

Hungarian has differential object agreement, not clitic doubling

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Hungarian has object agreement triggered by certain definite accusative objects (Bartos 1999, Coppock 2013, 2022, Bárány 2017). Most work focuses on the trigger of object agreement and less on whether object markers (OMs) are **agreement markers or clitics**. Coppock & Wechsler (2012) and den Dikken (2018) argue that some OMs are clitics and others are agreement markers; Bartos (1999), Trommer (2005) and Bárány (2017) treat all as agreement markers. Considering new data and recent literature I argue that **Hungarian has agreement markers**, not clitics.

1 Data Compared to the indefinite direct object (DO) and subject–verb agreement in (1), the definite DO triggers a different verb form in (2) (the ‘objective paradigm’; 1SG>3 is short for 1SG.SBJ>3.OBJ). With 1SG subjects and second person objects, the verb shows the marker *-lak/-lek* ‘1SG>2’, (3). Subjects and objects can be dropped.

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| (1) | <i>Keres-ek</i> | <i>valaki-t.</i> | (2) | <i>Keres-em</i> | <i>ő-t.</i> | (3) | <i>Keres-lek.</i> |
| | look.for-1SG | someone-ACC | | look.for-1SG>3 | 3SG.ACC | | look.for-1SG>2 |
| | ‘I am looking for someone.’ | | | ‘I am looking for him/her.’ | | | ‘I am looking for you.’ |

Objective forms differ from subjective forms in nearly all person–number combinations across tense and mood. In the present, objective forms include the segment *-j(a)/-i* (based on vowel harmony) in 3SG and PL forms, (4). In the past, *-j(a)* does not appear in all forms, (5).

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| (4) | <i>lát</i> | <i>lát-ja</i> | <i>lát-unk</i> | <i>lát-juk</i> |
| | see-3SG.SBJ | see-3SG.SBJ>3.OBJ | see-1PL.SBJ | see-1PL.SBJ>3.OBJ |
| | ‘s/he sees’ | ‘s/he sees him/her/it’ | ‘we see’ | ‘we see him/her/it’ |
| (5) | <i>lát-ott</i> | <i>lát-t-a</i> | <i>lát-t-unk</i> | <i>lát-t-uk</i> |
| | see-PST.3SG.SBJ | see-PST-3SG.SBJ>3.OBJ | see-PST-1PL.SBJ | see-PST-1PL.SBJ>3.OBJ |
| | ‘s/he saw’ | ‘s/he saw him/her/it’ | ‘we saw’ | ‘we saw him/her/it’ |

Based on tense and mood invariance (Nevins 2011), Coppock & Wechsler (2012) treat *-l-* in *-lak/-lek* as the sole clitic in Hungarian. For den Dikken (2018), *-j(a)/-i* (3.OBJ), *-m* (1SG.SBJ) and *-d* (2SG.SBJ) are clitics, such that the present tense objective paradigm includes either one subject or one object clitic. Here, I focus on forms involving *-j(a)/-i* in particular, (6).

2 Grammatical agreement and clitic doubling Diagnostics for identifying clitics vs. agreement markers (e.g. Zwicky & Pullum 1983, Bresnan & Mchombo 1987, Suñer 1988, Nevins 2011, Baker & Kramer 2018, Yuan 2021, Paparounas & Salzmann 2023a,b), are roughly (i) morphological, (ii) syntactic, and (iii) semantic. **Morphologically**, Hungarian OMs are not mobile: they appear in fixed suffixal positions (cf. Romance pro- and enclitic object clitics). If *-j(a)/-i* is a clitic, objective forms show mesoclitisis ([[V]-CL]-AGR]), a rare type of cliticisation that often shows order alternations (see e.g. Arregi & Nevins 2018). Hungarian lacks such alternations, however. Other morphological criteria (allomorphy, idiosyncrasies) do not easily apply to Hungarian, an agglutinating language with little allomorphy (save for vowel harmony).

Semantically, clitics often occur with highly referential (e.g. topical or definite) arguments. Baker & Kramer (2018: 1084) treat as a diagnostic what kinds of objects OMs can double: universally quantified NPs, anaphoric (reflexive, reciprocal) NPs, etc. OMs doubling all of these are likely agreement markers, OMs that do not are likely pronominal clitics according to Baker & Kramer (2018) (see also Bresnan & Mchombo 1987, Yuan 2021). In Hungarian, OMs can always double definite DOs, independently of their topicality ((2), (3)). Universally quantified DOs with *minden* ‘every’, do not trigger an OM, while universally quantified DOs with *mindegyik* ‘each’ do. For Coppock (2013), this reflects a difference in referentiality, with *mindegyik* introducing a presupposition. Reflexive, reciprocal and semantically bound pronouns trigger OMs like free pronouns (Bárány 2017). In sum, doubling of objects and OMs with reflexive, reciprocal and bound pronouns point to agreement markers; other diagnostics do not provide clear results.

