

# Agreement with possessed direct objects in Hungarian

## An experimental approach

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# Overview

Intro: Object agreement and possessed NPs

The data

Surveys

Conclusions

# Intro: Object agreement and possessed NPs

# Object agreement in Hungarian

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- ▶ But: *dialectal variation?*



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- ▶ Series of online surveys
- ▶ Acceptability judgments with and without contexts
- ▶ Forced choice tests with and without contexts



# The data

# Object agreement

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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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- c. *az ő*        *kutyá-ja*        Pronominal possessor  
       the s/he.NOM dog-3SG.POSS  
       ‘her/his dog’

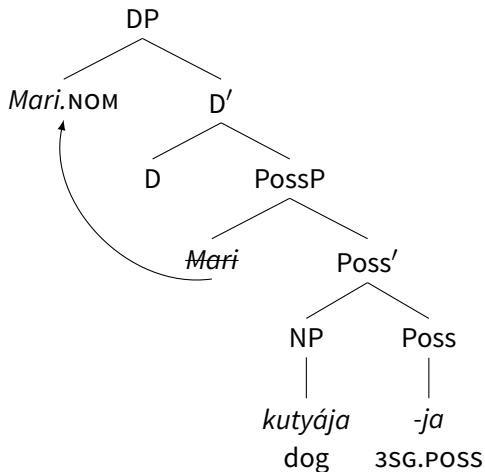


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- Distribution suggests different heights in the NP (Szabolcsi 1994; Bartos 1999; den Dikken 1999; É. Kiss 2000; Dékány 2015)

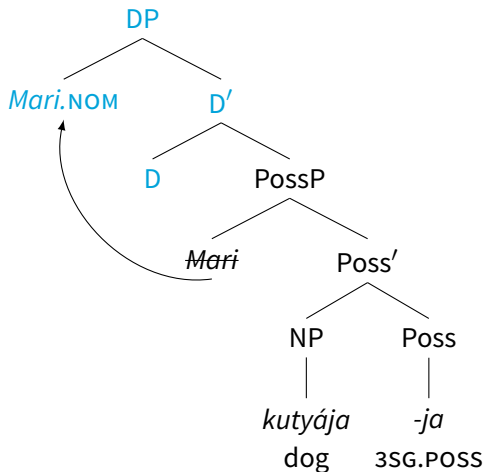
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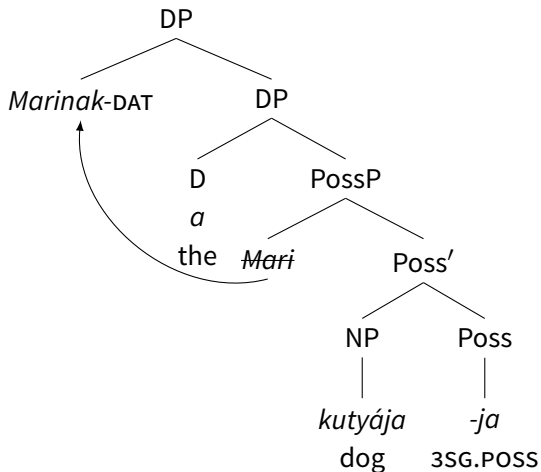
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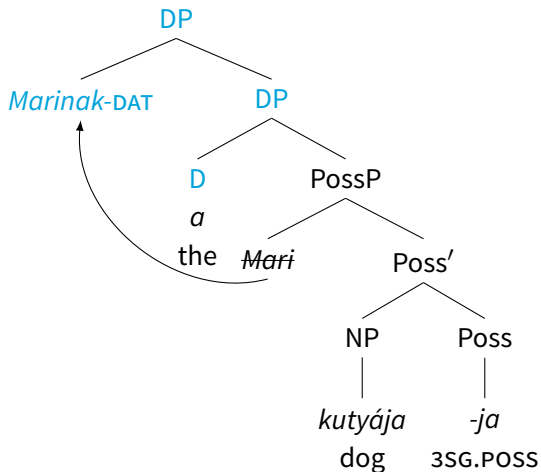
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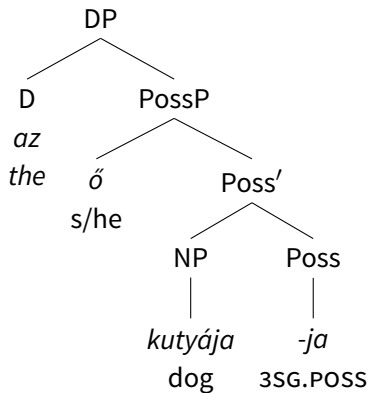
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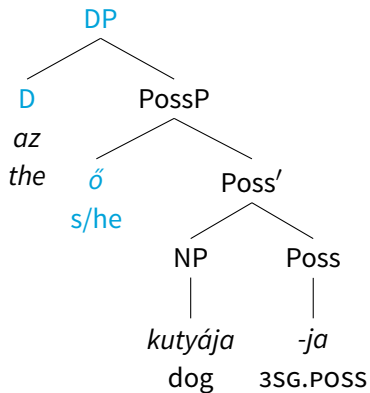
# Structures: pronominal possessor

