

Object agreement and locality in Hungarian: infinitival complement clauses, second person objects and accusative adjuncts

Krisztina Szécsényi and Tibor Szécsényi
Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest and University of Szeged

In Hungarian a finite verb can show object agreement with a DP that is not an argument of its own. In our talk we consider different patterns of this kind hoping to gain insight into some aspects of object agreement that simple transitive constructions cannot reveal. In our paper we argue for a cyclic approach to object agreement in Hungarian. Support for our claim comes from multiple infinitival constructions. Special attention is paid to the differences between the agreement patterns of second person and third person objects and sentences containing accusative and infinitival adjuncts.

It is well known that a large class of finite verbs can agree with the definiteness features of the object of its infinitival complement in Hungarian. Bartos (1999) and É. Kiss (2002) propose a long distance agreement analysis, den Dikken (2004) accounts for the data assuming clause union.

Agreement patterns containing multiply embedded infinitival clauses show that a finite matrix verb can agree with the definiteness of the object of its infinitival complement even without the clauses being adjacent (1).

- (1) Péter *fog/fogja akarni nézni a filmet.
Peter will.INDEF/will.DEF to.want to.watch the film.ACC
'Peter will want to watch the film.'

However, whether definiteness agreement actually takes place or not also depends on the properties of the intervening verbs. If one of the verbs in the sentence is non-agreeing, such as *fél* 'is afraid to' in (2), it blocks definiteness agreement. This suggests that agreement proceeds in a cyclic manner from clause to clause.

- (2) Péter fog/*fogja félni nézni egy/a filmet.
Peter will.INDEF/will.DEF to.be.afraid to.watch a/the film.ACC
'Peter will be afraid to watch a film.'

Interestingly enough, the class of verbs that blocks object agreement is not the same in third person definiteness agreement and the agreement patterns involving the special agreement marker *-lak/lek* expressing first person singular subject and second person object agreement. Three groups of verbs can be identified when they take infinitival complements: (i) verbs that always agree. It includes Kenesei's (2001) auxiliaries and other verbs such as *elkezd* 'begin' or *akar* 'want'; (ii) verbs that only agree with the *-lak/lek* morpheme, discussed in some detail in den Dikken (2004); (iii) verbs that never agree: *próbálkozik* 'try' and *látszik* 'seem'. The fourth logical option is never attested. There is also substantial native speaker variation concerning group (ii) with some speakers accepting definiteness agreement as well.

We account for these data assuming the inverse agreement constraint of É. Kiss (2013) for Hungarian, the cyclic agree proposal of Bányai (2015), and the claim made in de Cuba and Ürögdi (2010) that CPs can also have referentiality features together with Bányai (2015) arguing that person grammaticalizes referentiality. The Hungarian data support such an approach insofar as clauses also participate in agreement: finite clauses show definite agreement, non-finite clauses indefinite as a default.

We argue that infinitives agree with their objects, and that the infinitival C-head has either no person feature or the person feature of the object. The motivation for movement to C is that the person features of the object are available, but the person features of the subject are not, leading to the attested Cyclic Agree pattern. The finite verb selecting the infinitive agrees with the person/referentiality feature on the C head of the infinitive similarly to the process in Bányai (2015). The difference is in the category of the object: CP instead of DP. The different patterns follow from the fact that not every verb taking an infinitival complement can be used transitively, in group (ii) the infinitive is what we could call an oblique infinitive: it is not an object argument of the selecting verb, but is still assigned a

theta role. The lack of definiteness agreement then follows from the lack of the light verb that can check definiteness in the finite clause. To account for the mixed pattern we propose an obligatory [+V] feature for the *-lak/lek* morpheme similarly to the indefinite first person singular ending *-k* actually a part of the morpheme (with *-l* being an object clitic following den Dikken 2004), which blends it into the indefinite paradigm.

Turning to adjunct DPs showing object agreement discussed in Csirmaz (2008), we, unsurprisingly, find that agreement is possible only if the verb has no selected object of its own ((3), (4)).

- (3) a. Péter fut/*futja egy kör-t.
 Peter run.INDEF/run.DEF a circle-ACC
 ‘Peter runs a circle.’
- b. Péter az utolsó kör-t futja/*fut.
 Peter the last circle-ACC run.DEF/run.INDEF
 ‘Peter runs the last circle.’
- (4) Péter egy órá-t sétál-tat-ja/*sétál-tat a lovat.
 Peter one hour-ACC walk-CAUS-3SG.DEF/walk-CAUS.3SG.INDEF the horse-ACC
 ‘Peter walks the horse for an hour.’

Finally, the weakest types of agreement relationship: while the finite verb can agree with the definiteness feature of an accusative adjunct of its infinitival complement, when the infinitive itself is the adjunct, such agreement does not take place ((5), (6)). It suggests that definiteness agreement works slightly differently for DPs and infinitives: while the [+definite] feature of a DP is always checked by the infinitive, including the case when it is an adjunct, adjunct infinitives do not participate in agreement, which can be derived from the different structural position of the infinitival clauses in question.

- (5) Péter akarja/*akar futni az utolsó kör-t.
 Peter want.DEF/want.INDEF to.run the last circle-ACC
 ‘Peter wants to run the last circle.’
- (6) Péter egész este futott/*futotta ki-szellőztet-ni a fejét
 Peter whole evening ran.INDEF/ran.DEF out-air-INF the head-ACC
 ‘Peter ran the whole evening to let off steam.’

References

- Bárány, András 2015. *Differential object marking in Hungarian and the morphosyntax of case and agreement*. PhD Dissertation. University of Cambridge. • Bartos, Huba 1999. *Morfoszintaxis és interpretáció: A magyar inflexió jelenségek szintaktikai háttere* [Morphosyntax and Interpretation: The Syntactic Background of Hungarian Inflectional Phenomena]. PhD Dissertation. Budapest: ELTE. • Csirmaz, Anikó 2008. Accusative case and aspect. In Katalin É. Kiss (ed.) *Event Structures and the Left Periphery*. Dordrecht: Springer. 159–200 • de Cuba, Carlos and Barbara Ürögdi 2010. Clearing up the ‘facts’ on complementation. *University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics* 16 41–50 • Den Dikken, Marcel. 2004. Agreement and ‘clause union’. In Katalin É. Kiss and Henk van Riemsdijk (eds.) *Verb Clusters. A Study of Hungarian, German and Dutch*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 445–498. • É. Kiss, Katalin 2002. *The Syntax of Hungarian*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. • É. Kiss, Katalin 2013. The inverse agreement constraint in Uralic languages. *Finno-Ugric Languages and Linguistics* 2.3, 2–21. • Kenesei, István 2001. Criteria for auxiliaries in Hungarian. In István Kenesei (ed.) *Argument structure in Hungarian*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó. 73–106.