

## Compounds split by silence

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**1. The data** We describe a novel ellipsis phenomenon that is attested in Hungarian and Dutch in almost identical ways, involving deletion of the second part of synthetic adjectival compounds, illustrated in (1)-(2). Deletion is indicated by < >.

- (1) Ez a bogár hatlábú, az a pók nyolc < >. (Hungarian)  
this the insect six.leg.ADJ that the spider eight  
lit. ‘This insect is six-legged and that spider eight.’ (i.e. that spider has eight legs).
- (2) Deze lift is zevenpersoons, en die acht < >. (Dutch)  
this lift is seven.person.ADJ and that eight  
‘This lift can carry seven people, and that one can carry eight.’

We refer to this phenomenon as “**left part stranding**” or LPS, as it removes the second part of a synthetic adjectival compound and strands the left part (the contrastive non-head) of the compound. The stranded item can be a numeral, an adjective or a noun:

- (3) (*Milyen a gyerekek szeme?* What kind of eyes do the children have?)  
Peti zöldszemű, Éva kék < >.  
Peti green.eye.ADJ Éva blue  
‘Peti has green eyes, Éva blue.’
- (4) (*Milyen a könyvek kötése?* What kind of binding do these books have?)  
Ez a könyv bőrkötéses, az vászon < >.  
this the book leather.binding.ADJ that canvas  
‘This book has a leather binding, and that one a canvas binding.’

As we will argue, LPS supplies evidence for the role of syntax in compound formation.

**2. LPS as ‘standard’ ellipsis** After inventorising the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of LPS, we will argue that data like (1)-(4) really involve ellipsis of part of a compound. The fact that numerals can never be used as clausal predicates in any other context supports this analysis, similarly to the observation that the remnant in LPS is clearly adjectival when it comes to category: later reference to it is made by an adjectival pronominal, *olyan* (6).

- (6) Ez az autó kétajtós. Misié [adj négy < >]. És olyan<sub>(adj)</sub> az enyém is.  
this the car two.door.ADJ Misi.POSS four and such the mine too  
‘This car has two doors. Misi’s four. Mine is like that, too (i.e. it has four doors).’

We will also show that LPS cannot be classified as any known type of omission that can target compounds, such as coordination reduction (e.g. *lap- és könyvkiadás* “newspaper and book publication” or *férfiing és -nadrág* “mens’ shirt and trousers”, see Kenesei 2008). Conjunction reduction eliminates prosodic constituents (Booij 1985) and should be thought of as a process of prosodic deletion. The properties of LPS, listed in (7) are entirely atypical of coordination reduction affecting compounds:

### (7) Properties of LPS

- (i) deletion is only allowed under clausal coordination
- (ii) deletion is only allowed in compounds that function as predicates (not as attributive modifiers)
- (iii) deletion is only allowed in compounds that have a fully compositional meaning
- (iv) deletion usually co-exists with clausal ellipsis of some sort (i.e. gapping in (1)-(4))
- (v) deletion results in the loss of inflectional affixation on the compound, but retains case

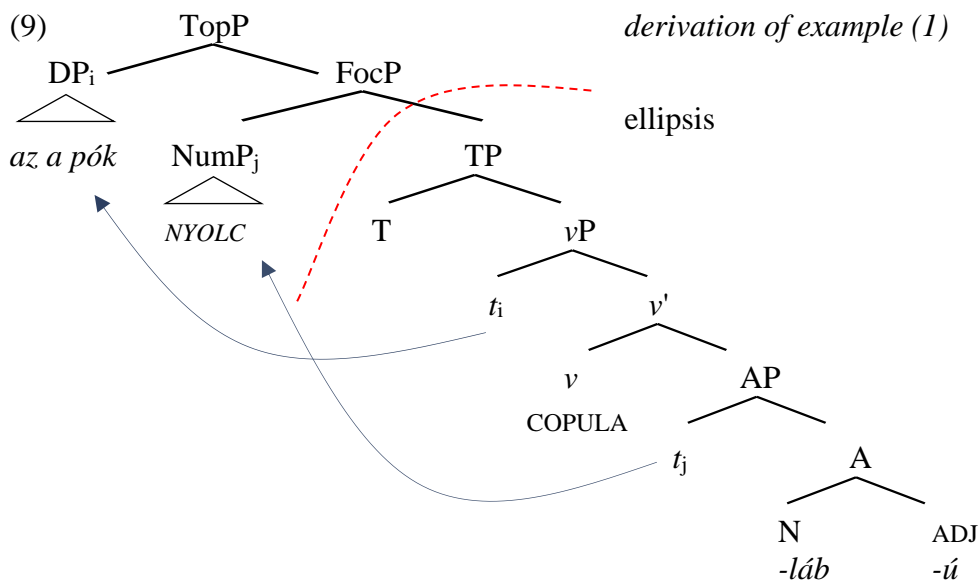
**3. The derivation of LPS** We will argue that LPS is possible due to two factors: (a) syntactic movement of the first part out of the compound, and (b) the presence of clausal ellipsis that eliminates the otherwise ill-formed second part.

(a) Syntactic movement of the first part is allowed as synthetic adjectival compounds in Dutch and Hungarian are not word-level units but syntactic phrases (Kenesei 1995/96 on Hungarian, see also Bauer 1998, de Belder & van Koppen 2016). In addition to arguments from the existing literature, (7) and (8) provide novel evidence for this claim: the first part of the compound can be a *wh*-phrase (with an ordinary information question meaning), and this part can also contain a fully referential DP.

(7) A: Hoeveel baans wordt de A4? B: Vier\_\_ (NL)  
 how.many lane.ADJ BE.3SG the highway A4 four  
 lit. ‘How many-laned will highway A4 be?’

(8) Ez egy Bayer Zsolt stílusú kijelentés, bár ő ezt tagadná. (HU)  
 this a Zsolt Bayer style.ADJ statement although he this.ACC deny.COND3  
 ‘This is a statement in the style of Zsolt Bayer<sub>i</sub>, even though he<sub>i</sub> would deny this.’

(b) The need for clausal ellipsis can be understood with reference to the derivation in (9). Even though the first part of the compound can undergo movement to the left periphery (being a phrase), the second part cannot normally be left behind in non-elliptical sentences, as it would form a morphologically ill-formed affix such as *-lábú* in example (1). When clausal ellipsis applies, however, it eliminates a constituent that contains the ill-formed affix, and this results in full grammaticality:



As we will show, our analysis of LPS explains properties (i)-(iv) and gives a reasonable explanation for property (v) as well.

**References** Bauer (1998) When is a sequence of two nouns a compound in English? *English Language and Linguistics* 2(1): 65-86. \* De Belder and van Koppen (2016) One module, different levels of merge: AN(N) compounds in Dutch. *Studia Linguistica* 70:1, 1-33. \* Booij (1985) Coordination reduction in complex words: a case for prosodic phonology. In: van der Hulst & Smith (eds.), *Advances in Non-linear Phonology*. Dordrecht: Foris, 143-160. \* Kenesei (1995/96) Bracketing paradoxes. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 43:1-2, 153-173. \* Kenesei (2008) Az ellipszis szabályai a szóösszetételekben. In: Bibok (ed) *A morfológiától a pragmatikáig*. Szeged: JATE Press, 63-77.