

# Agreement with possessed direct objects in Hungarian

## An experimental approach

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# Overview

Intro: Object agreement and possessed NPs

The data

Surveys

Results

# Intro: Object agreement and possessed NPs

# Object agreement in Hungarian

- (1) a. *Mari lát egy kutyá-t.*  
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'Mari sees a dog.'

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- ▶ Standard Hungarian: all possessed DOs agree



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- ▶ Possessed direct objects are an exception
- ▶ They can be indefinite yet require agreement
- ▶ Standard Hungarian: all possessed DOs agree
- ▶ But: dialectal variation?

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- ▶ Speakers treat all possessed DOs alike: **syntactic** trigger?

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‘Mari sees a dog.’

b. *Mari lát-ja/ %lát egy kutyá-m-at.*

M. see-3SG.OBJ see.3SG the dog-1SG.POSS-ACC

‘Mari sees a dog of mine.’



# Types of possessed NPs

- (3) a. *Mari*        (\*a) / *egy kutyá-ja*        Nominative possessor  
Mari.NOM (the) a    dog-3SG.POSS  
‘Mari’s dog’, ‘Mari’s one dog’

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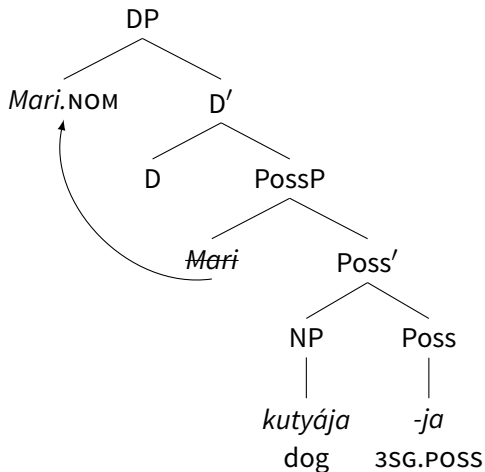
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- c. *az ő            kutyá-ja*        Pronominal possessor  
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       ‘her/his dog’

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- (3) a. *Mari* (\*a) / *egy kutyá-ja* Nominative possessor  
 Mari.NOM (the) a dog-3SG.POSS  
 ‘Mari’s dog’, ‘Mari’s one dog’
- b. *Mari-nak a / egy kutyá-ja* Dative possessor  
 Mari-DAT the a dog-3SG.POSS  
 ‘Mari’s dog’, ‘a dog of Mari’s’
- c. *az ő kutyá-ja* Pronominal possessor  
 the s/he.NOM dog-3SG.POSS  
 ‘her/his dog’
- Distribution suggests different heights in the NP (Bartos 1999; den Dikken 1999; Dékány 2015)

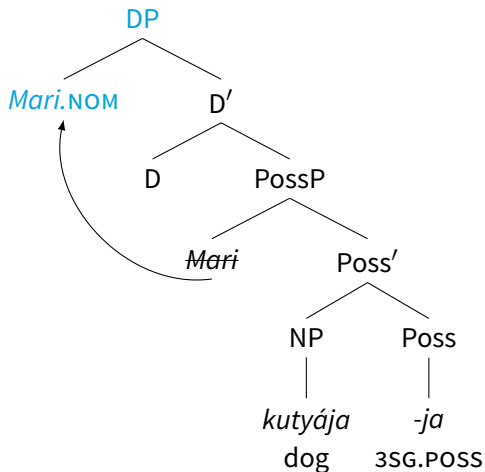
# Structures: NOM possessor

(4)

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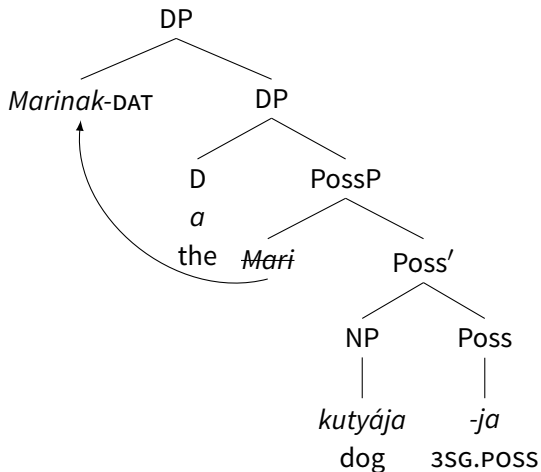
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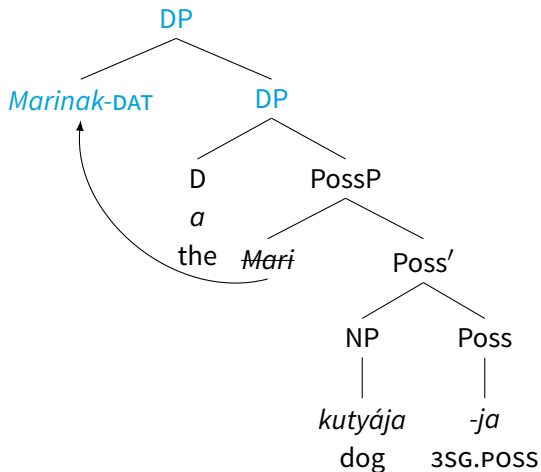
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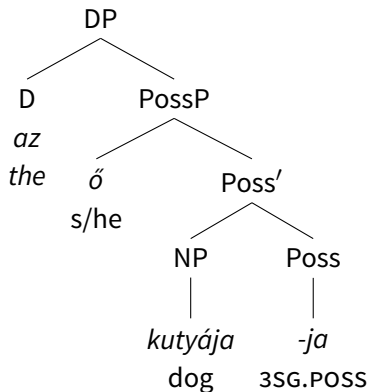
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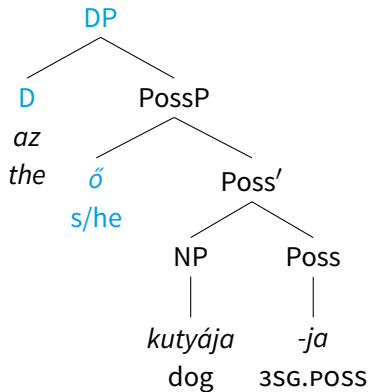
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# Syntactic and semantic properties