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# Syntactic and semantic properties

## Extraction



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## Extraction

- ▶ Dative possessors can be extracted (Szabolcsi 1994)

(7) a. *Mari-nak van kutyá-ja.*  
Mari-DAT is dog-3SG.POSS  
'Mari has a dog/dogs.'

b. \**Mari van kutyá-ja.*  
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- ▶ Only extracted possessors in definiteness effect-contexts (7a)

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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?

- ▶ Syntax? DP structure

(Bartos 1999)

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- ▶ ... and agreement

# Surveys

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# Data: Acceptability judgments with possessors

(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

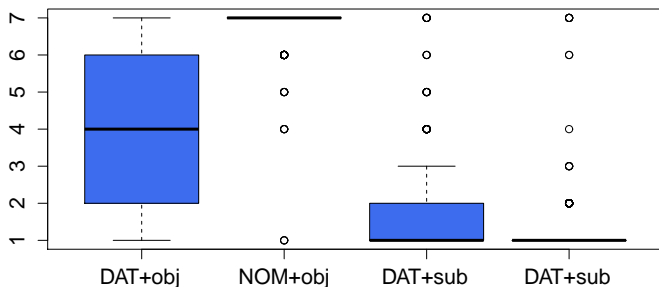
d. *Mari olvas-t-a Petőfi-nek vers-ét.*

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

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

# Results: Acceptability judgments with possessors

Object agreement is always significantly better than SUB



→ We do not find judgments reported in the literature

# Data: Acceptability judgments without possessors

(10) Petőfi was a famous writer.

a. *Mari olvas-ott vers-ét.*

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

b. *Mari olvas-t-a vers-ét.*

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

c. *Mari olvas-ott néhány vers-ét.*

Mari read-3SG.PAST some poem-3SG.POSS

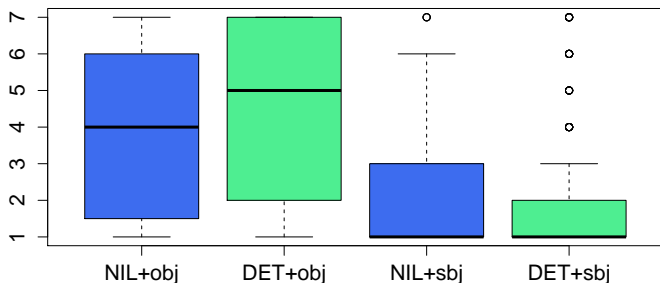
d. *Mari olvas-t-a néhány vers-ét.*

Mari read-PAST-3SG.OBJ some poem-3SG.POSS

intended: 'Mari read his poem(s) / some poem(s) of his.'

# Results: Acceptability judgments without possessors

No possessors with and without determiners: *néhány* 'some', *minden* 'every',  $\emptyset$



→ presence of determiner significantly better

# Data: Forced choice, no context

Ismerte a szomszéd nővérét.

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Ismerte a szomszéd **egy** nővérét.

⋮

Ismerte a szomszédnak nővérét.

Ismerte a szomszédnak **a** nővérét.

