

Hungarian object-drop as noun phrase ellipsis

1. Introduction

- In many languages some argument positions may remain empty.

Most common: **subject-drop**

(1) Ø copmro un libro.

Buy- 3SG a book

‘(He) buys a book.’

- Less common: **object-drop**

- Argument-drop of a verb may be **partial**: available only in part of the verbal paradigm (Finnish, Hebrew)

(2) Kun soititte, olimme juuri kaupassa.

When call-PAST.2PL be-PAST.1PL just store-INE

‘When you called, we were just at the store.’

(3) Jukka lähtee, jos hän löytää oven.

Jukka-NOM leave-3SG if he-NOM find-3SG door-ACC

‘Jukka will go if he finds the door.’

3. Claim

- Hungarian **referential pronouns** can be covert both in subject and in object position.
- (i) there is **partial object-drop** in Hungarian
- (ii) this object-drop is due to **DP/NP ellipsis** and the **privative** nature of person features.

5. Data

(1) (én)Elbújtam előled, (te) mégis megtaláltál (engem).

I hide-PAST.1SG from.you you still find-PAST.2SG me

‘(I) hid from you still (you) found (me).’

(2) %(mi) Elbújtunk előled, (te) mégis megtaláltál (minket).

We hide-PAST.1PL from.you you still find-PAST.2SG us

‘(We) hid from you, still (you) found (us).’

(3) (te) Elbújtál előlem, (én) mégis megtaláltalak (téged).

you hide-PAST.2SG from.me I still find-PAST.1SG you

‘(You) hid from me, still (I) found (you).’

(4) %(ti) Elbújtatok előlem, (én) mégis megtaláltalak (titeket).

You-PL hide-PAST.2PL from.me I still find-PAST.1SG you-PL

‘(You) hid from me, still (I) found (you).’

(5) (ő) Elbújt előlem, (én) mégis megtaláltam (öt).

he hide-PAST.3SG from.me I still find-PAST.1SG him

‘(He) hid from me, still (I) found (him).’

(6) (ők) Elbújtak előlem, (én) mégis megtaláltam *(öket).

they hide-PAST.3PL from.me I still find-PAST.1SG them

‘(They) hid from me, still (I) found *(them).’

Generalization:

- object-drop is always possible in singular in each person
- first and second person in plural can be null
- third person plural pronouns can never be null

7. Assumptions

- The features of Hungarian pronouns are as in (7).
- First/second person pronouns are NPs, third person pronouns are DPs.
- The first and second person pronouns have a possessive internal structure.

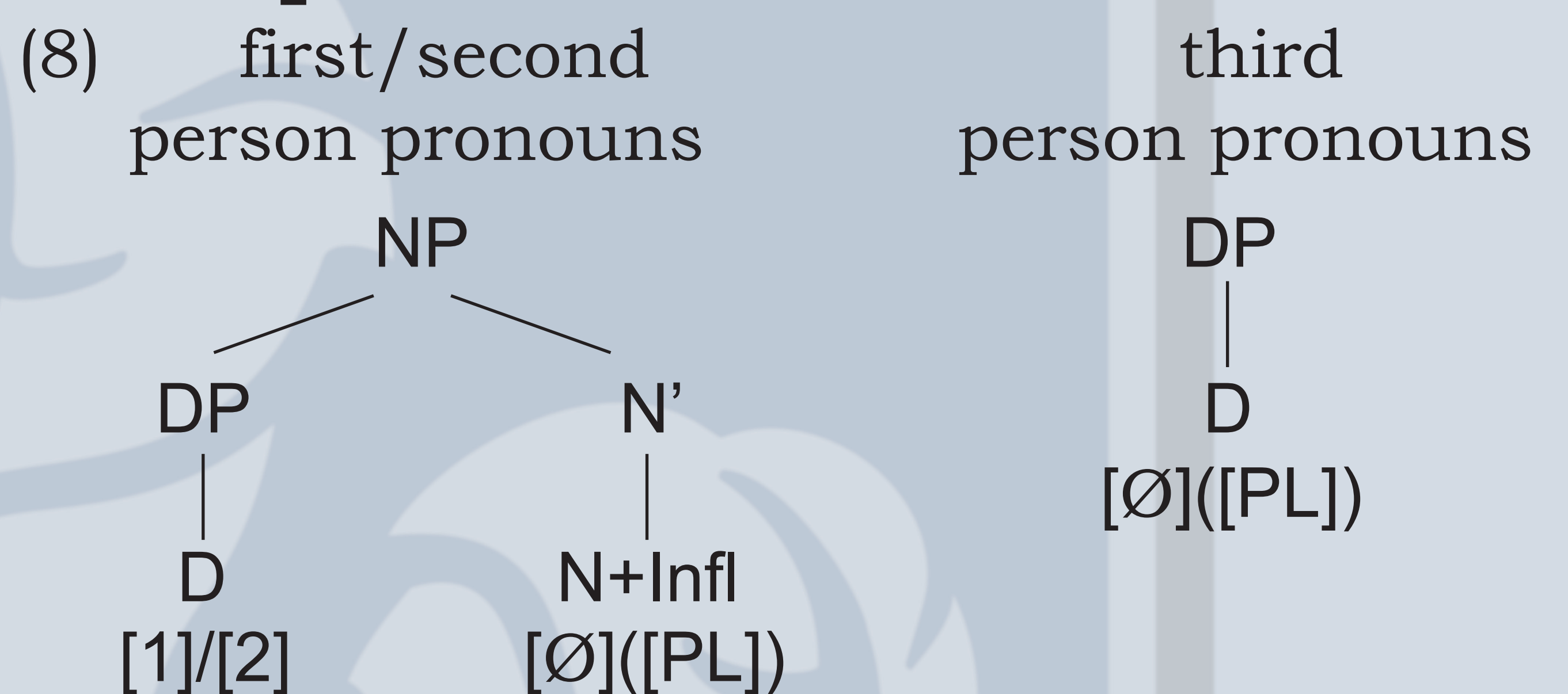
2. Questions

- What makes argument-drop possible?
 - rich agreement? (Rohrbacher, 1994)
 - topic-drop? (Chinese; Huang, 1984)
 - uniform inflectional morphology? (Jaeggli&Safir, 1989)
- How does argument-drop work in the syntactic representation?
 - special phonologically zero pronoun (pro)?
 - the inflectional morphology IS the „pronoun”?
 - verb phrase deletion?
 - argument deletion?

4. Background

- Hungarian has two verbal paradigms
 - (i) „subjective” conjugation
 - (ii) „objective” conjugation (Bartos, 1997)
- First person pronouns can be covert.
- 3rd person is neither specified for person nor number since it is inherently featureless (den Dikken, 2004)

6. Proposed structure



8. Analysis

- Deletion of the nominal argument of a transitive verb.
- 1st/2nd person pronouns can be omitted because they are NPs, whose N head itself bears no person or number features.
- 3rd pronoun singular can be covert (inherently featureless).
- 3rd person plural pronoun is not allowed because the only feature on it(s D head) is the plural [PL] that is not recoverable from the verb.

9. Selected References

Bartos, H.(1997): On ‘Subjective’ and ‘Objective’ Agreement in Hungarian, Acta Linguistica Hungarica 44, 363-384.
Den Dikken, M. (2006): ‘When Hungarians Agree (to Disagree) – The Fine Art of ‘Phi’and ‘Art’, Linguistics Program, CUNY Graduate Center, New York.