Object agreement in Hungarian: In defense of a semantic solution*

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Abstract

This paper contributes another round in the debate over how to analyze object agreement in Hungarian, a form of differential object marking that is found among other Uralic languages as well. I have previously argued that the choice of conjugation is determined not by the syntactic category of the object, but rather on the basis of semantic factors, primarily: on the Lexical Familiarity Hypothesis (LFH), selected lexical items are assigned a definiteness feature in virtue of a certain type of familiarity presupposition that they carry. Subsequent work has raised challenges for the LFH. This paper considers what would be necessary in order for these challenges to be met. I conclude that the LFH can be defended, if supplemented by a certain set of independently-motivated assumptions. In fact, this theory enjoys certain advantages over the most recent alternative.

Keywords: Hungarian, object agreement, differential object marking, definiteness, familiarity, presupposition, syntax vs. semantics

Introduction

Like other Uralic languages (Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011; É. Kiss 2013; 2017), Hungarian exhibits a kind of differential object marking (DOM), a phenomenon where a certain class of objects is grammatically marked in a distinctive way, for example using a dedicated kind of case-marking. DOM is typologically common (Bossong 1983–1984), and tends to be associated with objects that are higher in prominence, where prominence is associated with animacy and definiteness. The basic pattern can be modelled using Optimality Theory in terms of harmonic alignment among prominence scales (Aissen 2003), and has a natural functional explanation in terms of processing cost (Haspelmath 2009). But close inspection of individual languages often reveals more to the story; see Iemmolo & Klumpp (2014), Seržant & Witzlack-Makarevich

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(2018), and Mardale & Karatsareas (2020) for some recent studies revealing the importance of other factors such as information structure and verbal semantics.

In Hungarian, the marking in question appears on the verbal conjugation, rather than on the object itself. Verbs alternate between two conjugations, which I call here "subjective" and "objective" following the terminology of traditional Hungarian grammar.[1] The conjugations are sometimes called "definite" and "indefinite", but definiteness is an imperfect guide to the distribution of the two conjugations, as we will review shortly. Although the present paper will focus on Hungarian, it is worth bearing in mind the larger context of related languages that Hungarian fits into. Among the Uralic languages (comprising the Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic families), object agreement is found in Samoyedic (Nenets, Enets, Nganasan, Selkup), Mordvinian, and Ugric (including Hungarian, and the Ob-Ugric languages Khanty and Mansi). Samoyedic is similar to Hungarian in that there are two conjugations, subjective and objective, with the objective conjugation reserved for "definite" objects (Hajdú 1968). Ob-Ugric languages have a subjective conjugation and several objective conjugation paradigms, one for each of the possible number values (singular, dual, or plural) of the object (Honti 1984; Kálmán 1965); see Virtanen (2015) on Eastern Mansi. In Northern Khanty, the use of one of these objective conjugations is further conditioned by whether the object is third person (Gulya 1966), and requires that the object be topical (Nikolaeva 1999; Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011). Mordvinian has by far the most complex system, in which the verb agrees in both person and number with the object (Keresztes 1989; Béjar 2008).

A popular current view on the distribution of the objective conjugation is syntactic: The objective conjugation is triggered whenever the object is a DP. In previous work (Coppock 2013), I argued against this "DP-hood Hypothesis" and in favor of a more semantic approach called the "Lexical Familiarity Hypothesis" (LFH), according to which the objective conjugation is triggered by a feature [+DEF], carried by selected lexical items that meet a certain semantic criterion having to do with existence presuppositions. Subsequent work by Bárány (2013; 2015a;b) argues against the LFH, and in favor of a (different) hybrid syntactic/semantic approach, one in which person is intimately intertwined with definiteness, and object marking is sensitive to the relative standing of the subject and the object on a person hierarchy, in agreement with É. Kiss (2005; 2013; 2017). In this paper, I consider these excellent and thoughtful critiques, and discuss what can be done to salvage the Lexical Familiarity Hypothesis, if anything.

I will conclude that the core of the Lexical Familiarity Hypothesis can in fact be maintained, if we: (i) adopt a focus-based theory of fake indexicals; (ii) assume that Condition B-threatening plurals denote groups; (iii) allow for local accommodation; (iv) assume that nominative possessors are required to be accompanied by *az* 'the'; (v) assume for some dialects a null [−DEF] determiner; (vi) add a DEF-unspecified lexical entry for cardinal numbers; and (vii) assume that

[1] Some scholars refer to this type of phenomenon as Differential Object Agreement or Differential Object Indexation and distinguish it from Differential Object Marking (see e.g. Iemmolo & Klumpp 2014). Others, like Bárány (2015a), include the phenomenon where an object-related marking occurs on the verb under the heading of Differential Object Marking, as I have done here.

egyik 'one of' is always [+DEF]. These are all independently-motivated assumptions. In fact, this theory enjoys certain advantages over the most recent alternative, insofar as it allows for CP objects and explains squeamishness in clash configurations.

