

Budapestet készülöm meglátogatni: Issues in Hungarian long-distance agreement

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While the Hungarian subjective (SBJ) and objective (OBJ) conjugations are well studied in simple transitive clauses, long-distance agreement (LDA) between the matrix verb and the object of an embedded infinitive, as shown in (1), has gained less attention (but see den Dikken 2004, É. Kiss 1989, Kálmán C. et al. 1989, Szécsényi & Szécsényi 2017).

- (1) a. *Anna készül olvas-ni egy / a könyv-et.*
Anna prepare.3SG.SBJ read-INF the book-ACC
'Anna is preparing to read a / the book.'
- b. *Anna *akar / akar-ja olvas-ni a könyv-et.*
Anna want.3SG.SBJ want.3SG.OBJ read-INF the book-ACC
'Anna wants to read the book.'
- c. *Anna *akar-ja / akar olvas-ni egy könyv-et / fut-ni.*
Anna want-3SG.OBJ want.3SG.SBJ read-INF a book run-INF
'Anna wants to read a book.', 'Anna wants to run.' (Szécsényi & Szécsényi 2017: 4)

In (1a), the matrix verb *készül* 'prepare' invariably appears in the SBJ-conjugation. In contrast, in (1b,c), the matrix verb *akar* 'want', appears in either the SBJ- or the OBJ-conjugation, depending on the definiteness of its object *könyv-et* 'book-ACC'. This is LDA: the object is selected by the infinitive, not the matrix verb, yet the matrix verb agrees with it. (1c) shows that if the infinitive is intransitive, the matrix verb shows the SBJ-conjugation. Based on such data, it is sometimes assumed that there are "non-agreeing" verbs like *készül* and "agreeing" verbs like *akar*. This is not surprising, since *készül* is intransitive and does not take ACC objects. What is surprising is that non-agreeing verbs sometimes *do* show agreement, albeit with a 2nd person, rather than a 3rd person object.

- (2) a. *Készül-t-elek / Jö-tt-elek meglátogat-ni (téged).*
prepare-PST-1SG>2SG come-PST-1SG>2 visit-INF you.ACC
'I prepared/came to visit you.' (Szécsényi 2017: 20, den Dikken 2004: 451)
- b. **Készül-öm megtanul-ni a vers-et.*
prepare-1SG.OBJ learn-INF the poem-ACC
intended: 'I prepare to learn the poem.' (Szécsényi 2017: 20)

Den Dikken (2004), Szécsényi (2017) suggest that some verbs, like *készül*, can take *-lak-*agreement but not usual "definiteness agreement", while other verbs, like *akar*, can take both.

1 Claim In this talk, I suggest that the difference in (2) is not as clear-cut as usually thought and that there is no need for a distinct analysis of *-lak/-lek* (or second person agreement) and "regular" third person agreement in Hungarian. Examples like (2b) are in fact attested. The fact that they are rarer and arguably less felicitous than (1b,c) can be explained by the verbs' intransitivity. Two classes that are distinct for LDA are therefore (i) transitive verbs and auxiliaries like *akar* and *fog* 'will' and (ii) intransitive verbs like *készül* or *próbálkozik* 'attempt'.

2 Data This claim is supported by attested data, some shown in the following examples.¹

- (3) a. *A Windows XP-t készül-öm levált-ani linux-ra ...*
the Windows XP-ACC prepare-1SG.OBJ change-INF linux-SUBL
'I am planning to switch from Windows XP to Linux.' <https://goo.gl/B0RPWN>

¹ Cf. also *?igyekez-t-ék a többiek-et meggyőz-ni* 'they strove.OBJ to convince the others', *vágy-juk viszontlát-ni hazánkat* 'we long.OBJ to see our home again' (Kálmán C. et al. 1989: 61).

