Hungarian object-drop as noun phrase ellipsis
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1. Claim   In Hungarian referential pronouns can be covert both in subject and in object position. I propose that (i) there is partial object-drop in Hungarian, and (ii) this object-drop is due to DP/NP ellipsis and the privative nature of person/number features.

2. Background and data   In first and second person, object pronouns can be omitted in singular and plural as well, 3rd person is neither specified for person nor number since it is inherently featureless (den Dikken, 2004), while the third person pronoun is allowed to be non-overt only in singular, in plural it always needs to be overt. I ground my arguments on earlier works on the verbal paradigms of Hungarian (Bartos 1997, den Dikken 2004) and on object-drop in Hungarian (Puskás 2000, Farkas 1987). These works have shown that the arguments of transitive verbs need not be overt in singular as the referents of the omitted pronouns are recoverable from the features on the verb.

As it can be seen from the examples (1) to (3), the verb agrees in person and number with the subject only, but not with its object. The examples (4) and (5) show that in Hungarian the only pronoun that cannot be dropped is the third person plural pronoun. According to the results of my acceptability judgment questionnaire, in other persons and numbers the pronouns can be covert, however the acceptability of the first/second person plural non-overt pronouns may vary among speakers. Farkas (1987) claims that there is no agreement between the verb and the object, except for a participant ([PART]) feature that is assigned by the verb to its object. Object drop in Hungarian therefore cannot be agreement based pro-drop.
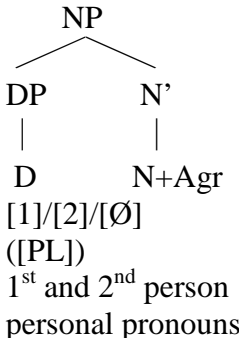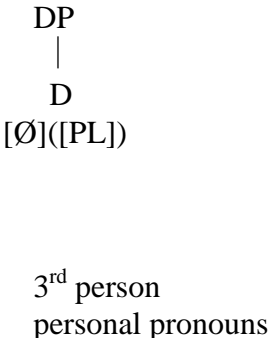
3. Two possible alternative analyses   I am going to consider two possible analyses (i) topic-drop and (ii) VP-ellipsis, both of which I am going to reject. The omission of objects in Hungarian could be accounted for by topic-drop, as in Chinese, however that would not explain the compulsory presence of third person plural pronouns in object position. An NP can be dropped in topic-drop languages if the referent of the non-overt element is present in the discourse. It does not depend on the syntactic position of the There is no constraint on the topicalization of the third person plural pronoun.

Another analysis could be VP-ellipsis. This means that object pronouns are allowed to be non-overt if they are situated in the VP, and – after the verb has moved out of the VP – the VP is deleted (together with the object pronoun). This analysis fails to account for the ungrammaticality of the covert third person plural pronouns. As it can be seen in (7), there is a conversation between A and B about the boys. In B's answer the plural object pronoun can be omitted. The reason for this is that *őket* (them) is in the VP that has been deleted.

4. Proposal   I propose that the empty objects in Hungarian need to be analyzed as DP/NP-ellipsis.T he main assumptions that I build my analysis on are the following. (i) The features of the personal pronouns of Hungarian are as in (6). (ii) The first and second person pronouns are structurally smaller (NP=indefinite) than the third person pronouns (DP=definite), which explains why there is object definiteness agreement with third person pronouns, but not with first and second person pronouns: namely, there is no definiteness agreement with NP arguments, only with DPs (Bartos, 1997). (iii) The first and second person pronouns have a possessive internal structure, as in (8a) (compare 8b): they consist of a morphologically bound possessor pronoun and a morphologically bound possessed element, which bears possessive inflection agreeing in person and number with the possessor (den Dikken, 2006).

I suggest that the deletion of the 3rd person plural pronoun is not allowed because the only feature on it(s D head) is the plural [PL], which would not be recoverable from the verb if the pronoun were deleted. 3rd person singular pronouns can be dropped because there is no person or number feature to be recovered (cf. (6)). Recoverability apparently only prohibits the deletion of pronouns whose head itself bears unrecoverable interpretable features: 1st and 2nd person pronouns can be deleted because they are NPs, whose N head itself bears no

person or number features (N only bears *uninterpretable* agreement morphology).

(1) a (Én) látom (őt)/*(őket).
    I   see-1SG him/her them
    'I see (him/her) them.'

 b. (Én) látlak (téged/titeket).
    I   see-SG you-SG/you-PL
    'I see you/you'

(2) (Te) látsz (engem/minket).
    You see2SG me/us
    'You see me/us.'

(3) (Ő) lát (engem/téged/minket/titeket)

(4) János azt mondta,   hogy Mari szereti   (őt)/ *(őket).
    János that say-3SG.PAST that   Mari love-3SG him/her them
    'János said that Mari loves him/her/them.'

(5) János azt mondta,   hogy Mari szeret   (engem/téged)/ %(minket/titeket).
    János   say-3SG.PAST that   Mari love-3SG me   you   us   you

(6) engem [1ˢᵗ]   minket [1ˢᵗ ,PL]
    téged [2ⁿᵈ]   titeket [2ⁿᵈ,PL]
    őt [Ø]   őket [PL]

(7) A: A fiúk   a   parkban fociznak.   Láttad   őket?
       the boys the park.in   play.football see-PAST.2SG them
       'The boys are playing football in the park. Did you see them?'

 B: Láttam   (őket).
    see-PAST.1SG them
    'I saw (them).'

(8)   a.   NP   b.   DP
              /   \ |
           DP   N'   D
            | | [Ø]([PL])
            D   N+Agr
          [1]/[2]/[Ø]
           ([PL])
          1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ person   3ʳᵈ person
          personal pronouns   personal pronouns

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