In the next section, I argue that neither definiteness nor specificity captures the right generalization. In section 2, I discuss a syntactic approach, on which the objective conjugation is triggered by the presence of an object whose syntactic category is DP (or larger). Although that approach fares well empirically, it faces certain challenges. Section 3 presents a semantic approach, namely the hypothesis that the objective conjugation is triggered by lexically-grounded familiarity presuppositions (Coppock 2013). This section also presents challenges for this approach identified by Bárány (2013; 2015b), interwoven with potential responses. Section 4 presents Bárány's "hybrid" syntactic/semantic approach, along with some potential criticism. On the whole, I hope to convince the reader that the lexical familiarity approach can be augmented with auxiliary assumptions in a way that allows Bárány's challenges to be met, or at least to clarify exactly what is at stake.

1 Definiteness

Let us begin by reviewing the facts. Definite descriptions trigger the objective conjugation, and indefinite descriptions and intransitive verbs trigger the subjective conjugation:

(1) *Lát-om a madar-at.*
see-1SG.O the bird-ACC
'I see the bird.'

(2) *Lát-ok egy madar-at.*
see-1SG.S a bird-ACC
'I see a bird.'

(3) *Vár-ok.*
wait-1SG.S
'I'm waiting.'

The following sorts of elements trigger the objective conjugation: (i) proper names; (ii) *a/az* 'the', *ez* 'this', *az* 'that', *melyik* 'which', *bármelyik* 'whichever', *hányadik* 'which (=how manieth)', and *valamennyi* 'each'; (iii) third person [−wh] personal pronouns (both overt and null); (iv) reflexive and reciprocal pronouns. These could all be considered definite. Indefinite objects, including *néhány* 'some' and *sok* 'many', numerals, and the indefinite article *egy* 'a', trigger the subjective conjugation. However, definiteness is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the objective conjugation.

Grammatical person plays a role. 3rd person pronouns trigger the objective conjugation:

(4) *Lát-ják őt/őket.*
see-3PL.O him/them
'They see him/them.'

(5) *Lát-om.*
see-1SG.O
'I see it/him.'

But 1st and 2nd person object pronouns generally trigger the subjective conjugation.

(6) *Lát-nak engem/téged/minket/...*
see-3PL.S me/you/us/...
'They see me/you/us/...'

When the object is 1st person and the subject is 2nd person, a special form appears:

(7) *Szeret-lek.*
love-1SG/2
'I love you.'

Another exception to the generalization that the subjective conjugation is used when the object is 1st or 2nd person is with reflexive 1st or 2nd person pronouns, which trigger the objective conjugation.

(8) *(Én) szeret-em magam-at.*
I love-3SG.O myself-ACC
'I love myself.'

(9) *(Te) szeret-ed magad-at.*
You love-2SG.O yourself-ACC
'You love yourself.'

(10) *Lát-ják egymás-t.*
see-3PL.O each_other-ACC
'They see each other.'

Wh- words challenge the definiteness-based generalization as well; some trigger the objective conjugation, and some trigger subjective:

(11) *Hány-at kér-sz?*
how.many-ACC want-2SG.S
'How many do you want?'

(12) *Mi-t kér-sz?*
What-ACC want-2SG.S
'What do you want?'

(13) *Hányadik-at kér-ed?*
how.manyieth-ACC want-2SG.O
'Which one do you want?'

(14) *Melyik-et kér-ed?*
which-ACC want-2SG.O
'Which one do you want?'

É. Kiss (2018) observes that the contrast correlates with the presence or absence of the suffix *-ik*. While the objective-triggering *wh* words are what one might call 'D-linked' (ranging over a discourse-familiar subset of the domain) and others are not, it is not clear that the former are actually definite.

Moreover, the determiner *minden* 'every' generally triggers the subjective conjugation.

(15) *Eltitkol-ok minden találkozás-t.*
keep.secret-1SG.S every meeting-ACC
'I keep every meeting secret.'

Minden is a strong determiner:

(16) **Van minden könyv.*
is every book
'There is every book.'

As Coppock (2013) writes, "If we take this as a diagnostic of definiteness, then *minden* is an example of a definite determiner that does not trigger the objective conjugation. Alternatively, we could view the existential construction as a diagnostic of some property other than definiteness [...] and maintain that *minden* is, for example, specific but indefinite." In any case, according to Bartos (2001: 314), "there is absolutely no definiteness or specificity difference" between the following two sentences:

(17) *Eléget-em a től-ed kapott minden level-et.*
burn-1SG.O the from-2SG.P received every letter-ACC
'I burn every letter received from you.'