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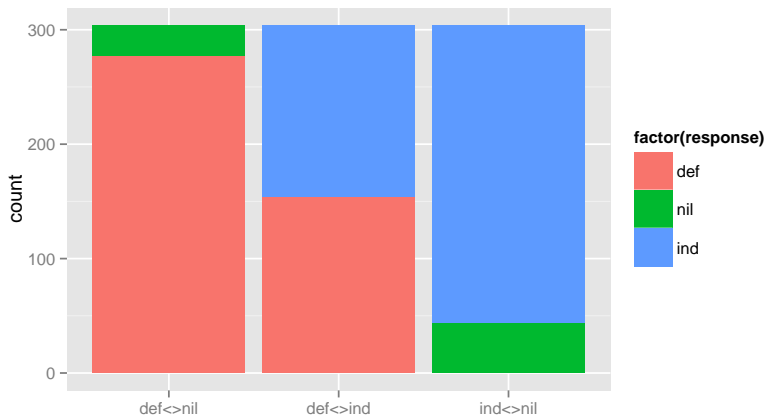
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- ▶ *S/he knew the neighbour's daughter / **the** daughter of the neighbour / **a** daughter of the neighbour / ...*

# Results: Forced choice, no context

DAT possessors with and without determiners:  $a(z)$  'the',  $egy$  'a',  $\emptyset$



→ presence of determiners significantly better

# Data: Forced choice, 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 költőnek tájképét.

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Péter látta a költőnek tájképét.

⋮

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



# Data: Forced choice, indef. context

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

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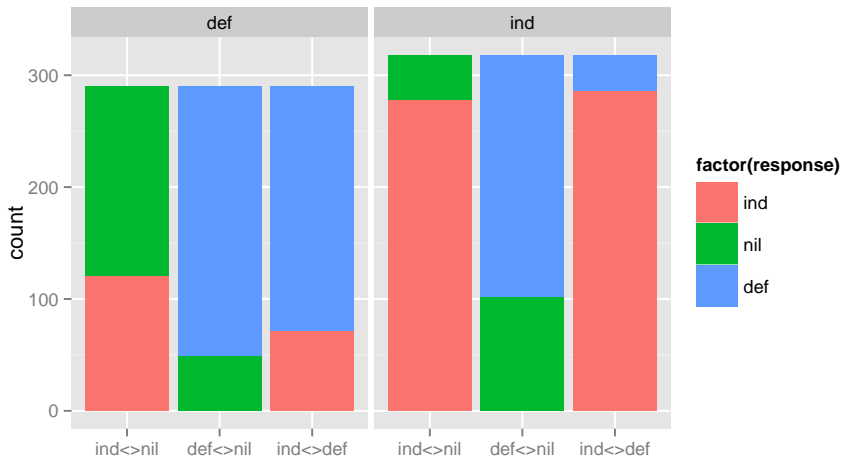
Péter látta a költőnek tájképét.

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

# Results: Forced choice with context

DAT possessors with and without determiners:  $a(z)$  'the',  $egy$  'a',  $\emptyset$



# Summary of results

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- ▶ Subject agreement was always marked as unnatural

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- ▶ Object agreement is always significantly better than subject agreement
- ▶ Subject agreement was always marked as unnatural
- ▶ We find significant effects between items with and without determiners

# Conclusions

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- ▶ Why D?

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- ▶ The results highlight [the role of determiners for acceptability](#)
- ▶ Why D?
  - ▶ Bernstein (2008) and Longobardi (2008): D as the syntactic locus of referentiality; DPs as arguments?
  - ▶ Arguably explains extraction facts: no place for possessor?

# Conclusions and future

- ▶ Object agreement is not semantic
- ▶ POSS suffix does not influence definiteness
- ▶ We have not found data corroborating the variation reported
- ▶ Subject agreement with poss. DOs very unnatural
- ▶ The results highlight [the role of determiners for acceptability](#)
- ▶ Why D?
  - ▶ Bernstein (2008) and Longobardi (2008): D as the syntactic locus of referentiality; DPs as arguments?
  - ▶ Arguably explains extraction facts: no place for possessor?
- ▶ Future: Non-specific possessed DOs? Other determiners?



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