

An Impoverishment Account of Hungarian Possessive Morphology

This paper explores the morphosyntactic phenomena of possessive agreement in Hungarian, in which the possessum agrees in person and number with the possessor. Table 1 lists the agreement suffixes seen on possessums. Examples in 1a and 1b show that, when inside the DP (to the right of a determiner), a possessor bares nominative case, while the possessor appears as dative when outside or in the periphery of the DP. Sentences in 1e and 1f show how third person plural morphology participates in agreement somewhat inconsistently, with the possessor's plurality only appearing once. In 1e, the pronominal possessor appears as the 3SG *ő* while the possessive morphology on the possessum, *-juk* corresponds to a 3PL possessor. For a lexical possessor, as in 1f, the plurality of the possessor remains, though the possessum displays the possessive *-ja-* morpheme otherwise used for 3SG possessors. Working in a Minimalist / Distributed Morphology framework (Chomsky 1999, Halle & Marantz 1993), this paper argues for a unified structure for all Hungarian possessive DPs. In doing so, it suggests that the usual environment in which the DM operation Impoverishment applies be expanded.

The paper builds on the many insights of Szabolcsi (1994) and den Dikken (1999), which both attempted a purely syntactic accounting of the facts seen above. Though Szabolcsi identifies and discusses this aspect of the possessed DP, her analysis ultimately makes no strong claims about origin of the variable case-marking. den Dikken explains the case realizations through null allomorphy on a dative PP combined with predicate inversion and the third person agreement effects on restrictions on agreement and movement within the possessive DP. The current account uses a simpler, consistent model, positing identical syntax for all possessive DPs and using Impoverishment to explain both case variation and third person agreement facts. Figure 1a demonstrates the proposed structure for the possessive DP. The Poss head has unvalued person and number features and probes down, finding them and agreeing with the possessor generated as a sister to *n*, moving it up to the specifier of PossP and assigning it dative case. In this manner, DP-internal agreement is identical to subject agreement, involving case assignment, agreement, and movement.

The possessor may remain in place or move to the periphery of the DP or beyond. If it remains in place, it is subject to the Impoverishment rule 2a, which removes the +DAT feature from any possessor. This simple impoverishment rule accounts for the lack of dative case in DP-internal possessors. Additionally, similar impoverishment rules can account for the third person agreement facts. As seen in 1e and 1f, third person plural pronominal possessors trigger plural agreement but do not show plural morphology themselves, while the situation is reversed for lexical possessors. Assuming that pronouns and lexical items differ in their structure and that pronouns are simply NumPs, an additional pair of impoverishment rules may apply which eliminate plural features in certain conditions. These operations will, in the first instance, remove plural features from a pronoun, and, in the second instance, remove plural features from the agreeing Poss head. Plural features remain on the lexical possessor, as they are within a full DP and not adjacent to a PossP. Figure 1c shows trees, post-Impoverishment, for a pronominal possessor.

From here, the possessive DP may undergo straightforward vocabulary insertion and linearization. These steps are outlined in 3h for a lexical possessor. In this way, the facts of the Hungarian possessive DP can be understood with a simple, consistent structure and a few simple impoverishment rules. This approach also extends the potential use of Impoverishment to analyze morphological behavior of larger syntactic units. Impoverishment may target features that have not already been spelled-out in an environment limited not just by the head but by features active in the current cycle.

References

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Person	Singular Possessum		Plural Possessum	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1	-om	-unk	-ja-i-m	-ja-i-nk
2	-od	-otok	-ja-i-t	-ja-i-d
3	-ja	-juk	-ja-i	-ja-i

Table 1: Head-Marking Suffixes for Possession

- (1) a. az én kalap-om
the 1SG.NOM hat-POSS.1SG
my hat
- b. a te kalap-ja-i-d
the 2SG.NOM hat-POSS-PL-2SG
your hats
- c. (a) Mari kalap-ja.
the Mary.NOM hat-POSS.3SG
Mary's hat
- d. Mari-nak a kalap-ja-i.
Mary-DAT the hat-POSS.3SG-PL
Mary's hats
- e. az ő(*k) kalap-juk.
the 3SG.(PL) hat-POSS.3PL
their hat
- f. a fiúk kalap-ja-i-(*k)
the boy-PL hat-POSS.3SG-PL-(*3PL)
the boys' hats

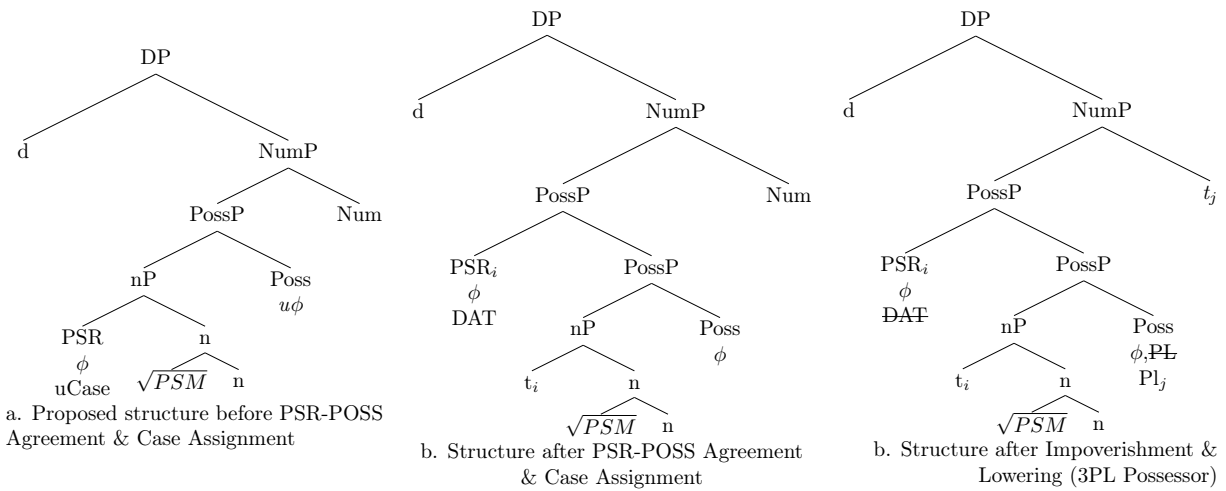


Figure 1: Syntactic structures for Hungarian possessive DP

- (2) a. +DAT $\rightarrow \emptyset / _$ PossP
b. +PL, +3 $\rightarrow \emptyset / _$ PossP
c. +PL, +3 $\rightarrow \emptyset / \overline{\text{DP}} _$
- (3) a. *Morphological Structure*: D (-Auth,-Part,+PL, DAT) N (Poss -Auth,-Part,+PL) +PL
b. *Lowering*: D (-Auth,-Part,+PL, DAT) N (Poss +PL -Auth,-Part, +PL)
c. *Impoverishment*: D (-Auth,-Part,+PL, $\overline{\text{DAT}}$) N (Poss +PL -Auth,-Part, + $\overline{\text{PL}}$)
d. *Vocabulary Insertion & Fission*: az fiúk kalap (-ja- -i- -Auth, -Part, +PL)
e. *Vocabulary Insertion & Fission*: az fiúk kalap (-ja- -i- -Auth, -Part, -k)
f. *Vocabulary Insertion & Fission*: az fiúk kalap (-ja- -i- \emptyset -k)
g. *Linearization*: az * fiúk kalap*-ja-*i-** \emptyset *-k
h. *az fiúk kalapjaik*