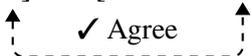
- b. ... *van egy nagyon szimpatikus kölyök, most ő-t készül-öm elhoz-ni.*
 is a very nice cub now 3SG-ACC prepare-1SG.OBJ pick up-INF
 ‘... there’s a very nice cub, I’m preparing to pick it up now.’ <https://goo.gl/ytQ6pI>

3 Analysis The examples in (3) have objects in the pre-verbal matrix focus position (resembling single-clause transitive constructions), but OBJ-agreement is also possible when the object is not adjacent to the matrix verb. I propose that the reduced availability of LDA with intransitive verbs relative to transitive verbs is due to competing grammatical pressures. On the one hand, LDA with *fog*, *akar* etc. is fully productive and widely attested, on the other hand, *készül*, *próbálkozik*, etc. never take ACC objects in simple clauses. For LDA, there are four logical possibilities of the distribution of SBJ/OBJ-agreement and (in)definiteness of the embedded object:

- (4) a. [V-SBJ ... [V-INF DP-DEF]] = (1a) c. [V-SBJ ... [V-INF DP-INDEF]] = (2c)
 b. [V-OBJ ... [V-INF DP-DEF]] = (1b) d. [V-OBJ ... [V-INF DP-INDEF]] ✗

For LDA with *akar*, *fog*, etc., (4b,c) are attested: the matrix verb tracks the definiteness of the embedded object and agrees with it, be it 3rd or 2nd person. For LDA with *készül*, etc., (4a) is common, but (4b) is also possible, cf. (3). The reason for this variation is **competition between two valid grammatical generalisations**: (i) *készül*, etc. do not take ACC objects and thus do not agree vs. (ii) analogy with verbs like *fog*, *akar*, i.e. (4b). In other words, what rules out (2b) for many speakers is preference of (i) over (ii), i.e. avoiding object agreement with intransitive verbs, rather than a difference between *-lak* and 3rd person object agreement.

To implement this proposal, we can assume that some speakers allow *készül* etc. to have a ϕ -probe that can enter an Agree relation with an ACC object, in analogy with *akar*. With INDEF embedded objects, this probe will attempt to agree but since it does not find a DEF ACC object, Agree will fail (Preminger 2014). If there is an embedded DEF ACC-DP, however, the matrix verb’s ϕ -probe will agree with that object in the same way the ϕ -probe of *akar*, etc. agrees.

- (5) ϕ -probe on v , embedded DP is DEF: (6) ϕ -probe on v , embedded DP is INDEF:
 $[_{VP} v[\phi: 3]-OBJ [V-INF DP-DEF]]$ $[_{VP} v[\phi: _]-SBJ [V-INF DP-INDEF]]$
 

- (7) No ϕ -probe on v , no Agree relation:
 $[_{VP} v-SBJ [V-INF DP-DEF/INDEF]]$

This provides a systematic account of why both (4a,b) are possible with a verb like *készül* but not with *akar*, which allows only (4b,c). Speakers who do not allow a ϕ -probe on *készül* only have option (7): they never allow agreement, even with DEF objects, cf. (4a). Speakers who do allow a probe on *készül* derive (4b,c) using (5) and (6), respectively, for both *készül* and *akar*. Since the latter always has a probe, it does not allow (7). Finally, it is impossible to derive (4d).

The seeming preference of, say, *készüllek* over *készülöm*, need not be analysed by positing a categorical difference between *-lak* and 3rd person object agreement, as both types are attested, cf. (3) and fn. 1. The person of the subject, morphophonology and frequency can play a role.

4 Conclusion Some speakers allow intransitive verbs like *készül*, *igyekszik*, etc. to have a ϕ -probe. Attested data of LDA-agreement with these verbs provide evidence for this claim. Analogy with verbs like *akar* allows speakers to treat intransitives like *készül* as transitive in LDA.

References den Dikken, M. 2004. Agreement and ‘clause union’. In *Verb clusters*. K.É. Kiss & H van Riemsdijk (eds.). John Benjamins. 445–498. É. Kiss, K. 1989. Egy főnévi igenes szerkezetéről. *ANyT* 17. 153–169. Kálmán C., G et al. 1989. A magyar segédigék rendszere. *ANyT* 17. 49–103. Preminger, O. 2014. *Agreement and its failures*. MIT Press. Szécsényi, K. 2017. *Object agreement and locality*. Talk at RIL-HAS, Budapest. Szécsényi, K & T Szécsényi. 2017. *Definiteness Agreement in Hungarian Multiple Infinitival Constructions*. Ms., ELTE/RIL-HAS, Budapest and University of Szeged, Szeged.