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- ▶ Dative possessors can be extracted (Szabolcsi 1994)

(7) a. *Mari-nak van kutyá-ja.*  
Mari-DAT is dog-3SG.POSS  
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- ▶ Non-specific reading in (7a)

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# Variation

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- ▶ **Semantic agreement?** only specific DOs agree

- (8) a. %*Chomsky-nak nem olvas-t-ál vers-é-t.*  
           Chomsky-DAT NEG read-PST-2SG poem-3SG.POSS-ACC  
           ‘You haven’t read a poem of Chomsky’s.’
- b. *Chomsky-nak nem olvas-t-ad vers-é-t.*  
       Chomsky-DAT NEG read-PST-2SG.OBJ poem-3SG.POSS-ACC  
       ‘You haven’t read a poem of Chomsky’s / Chomsky’s poem.’



# What triggers object agreement?

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- ▶ ... and agreement

# Surveys

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  - ▶ Presence vs. absence of determiner
  - ▶ Contexts: definite (unique) vs. indefinite (non-unique) reading of the DO

# Data: Acceptability judgments

(9) In literature class, the children were reading Petőfi and Arany.

a. *Mari olvas-ott          Petőfi          vers-ét.*

Mari read-3SG.PAST Petőfi.NOM poem-3SG.POSS

b. *Mari olvas-t-a                  Petőfi          vers-ét.*

Mari read-PAST-3SG.OBJ Petőfi.NOM poem-3SG.POSS

c. *Mari olvas-ott          Petőfi-nek vers-ét.*

Mari read-3SG.PAST Petőfi-DAT poem-3SG.POSS

d. *Mari olvas-t-a                  Petőfi-nek vers-ét.*

Mari read-PAST-3SG.OBJ Petőfi-DAT poem-3SG.POSS

intended: 'Mari read Petőfi's poem / a poem by Petőfi.'

# Data: Forced choice I, no context

Ismerte a szomszéd nővérét.

Ismerte a szomszéd nővérét.

Ismerte a szomszéd nővérét.

Ismerte a szomszéd nővérét.

Ismerte a szomszéd **egy** nővérét.

⋮

Ismerte a szomszéd**nak** nővérét.

Ismerte a szomszéd**nak a** nővérét.

Ismerte a szomszéd**nak egy** nővérét.

Ismerte a szomszéd **egy** nővérét.

Ismerte a szomszéd**nak** nővérét.

⋮

- ▶ *S/he knew the neighbour's daughter / **the** daughter **of the** neighbour / **a** daughter **of the** neighbour ...*

# Data: Forced choice II, def. context

- ... *is a famous writer, but she also painted a landscape.*

Péter látta a költő **egy** tájképét.

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Péter látta a költő tájképét.

⋮

Péter látta a költő tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek egy** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek a** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek** tájképét.

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Péter látta a költő **egy** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek egy** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő **egy** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek a** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek** tájképét.

⋮

⋮

- Péter saw the painter **one** landscape / the painter's landscape /  
**the** landscape **of the** painter ...

# Data: Forced choice III, indef. context

- ... is a famous writer, but she also painted *several* landscapes.

Péter látta a költő **egy** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő **egy** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő **egy** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő **egy** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő tájképét.

⋮

Péter látta a költő tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek egy** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek a** tájképét.

Péter látta a költő**nek** tájképét.

⋮



# Data: Forced choice III, indef. context

- ... is a famous writer, but she also painted *several* landscapes.

Péter látta a költő *egy* tájképét.

Péter látta a költő tájképét.

Péter látta a költő *egy* tájképét.

Péter látta a költő*nek* tájképét.

Péter látta a költő *egy* tájképét.

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Péter látta a költő *egy* tájképét.

Péter látta a költő*nek a* tájképét.

Péter látta a költő tájképét.

Péter látta a költő*nek* tájképét.

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- Péter saw the painter *one* landscape / the painter's landscape / *the* landscape *of the* painter ...

# Results

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- ▶ Object agreement is always better than subject agreement.  
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# Acknowledgements

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