(18) *Eléget-ek minden től-ed kapott level-et.*
burn-1SG.S every from-2SG.P received letter-ACC

'I burn every letter received from you.'

Szabolcsi (1994: 210) concurs: "whereas the presence of the article is required in one of the examples and prohibited in the other, this makes no difference for interpretation".[2] That the contribution of *minden* to the meaning of a sentence is equivalent to what a definite construction contributes suggests that *minden* could be considered definite, even though it triggers the subjective conjugation.

When *minden* is combined with a possessor, however, the result triggers the objective conjugation (Bartos 1999: 100).

(19) a. *Ismer-em minden titk-od-at.*
know-1SG.O every secret-2SG.P-ACC
'I know your every secret.'

b. %*Ismer-ek minden titk-od-at.*
know-1SG.S every secret-2SG.P-ACC
'I know your every secret.'

The '%' diacritic represents the fact that not all speakers consider (19-b) grammatical. The version with the objective conjugation appears to be uncontroversially acceptable.

The presence of a possessor affects the behavior of *valaki* 'someone' as well, making the objective conjugation available for some speakers, according to Bartos (2001).

(20) a. *Lát-ok/*Lát-om valaki-t.*
see-1SG.S/see-1SG.O someone-ACC
'I see someone.'

b. *Lát-om valaki-d-et.*
see-1SG.O someone-2SG.P-ACC
'I see someone of yours.'

c. %*Lát-ok valaki-d-et.*
see-1SG.S someone-2SG.P-ACC

Note: According to Bartos (2001), the example with the subjective conjugation, (20-c), means something "less specific" than what (20-b) means. It is not entirely clear to me whether there are contexts in which the one would be appropriate but not the other. Answering this question is made more difficult by the fact that not all speakers accept (20-c).

[2]Balázs Surányi (p.c.) informs me that (17) and (18) differ in whether they would be appropriate in the following context: "I haven't yet received a single letter from you, and please do not send any in the future either." The variant with the definite article, (17), would not be appropriate in this context but the variant without it, (18), would be. This observation suggests that there is in fact a level at which *minden* is indefinite, and echoes the observation by Lappin & Reinhart (1988), discussed extensively by Horn (1997), that "lawlike" universals with English *every* do not carry existential presuppositions. (See also Geurts 2007 for an opposing view on this issue.)

Possessed NPs with otherwise-indefinite *egy* 'a/one' give rise to the same effect (Gerland & Ortmann 2009):

(21) *Egy könyv-em-et olvas-om.*
a book-1SG.P-ACC read-1SG.O
'I'm reading a book of mine.'

Bárány & Szalontai (2015) give results from a larger survey including the following sentences, showing that speakers are divided on the grammaticality of the subjective conjugation with possessed *egy* 'one' NPs:

(22) a. *Mari lát-ja egy kutyá-m-at.*
Mary see-3SG.O a dog-1SG.P-ACC
'Mary sees a dog of mine.'

b. %*Mari lát-∅ egy kutyá-m-at.*
Mary see-3SG.S a dog-1SG.P-ACC
'Mary sees a dog of mine.'

Egy 'one' behaves similarly to (other) cardinals in this respect, such as *öt* 'five'. With *öt*, adding a possessor allows the objective conjugation to be triggered, optionally according to Bartos (2001):

(23) a. *Lát-ok öt ember-t.*
see-1SG.S five man-ACC
'I see five men.'

b. *Lát-om öt ember-ed-et.*
see-1SG.O five man-2SG.P-ACC
'I see your five men.'

c. *Lát-ok öt ember-ed-et.*
see-1SG.S five man-2SG.P-ACC
'I see five of your men.'

In this case as well, the choice of conjugation reportedly comes with a difference of interpretation. According to Bartos (2001), the object NP in (23-b) has a more "specific" interpretation than the object NP in (23-c). Bartos does clarify more than this, but one speaker I consulted reported that (23-b) suggests that the speaker has five men total, while (23-c) does not carry this maximality implication (András Bárány, p.c.). This is an issue that could be nailed down more solidly.[3]

[3]To begin to explore this, I carried out a simple judgment study via the subject recruitment platform Prolific. Self-reported native Hungarian speakers (n=24) were presented with sentence pairs differing only in subjective vs.

Finally, bare possessed NPs as in (24-b), in contrast to definite possessed NPs as in (24-a), can be indefinite for some speakers, though not all (Bartos 1999: ex. (14), cf. also his fn. 8).

