

Variation in the size of nominal ellipsis in Hungarian: evidence from nouns and pronouns

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We argue, based on novel data, that the possessor head (Poss) can license ellipsis of its complement in Hungarian. That is, contra existing claims in the literature, possessor morphology can survive nominal ellipsis and be stranded on the remnant. Adopting Saab and Lipták's (2016) account of ellipsis licensing, we propose that there is variation in the size of the ellipsis site in Hungarian: nominal ellipsis is licensed by either Num or Poss. We further propose that nominal ellipsis licensed by Poss can capture a previously unanalyzed variation in the Hungarian possessive pronoun paradigm. Specifically, the two variants of possessive pronouns correspond to two different structures: one is the anaphoric possessive (see Dékány 2015), while the other exists only as a consequence of nominal ellipsis, which, as we show, is a productive possibility.

1. Hungarian nominal morphemes. The basic order of nominal morphemes in Hungarian is illustrated in (1)–(2). Depending on the (morpho)phonological environment, the possessedness suffix appears in the forms *-ja*, *-je*, *-a* and *-e*. When the head noun (i.e. the possessum) is plural, the plural marker (*-i*) appears between the possessedness suffix and the agreement suffix, which in turn corresponds to the person and number of the possessor (2-a). But when the head noun is singular, the possessedness and the agreement suffixes are fused (2-b). Note that the plural marker of possessed nouns (*-i*) is different from the regular plural marker (*-k*).

(1) order of nominal morphemes: noun – possessedness suffix – number – agreement – case

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| <p>(2) a. <i>játék-a-i-m-at</i>
toy-POSS-PL-1SG-ACC
'my toys (acc)'</p> | <p>b. <i>játék-om-at</i>
toy-POSS.1SG-ACC
'my toy (acc)'</p> |
|---|--|

2. Hungarian nominal ellipsis. Saab and Lipták (2016) argue that nominal ellipsis in Hungarian targets the nP, hence the name nP-Ellipsis (or nPE). Their proposal is that ellipsis can apply sufficiently early on the PF branch to bleed other processes, such as lowering of affixes to their hosts. When this happens, the stranded affixes are reattached to a non-canonical host: affixes that otherwise show up on the noun, e.g. *-okat* (PL-ACC) in (3), appear on the rightmost remnant (i.e. the adjective in this case), as shown in (4):

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|--|---|
| <p>(3) a. <i>a piros játék-ok-at</i>
the red toy-PL-ACC
'the red toys (acc)'</p> <p>b. *<i>a piros-ak-at játék(-ok-at)</i>
the red-PL-ACC toy-PL-ACC</p> | <p>(4) a. <i>piros-ak-at</i> ∅ (<i>nPE</i>)
the red-PL-ACC
'the red ones (acc)'</p> |
|--|---|

Under their analysis, nPE is licensed only by Num. However, we show that, contra Saab and Lipták (2016) (and Kenesei et al. 1998), possessor morphology can also be stranded under nPE. Judgements reported in existing literature were only based on a remnant presented in isolation, e.g. *a ti érdekes-e-i-tek* 'your interesting ones' (fn. 13 in Saab and Lipták). Testing sentences where nPE is licensed by an appropriate antecedent, we find that the relevant examples (5) are in fact grammatical—this judgement is shared by 8 native speaker informants. That is, possessor morphology can show up on the adjectival remnant after nPE; it is not only Num (=“number” in (1)), but also Poss (=“possessedness” in (1)) that licenses ellipsis of its complement.

- (5) a. Mari kölcsönkérte a te piros játék-od-at és az én kék-em-et.
 Mary borrowed a you red toy-POSS.2SG-ACC and the I blue-POSS.1SG-ACC
 ‘Mary borrowed your red toy and my blue (toy).’
- b. Mari kölcsönkérte a te piros játék-a-i-d-at és az én kék-e-i-m-et.
 Mary borrowed a you red toy-POSS-PL-2SG-ACC and the I blue-POSS-PL-1SG-ACC
 ‘Mary borrowed your red toys and my blue (toys).’

Parallel examples where the remnant has a 2nd or 3rd person possessor are also grammatical: ...*a te kék-ed-et/kék-e-i-d-et*, ‘your blue (toy/s)’; ...*az ő kék-jé-t/kék-je-i-t*, ‘his blue (toy/s)’.

