuvola
fifty CL(long.thin) flower/sausage/blouse/person/flute

(3) ötven fej káposzta/saláta/*labda/*dinnye
fifty CL(big.spherical) cabbage/lettuce/ball/melon

With just one, mostly empirically oriented article on the topic (Csirmaz and Dékány 2014), our knowledge of the syntax of Hungarian classifiers is close to nil. The project aims to do detailed empirical and theoretical investigations into this area. One of the research questions that the project will pursue is why it is the case that once the numeral is contextually very low, the classifiers *szem* and *szál* may suddenly combine with a broader range of nouns. *Szem*, for instance, is normally incompatible with *gyerek* 'child' (1), but if the numeral is low, the combination becomes possible (4). Similarly, *szál* normally cannot combine with *blúz* 'blouse' or *ember* 'person' (2), but it can do so when the numeral is low (5).

(4) egy szem gyerek
one CL(small.spherical) child
a single child

(5) a. egy szál blúz-ban
one CL(long.thin) blouse-in
in a single blouse (and nothing else)

b. három szál ember lézeng kint
three CL(long.thin) person saunter outside
three people saunter outside

Rothstein (2009) and Li (2013) argue that in the default case the classifier and the noun form a constituent to the exclusion of the numeral, but in certain specific cases the numeral and the classifier form a constituent to the exclusion of the noun. The project will pursue the hypothesis that this variation in constituent structure is behind the difference between the 'regular' CL+noun combinations in (1) and (2) and the 'unusual' combinations in (4) and (5): in (1) and (2) the structure is [numeral [CL noun]], while in (4) and (5) it is [[numeral CL] noun]. As in the latter structure the classifier doesn't select the noun, the ordinary selectional restrictions aren't in effect.

3.3. Underinvestigated areas: Demonstrative reinforcers

Hungarian has two demonstrative particles, *a* for distal and *e* for proximal objects (7), which are clearly different from demonstrative pronouns proper, and which have never been investigated before.

(6) Which is the best book?

(7) ez e / az a
this E / that A
this here / that there

(8) Where is the book?

(9) itt e / ott a
here E / there A
here / there

(10) How did you do that?

(11) így e / úgy a
this.way E / that.way A
this way / that way

The project will pursue the following research questions regarding *a*/*e*: what is their i) exact distribution, ii) "word class" classification, and iii) structural position? The project will explore the hypothesis that *a*/*e* are demonstrative reinforcers of the kind found in Germanic and Romance languages (12).

(12) a. that **there** boy
(substandard English)

b. cette femme-**ci**
this woman-here
this woman (French)

This hypothesis is supported by several considerations. Like demonstrative reinforcers, *e* and *a* are licensed by demonstrative pronouns, they are emphatic, and bear stress. Distal reinforcers are typically compatible with the proximal demonstrative pronoun, and *a*, too, can co-occur with a proximal demonstrative (13b). Demonstrative reinforcers are often formally similar to demonstrative pronouns; this is also the case with *e*/*a*.

(13) a. How did you fold the paper?
b. így a
like.this A
like this

(14) ez (*e) a (*e) könyv (a háborúról) e
this E the E book the war-about E
this book here about the war

As for their distribution, *e*/*a* are most similar to reinforcer constructions in German and French, with the demonstrative preceding and the reinforcer following the noun (cf. (12b) and (14)). The project's hypothesis is that *e*/*a* are PP adjuncts to the noun phrase.

3.4. Underinvestigated areas: Possessors and prenominal PPs

It is well known that certain types of nouns cannot be unmarked possessors; if they are to function as possessors, they must bear Dative case. These nouns are the indefinite pronouns *mi* 'what' and *ki* 'who', the distributive pronoun *ki-ki* 'every person', relative pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and nouns modified by demonstratives. Some examples are given below.

(15) mi-*(nek a) ház-a
whato-dat the house-poss
the house of what

(16) aki-*(nek a) ház-a
who.rel-dat the house-poss
whose house

(17) a. ennek a ház-a
this-dat the house-poss
the house of this

b. *ez ház-a
this house-poss
the house of this

Hungarian adnominal phrases can only be prenominal if they are 'attributivized' by *-i* (Kenesei 2014).

(18) a. a folyó fölött-*(i) híd
the river above-attr bridge
the bridge above the river

b. a híd a folyó fölött-(*i)
the bridge the river above-attr
the bridge above the river

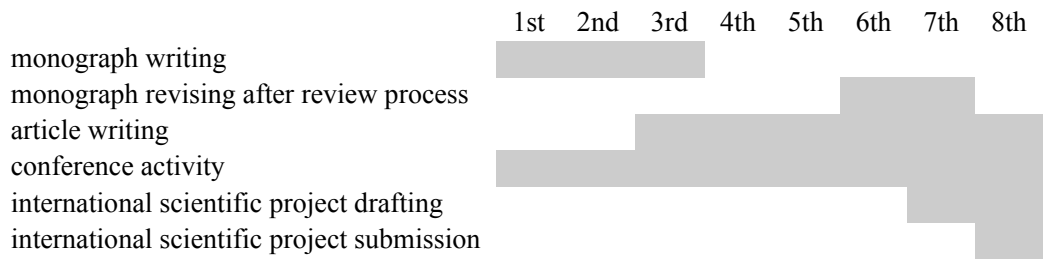
Unmarked possessors and adnominal PPs are both in the prenominal zone below D; this zone apparently restricts the types of constituents that it admits. The project will explore the hypothesis that the possessive data in (15)-(17) and the PP facts in (18) are related: both follow from a D-under-D restriction. Relative and demonstrative pronouns, nouns modified by demonstratives, the pronouns *mi* 'what', *ki* 'who', *ki-ki* 'every person', and PPs all project extended noun phrases at least as big as DP, and so in the zone below the modified noun's D node they create the offending D-under-D configuration. As a repair strategy, adnominal PPs are left in the zone under D but they undergo a category change via *-i* attributivization, while the possessive pronouns in question remain "big nominals" but make use of the Dative possessor position above the modified noun's D node. I will explore the hypothesis that the D-under-D restriction follows from a bigger, universal principle that disallows self-embedding recusion within the same phase.

4. Expected results, dissemination

Deliverables of the project:

I) A monograph already contracted with Springer's *Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* series (working title: *Nominal agreement and concord in the Hungarian functional sequence*).

II) At least three published articles in English, suitable for publication in international peer-reviewed journals with an impact factor. The articles will focus on the new empirical areas investigated in the project: case restriction on possessors, classifiers, and demonstrative concord. All publications will be openly accessible via the REAL repository of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and LingBuzz, the field's largest OA repository.

III) At least three conference presentations per year (at conferences with free topics or workshops specializing on noun phrases), at least two of which are international conferences.

5. Project timetable in quarter years