Free Word Order and Hungarian Dative Constructions

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Introduction:

This poster presents the findings of a study of free word order phenomena in Hungarian. Free word order (FWO) ties in with the debate on (non-)configurationality which claims that certain languages (in certain domains) lack a hierarchical structure of the sort which has been proposed for strict word order languages. However there have been attempts to analyse these configurationaly (Jelinek(1984), Baker (1988)).

If configurationality i.e. hierarchy is assumed there are two main possibilities for achieving explanatory coverage of the FWO phenomena. One is to assume that certain constituents can be base generated with out any constraint regarding their hierarchical position with regard to each other, and the other is to assume that there is some set base order, which can be freely changed through the mechanism of scrambling (Saito, 1985,1992). This second option is problematic with respect to grammars which strive to constrain operations along the lines of economy, such as the Minimalist Program, in a way that operations cannot occur unless there is some specific semantic/syntactic/prosodic need that drives them.

Hungarian:

FWO in the post-verbal domain; strict, information structure determined hierarchy in the pre-verbal domain.

(1) Az iskolában látta meg Mari Janit
the school.in saw PRT Mary John.acc

(2) Az iskolában látta meg Janit Mari.
the school.in saw PRT John.acc Mary.
'It was in the school that Mary saw John.'

The observable phenomena in the case of S and O exhibit both symmetries (for example in word order and Condition C violations) and asymmetries (Condition A violations).

The most worked out theory: É. Kiss (1987, 1994, 2002), proposes a completely flat, non-configurational analysis. This is further developed by É. Kiss (2008) into a hybrid theory where the structure looses the hierarchy within the VP after a certain point in the derivation.

Surányi (2006): proposes a completely configurational analysis with scrambling achieving free word order, symmetry.

As far as FWO is concerned the same observation holds of internal arguments.

(3) Az iskolában Mari adta oda a könyvet Janinak.
the school.in Mary gave to the book.acc John.dat

(4) Az iskolában Mari adta oda Janinak a könyvet.
the school.in Mary gave to John.dat the book.acc

As the theories presented above deal manly with the subject object (a)symmetries, the configurationality of internal arguments is still an open question.

The research presented by this poster aims to expand in this domain, primarily by using some of the same tools as Surányi (2006).

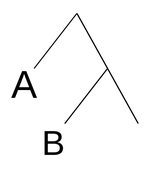
Methodology:

8 subjects; 4 verbs (the possibility of having different verbal classes anticipated based on Haider and Rosengren(2003). The test was administered via the internet in the form of a questionnaire where subject had to either give grammaticality judgments on a 7 point scale or select the potential meaning(s) of a given sentence (QP scope).

Tests:

With two constituents, and the assumption of a hierarchical structure, allowing scrambling there are four word order possibilities.

i.



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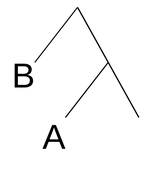

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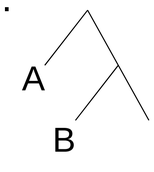

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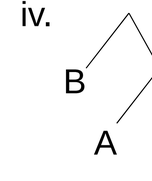

Condition A:

An anaphor must have a local antecedent which c-commands it.

Based on this formulation we can make the prediction that if there are two constituents, one containing the anaphor, and the other the antecedent, the grammatical base order would be the one in which the antecedent c-commands the anaphor.

(5) Bemutattam egymást nekik.
intoduced.past.1sg eachother.acc them.dat

Results:

	IOantecende DOanphor	DOanaphor IOantecedent	IOanaphor DOantecedent	DOantecedent IOanaphor
bemutat 'introduce'	2,85	1,71	6,00	7,00
alárendel 'subordinate'	2,71	1,42	3,85	5,85
elárul 'betray'	2,89	2,00	4,86	6,85
Átad 'hand over'	2,42	1,57	4,57	4,00
avrage	2,71	1,67	4,82	5,85
control: felhív 'call'	4,71 S.el O.an	2,85 O.an S.el	1,00 S.an O.el	1,00 O.el S.an

Scope taking of non-increasing QPs:

Szabolcsi (1997): non-increasing QPs (*kevés* 'few') do not take inverse scope higher than their A-position

(7) Tegnap hívott fel minden ügyintéző *kevés* ügyfelet.
SUB> OBJ, *OBJ > SUB
*'It was yesterday that few customers were called by all the admin.'
'It was yesterday that few administrators called all of the customers.'

The prediction is that if there is a hierarchical order between twoconstituents then there would be an observable pattern in the availability of scope interpretations.

Results:

	DO minendki IO kevés	IO kevés DO mindenki	DO kevés IO minenki	IO minenki DO kevés
ad 'give'	ambiguity	ambiguity	no ambiguity	no ambiguity
alárendel 'subordinate'	no ambiguity	ambiguity	ambiguity	ambiguity
elárul 'betray'	ambiguity	no ambiguity	ambiguity	ambiguity
bemutat 'introduce'	no(slight) ambiguity	no ambiguity	slight ambiguity	ambiguity

Condition C:

An r-expression must not be bound within a local domain

This formulation allows us to make a prediction as to the grammaticality of the possible patterns presented above. If there is a hierarchy, then we predict that the base order in which the r-expression is free will be grammatical, with varying degrees of grammaticality in the case of the other possibilities.

(8) Bemutattam $őt_i$ $János_i$ apósának.
intoduce.past.1sg him John father-in-law.poss.acc

Results:

	DO pronoun IO r-expression	IO r-expression DO pronoun	DOr-expression IO pronoun	IO pronoun DOr-expression
bemutat 'intoduce'	3,14	2,28	3,00	2,57
alárendel 'subordinate'	2,42	2,42	3,00	2,57
elárul 'betray'	3,42	2,42	3,00	3,00
átad 'hand over'	2,28	2,83	2,71	3,00
avrage	**2,82**	**2,48**	**2,92**	**2,78**
control: felhív 'call'	1,85 SUp OBr	2,45 OBr SUp	2,85 SUr OBp	2,28 OBp SUr

Analysis:

The results were not as clear-cut as in the case of Surányi (2006), this indicates that there might be some difference between internal-internal and external-internal argument hierarchies.

Scrambling analysis can make fairly accurate predictions, as shown by certain verbs of the Condition A test. Based on that data the base hierarchy of Hungarian internal arguments would be DO>IO.

The QP scope test also indicates the presence of some sort of hierarchy. But not as clearly as the Condition A test. What is interesting to see in the results is that the pattern of (non-)ambiguity seems to be different depending on the verb. Also, ambiguity was expected in only one of the possible patterns, yet in half of the cases it appears in two. These cases suggest that different verbs may take different internal argument word orders. This may also be supported by the differences in judgments in the Condition A test.

The Condition C test failed to indicate any hierarchy, how ever this may be due to independent reasons, such as the general tendency not to favor pronouns in sentence final positions.

Further research:

Needs to account for exactly why the Condition C test failed.

Needs to better control for the argument hood in case of certain verbs.

Needs to investigate why scrambling, which is associated with information structural motivations would happen in the post-verbal domain.

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