3. Possessive pronouns. Interestingly, when the only remnant is the possessor noun, the so-called ‘anaphoric possessive’ *-é* is used in place of regular possessive morphology (see i.a. Dékány 2015 and references therein). In anaphoric possessives, the possessedness suffix *-ja*, *-je*, *-a* and *-e* must be absent, i.e. *-é* is in complementary distribution with the possessedness suffix—compare (6-a) and (6-b) with (6-c):

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|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| (6) a. a fiú-é-(*ja) | b. a fiú-{{é/*ja}} | c. a fiú játék-a |
| the boy-é-(*POSS) | the boy-{{é/*POSS}} | the boy toy-POSS |
| ‘the boy’s one’ | ‘the boy’s one’ | ‘the boy’s toy’ |

The same anaphoric possessive is found in possessive pronouns: *miénk* (ours), *tiétek* (yours), etc. But what has not been previously analyzed is the systematic alternation of these forms with the forms containing *-e* rather than *-é*. This occurs in the 1st/2nd person, e.g. *miénk* vs. *mienk* (ours), etc., as shown in (7).

(7) Hungarian nominative pronouns: *én, te, ő, mi, ti, ők*.

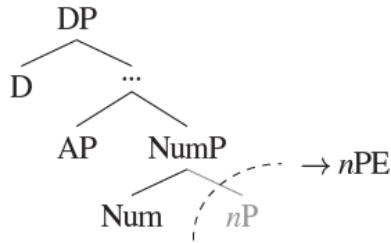
Hungarian possessives pronouns:

	sg possession	pl possession		sg possession	pl possession
1sg	Eny-é-m/%eny-i-m	Eny-é-m-ek/%eny-i-m-ek		1pl mi-é-nk/mi-e-nk	mi-é-i-nk/mi-e-i-nk
2sg	ti-é-d/ti-e-d	ti-é-i-d/ti-e-i-d		2pl ti-é-tek/ti-e-tek	ti-é-i-tek/ti-e-i-tek
3sg	öv-é	öv-é-i		3pl öv-é-k	öv-é-i-k

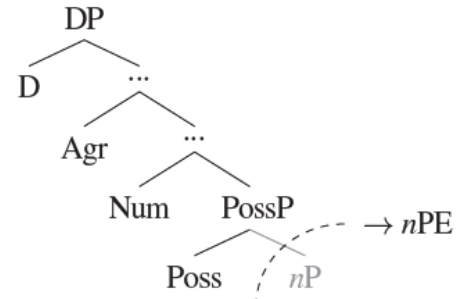
Dékány (2011) claimed that the *-é/-e* alternation is phonological with no syntactic or semantic import. However, given the acceptability of (5), the alternation in (7) can now be understood as a syntactic one, not merely an allomorphic one. Specifically, we argue that the *-e* versions of the pronouns exist as a consequence of nPE, licensed by the Poss head. In other words, the *-e* pronouns can be derived by adding to the nominative pronoun (e.g. *mi* ‘we’) the suffixes that would ordinarily surface on the noun (*-enk*); see Murphy (2018) for a similar account of pronominal inflection in German.

4. Analysis. On Saab and Lipták’s account of nPE in Hungarian, Num bears the [E] feature, which triggers ellipsis of its complement (8-a). Likewise, we propose that in the cases discussed in our paper (see (5) and the *-e* versions in (7)), Poss is the head bearing [E] (8-b). That is, both (8-a) and (8-b) are possible nPE structures.

(8) a. *n*PE licensed by Num (= ex. 4):



b. *n*PE licensed by Poss (= ex. 5, 7):



A puzzling property of *n*PE licensed by Poss (8-b) is that while it is allowed with all persons when the remnant is e.g. an adjective (as in (5)), it is only allowed with 1st/2nd persons when the only remnant is the possessor noun/pronoun (c.f. invariant *övé*). On Saab & Lipták's account, stranded affixes attach to their host via the process of leaning; our data points to a restriction on leaning, whereby in Poss-licensed *n*PE, remnant morphology can only attach to possessors that are 1st/2nd person pronouns. Note that 3rd person possessive pronouns in Hungarian are also exceptional in other respects, e.g. they exhibit the so-called anti-agreement pattern (É. Kiss 2002). We leave the exploration of the potential connections among these domains to the presentation.

5. Conclusion. In this paper we show that, contra previous claims in the literature, there are two possible sizes for the ellipsis site in Hungarian nominal ellipsis. We propose that the Poss head, as well as the Num head, can license *n*P-ellipsis of its complement. Our proposal also makes it possible to offer a novel analysis of the systematic variation in the possessive pronoun paradigm.

6. Selected references. Dékány. 2011. A profile of the Hungarian DP. PhD diss. | Dékány. 2015. The syntax of anaphoric possessives in Hungarian. NLLT. | Saab & Lipták. 2016. Movement and deletion after syntax: Licensing by inflection reconsidered. *Studia Linguistica*.