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On the inventory of Hungarian copular constructions from a lexicalist perspective

1. Introduction

In Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), the two main strategies for the treatment of copula constructions (CCs) across languages are best illustrated by Butt et al. (1999) and Dalrymple et al. (2004). In the former approach, CCs are handled in a uniform manner functionally. The copula is always taken to be a two-place predicate, and the two arguments it subcategorizes for have the following two grammatical functions: subject (SUBJ) (which is uncontroversial in any analysis of these constructions), and the other constituent is uniformly assigned a designated function designed for the second, "postcopular" argument of the predicate: PREDLINK. By contrast, in Dalrymple et al.'s (2004) approach, the two-place predicate, SUBJ and PREDLINK version is just one of the theoretically available options. In addition, they postulate that the copula can be devoid of meaning (and, hence, argument structure) and it can serve as a pure carrier of formal verbal features: tense and agreement. Finally, it can also be a one-place predicate of the "raising" type: assigning the XCOMP function to its propositional argument and also assigning a nonthematic SUBJ function.

2. Laczkó's (2021) analysis of 5 major types of Hungarian CCs

In his analysis of Hungarian CCs, Laczkó (2021) argues against Butt et al.'s (1999) view and he subscribes to Dalrymple et al.'s (2004) approach. He claims that the argument structure of the copula in its different uses is more varied, and in some types the postulation of the PREDLINK function is appropriate, and in some others the use of the OBLIQUE function is more feasible. Below is his tabular overview of the five major types of CCs he concentrates on and the crucial ingredients of his analysis (2021: 321). (I will exemplify these types in the talk.)

Table 1. Properties and analyses of Hungarian CCs

CC type	PR3: cop	PR3: neg	copula's function	argument structure	VM	other traits
attr/class	–	*nem*	formative	–	AP/NP	NP: –spec
identity	–	*nem*	predicate	< S, PL >	SUBJ	S: +spec, interch.
location	+	*nincs*	predicate	< S, OBL >	OBL	S: +spec
existence	+	*nincs*	predicate	< S, (OBL) >	–	S: –spec cop: FOC
possession	+	*nincs*	predicate	< S, PL >	–	S: –def S&PL agr. cop: FOC

cop = copula; attr/class = attribution or classification; PR3:cop = is the copula present in the present tense and 3rd person paradigmatic slots; PR3:neg = how is negation expressed in pr3; VM = what element occupies the VM position (if any) in neutral sentences; S = SUBJ; PL = PREDLINK; OBL = OBLIQUE; interch = the two arguments' grammatical functions are interchangeable in 3rd person; spec = specific; def = definite; FOC = FOCUS; agr = agreement

I subscribe to this approach, and I claim that if we also take additional (minor) types of CCs into consideration then the full picture further supports this analytical line in LFG.

2. Two minor types

In the talk I will concentrate on two additional minor types of CCs. First consider (A).

(A) *Nagyon hideg *(van) (a konyhá-ban).* [environmental CC]
very cold is the kitchen-INESS
'It is very cold (in the kitchen).'

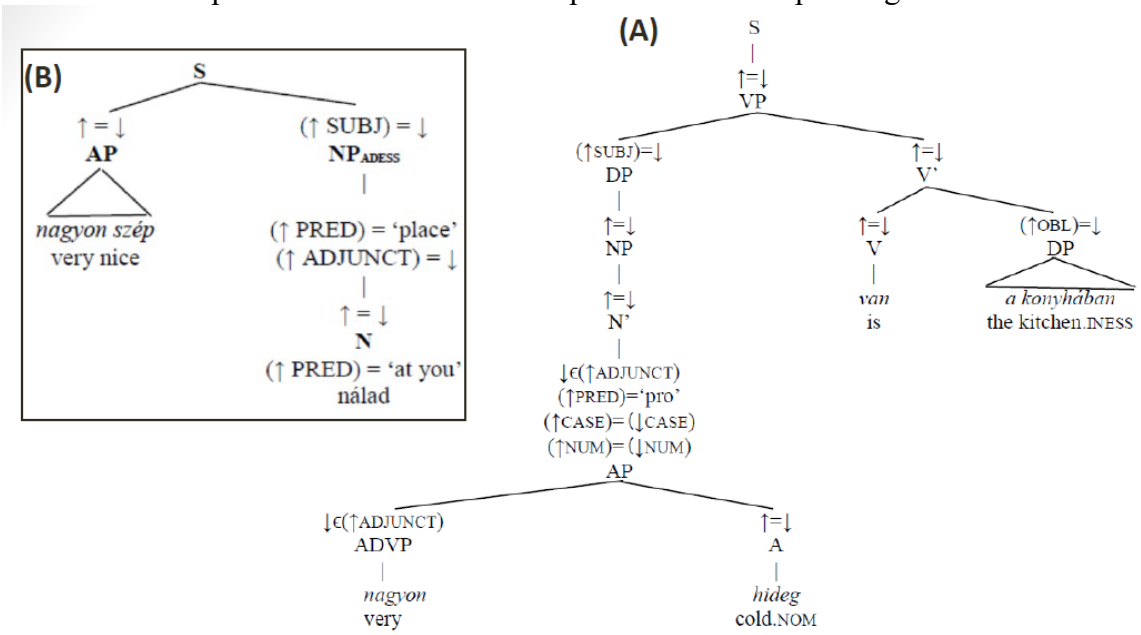
Komlósy (1994) and Tóth (2001) assume that in this type the AP is the predicate. Kádár (2011), in her MP framework, argues against such an analysis by pointing out that if the AP were the

predicate then the CC would be of the attribution/classification type, in which case the PRES.3SG copula would have to be absent from the construction, see Table 1, which it is not. Instead, she proposes that the AP-looking constituent is the subject: the adjective has undergone Adj → N conversion, and it serves as the head of the subject NP. I agree with the subject analysis; however, I argue against the conversion treatment. Instead, I develop an alternative LFG analysis in which a covert noun head is modified by the AP in the subject NP. My analysis of this type can be naturally accommodated in the "big picture" as an analysis of a special subtype of the locative use of the copula (while Kádár's existential use assumption is rather problematic).

In a footnote Kádár (2011: 421) mentions the CC type exemplified in (B), and she points out that it has not been analysed yet; however, she does not analyse it, either.

(B) *Nagyon szép (*van) nál-ad.* [special environmental CC]
very nice is ADESS-2SG
'It is very nice at your place.'

If this construction followed the pattern in Type A, the PRES.3SG copula would be obligatorily present in it, which it is not. I propose that this type follows the attr/class CC pattern in Table 1. The predicate is the AP, and the peculiarity of this type is that its subject is a "silent" noun head: 'place', which is overtly modified by an adjunct: *nálad* 'at you'. Below I show the functionally annotated constituent-structural representations of the two construction types. In the talk I will explain the formal details and present the corresponding functional structures.



3. Conclusion

The complexity of major and minor types of CCs lends additional support to the claim that the more appropriate treatment of all these types should be in the spirit of Dalrymple et al. (2004).

References

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