

Double objects and freedom of word order in Hungarian

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The Hungarian sentence can be divided into two main domains which behave differently in terms of word order constraints. The preverbal domain has a rigid structure determined by information structure, while the postverbal domain seems to have “free word order”. One dominant view, most worked out by É.Kiss (1987, 1991 and 2002) proposed a non-configurational approach whereby the postverbal domain possessed a flat structure, with no hierarchy between the constituents. However this suggestion seemed to be inadequate when dealing with some of the asymmetries that were present postverbally despite the freedom of linearization. In fact, to account for these asymmetries É. Kiss (2008) augmented her original theory with phase theory which allowed an originally hierarchical structure to flatten out after a given point in the derivation. Surányi (2006), put forward an analysis which was configurational in nature and argued for a hierarchy between the subject and the object based on a number of test. This proposal didn’t rely on phases and called on scrambling to explain the apparent freedom of word order in the postverbal domain.

In my presentation I will extend Surányi’s methodology to dative constructions, to attempt to give an account of the hierarchy between direct and indirect objects in the postverbal domain of neutral Hungarian sentences. In my research I have tested sentences based on the following templates with native speakers.

i) Condition C of Binding:

- (1) Bemutattam őt_i János_i apósának.
Introduced.1SG he.ACC John’s father-in-law.DAT
‘I introduced John to his father-in-law.’ (intended)

ii) Condition A of Binding

- (2) Bemutattam egymást nekik.
Introduced.1SG eachother.ACC them.DAT
‘I introduced them to each other’ (intended)

iii) The scope of non-increasing QPs

- (3) A gyűlésen mutattam be kevés részvényesnek
The meeting.at introduced Prt few shareholder.dat
minden új munkatársat.
every new colleagues
‘It was at the meeting that I introduced every new colleague to the few shareholders (who were present)’
‘It was at the meeting that I introduced every new colleague to few of the shareholders (who were present)’

Based on the data collected, I argue that asymmetries between indirect and direct objects are not as evident as between subjects and objects. I propose that this distinction can best be grasped with reference to the argument structure of the selecting predicate, whereby internal and external arguments are distinguished. Thus internal arguments are merged into a hierarchical structure, with out regard to any of their features save for their internal argumenthood. This way optionality can be maintained along with configurationality.