Syntactically, OMs doubling arguments suggests an OM is not an argument with its own θ -role but an agreement marker (the θ -criterion, Chomsky 1981, functional uniqueness, Bresnan & Mchombo 1987). OMs in Hungarian thus differ from OMs in Chichewa (Bresnan & Mchombo 1987) and clitic left-/right-dislocation in Romance languages (see e.g. Anagnostopoulou 2017).

Den Dikken (2018: 151) proposes that Hungarian clitics move to a person probe π : [$_{\pi P}$ π [$_{vP}$ DO [$_{vP}$ SBJ [$_{VP}$ V \emptyset]]]]. This predicts that if two objects are coordinated below vP and only one of these includes an object clitic, movement out of the coordinated phrase should be impossible due to the Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC; see Bányai 2017, Paparounas & Salzmann 2023a,b), which holds in Hungarian. (6) shows the coordination of definite and indefinite DOs and distinct verb forms. Subjective (1PL, (6b,d)) and objective (1PL>3, (6a,c)) forms are ungrammatical (red), although adjacency to the indefinite and the definite conjunct, respectively, slightly improves the data, unexpected for a CSC violation. More importantly, (6a–d) are fully grammatical if the verb form is **syncretic** between the subjective and objective paradigm, as in 1SG past tense and 1PL present conditional forms (indicated with ‘✓’ in (6a–d)).

- (6) a. { *? **Bemutat-juk** / ✓ **bemutat-ná-nk** } [Péter-t és egy lányt] ...
 introduce-1PL>3 introduce-COND-1PL P.-ACC and a girl-ACC
 ‘We introduce / would introduce Péter and a girl (to each other).’
- b. { * **Bemutatunk** / ✓ **bemutat-t-am** } [Pétert és egy lányt] egymásnak.
 introduce-1PL introduce-PST-1SG Péter-ACC and a girl-ACC each.other-DAT
 ‘We introduce / I introduced Péter and a girl to each other.’
- c. { * **Bemutatjuk** / ✓ **bemutatnánk** / ✓ **bemutattam** } [egy lányt és Pétert] egymásnak.
- d. { *? **Bemutatunk** / ✓ **bemutatnánk** / ✓ **bemutattam** } [egy lányt és Pétert] egymásnak.

Clitic movement from only one conjunct would give rise to a CSC violation independently of the verbs’ form. But syncretic forms make the structures completely grammatical, **providing evidence against clitic movement**. If the relevant forms are agreement markers rather than clitics, the patterns of (un)grammaticality in (6) follow from how agreement mismatches are realised: ungrammatical forms in (6) are incompatible with one of the conjuncts. Syncretic forms have no mismatches as they appear with both definite and indefinite forms.

3 Discussion These characteristics point to an analysis of Hungarian OMs as agreement markers rather than clitics. Object clitics are often said to occur with topical objects (Kallulli 2008, 2019, Baker & Kramer 2018, Yuan 2021). In Hungarian, too, not all objects trigger OMs but information structure is not a determining factor (Bányai 2017, Coppock 2022). More generally, **differential agreement is not an argument in favour of clitic doubling** in the absence of independent evidence for clitic doubling. Finally, while ‘it is not clear that there is a reliable link between affixes and agreement, and between morphophonological clitics and pronominal clitics’ (Yuan 2021: 157), there *are* diagnostics distinguishing bound from free forms. Referring to the former as bound pronouns rather than ‘clitics’, when their properties indicate they are not grammatical agreement markers, can avoid terminological confusion. Thus **Hungarian has morphologically bound grammatical agreement markers**, in contrast to morphologically bound (weak) pronouns in Inuktitut (Yuan 2021) or Amharic (Baker & Kramer 2018), and to morphologically freer clitics in Greek, Romance, or Slavic (Anagnostopoulou 2017).

Selected refs. ● Anagnostopoulou, E. 2017. Clitic doubling. In *The Wiley Blackwell companion to syntax*. M Everaert & HC Van Riemsdijk (eds.). Wiley Blackwell. ● Coppock, E. 2022. Object agreement in Hungarian. *J Uralic Linguist* 1. ● den Dikken, M. 2018. An integrated perspective on Hungarian nominal and verbal inflection. In *Boundaries crossed, at the interfaces of morphosyntax, phonology, pragmatics, and semantics*. H Bartos et al. (eds.). Springer. ● Paparounas, L & M Salzmann. 2023a. First conjunct clitic doubling in Modern Greek. *Nat Lang Linguist Theory* 42. ● Yuan, M. 2021. Diagnosing object agreement vs. clitic doubling. *Linguist Inquiry* 52.