(24) a. *Látt-uk/*Látt-unk a kutyá-d-at.*
see-1PL.O/see-1PL.S the dog-2SG.P-ACC
'We saw your dog.'

b. *Látt-uk/%Látt-unk kutyá-d-at.*
see-1PL.O/see-1PL.S dog-2SG.P-ACC
'We saw your dog / a dog of yours.'

Again, it is clear that the addition of a possessor affects the choice of conjugation.

In summary, definiteness is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for the objective conjugation. Definite objects that trigger subjective include non-reflexive local pronouns and *minden* 'every'. Non-definite objects that trigger objective include possessed NPs with *valaki* 'someone', *néhány* 'some', and *öt* 'five'.

Given this, one might surmise that it is not *definiteness*, but rather *specificity* that drives the objective conjugation. But as Coppock & Wechsler (2012: ex. (52)) discuss, specific indefinites trigger the subjective conjugation. They give the following example:

(25) a. *Minden nap egy görög énekes-t hallgatt-ak/*-ák.*
every day a Greek singer-ACC listened-3PL.S/-3PL.O
'Every day, they listened to a Greek singer.'

b. *Máriá-nak hív-ják.*
Maria-DAT call-3PL.O
'Her name is Maria.'

Here, the continuation 'Her name is Maria' enforces an interpretation where 'a Greek singer' takes scope over 'every day', so the indefinite is (at least scopally) specific; yet it triggers the

objective conjugation and asked to judge them on a 1-5 scale. Among the sentence pairs were the following; thanks to a reviewer for the first:

(i) *Tisztán látom/látok öt emberedet, de mintha többen is volnának.*
'I clearly see.O/see.S five of your mean, but there may be more.'

(ii) *Tudom, hogy öt embered van, és öt emberedet látom/látok.*
'I know that you have five men, and I see.O/see.S your five men.'

In (i), the addressee may have more than 5 men, as far as the speaker knows; in (ii), the addressee is more likely to have exactly 5 men according to the speaker. With both examples, there was a clear preference for the objective conjugation ($p < .001$, based on a linear regression model with robust standard errors using `lm_robust` in the R package `estimatr`), and the preference did not differ significantly between the examples ($p \approx 0.76$), nor did baseline acceptability ($p \approx 0.22$), with around half of the participants awarding a perfect score to the version with the objective conjugation. If a difference exists, this method was not able to detect it. I leave a more thorough examination of this issue to future research.

subjective conjugation.

2 DP-hood

According to what I will call the *DP-hood hypothesis*, the objective conjugation is used if and only if the object is at least the size of a DP (Bartos 2001, building on Szabolcsi 1994, adopted in É. Kiss 2000 and É. Kiss 2002: 49,151–157). This hypothesis explains the data we've seen, assuming that *minden* heads a projection below DP, and nominative possessors sit just below D, but a DP layer is always projected above them. The second assumption is carefully motivated in work by Anna Szabolcsi; see Szabolcsi (1994) and references cited therein.

Coppock & Wechsler (2012) identify a set of challenges for the DP-hood hypothesis. First, as we have seen, some pronouns trigger the subjective conjugation, including 1st and 2nd person non-reflexive pronouns, as well as most *wh-* NPs. These expressions all behave as DPs.

Their second argument comes from the appearance of the objective conjugation with clausal complements, such as in the following example:

(26) *János mond-t-a* [*hogy holnap érkez-ik*].
John.NOM say-PST-3SG.O that tomorrow arrive-3SG.S
'John said that he is arriving tomorrow.'

Bartos (1999) assumes, following Kenesei (1994), that CPs are linked to DPs, as in the following type of example:

(27) *János az-t mond-t-a* [*hogy holnap érkez-ik*].
John.NOM it-ACC say-PST-3SG.O that tomorrow arrive-3SG.S
'John said (it) that he is arriving tomorrow.'

In other words, the correlative pronoun *az-t* 'it-ACC' is underlyingly present in (26), and that's why the CP is underlyingly a DP. But if *holnap* 'tomorrow' undergoes focus-raising out of the clause, then *az-t* 'it-ACC' can no longer appear. In other words, inserting the correlative pronoun creates an island for focus-raising.

(28) *János* ***holnap*** *mond-t-a* *(*az-t)* [*hogy érkez-ik*].
John.NOM tomorrow say-PST-3SG.O it-ACC that arrive-3SG.S
'It is tomorrow that John said that he is arriving.'

Kenesei (1994) argues that the reason *holnap* 'tomorrow' and the correlative pronoun do not co-occur is that *holnap* raises into matrix focus position. But in examples like the following, where what's focus-raised is in instrumental case (clearly distinct from accusative) and indefinite, the focus-raised element cannot be occupying the position of an underlying correlative pronoun

that the verb is agreeing with (Coppock & Wechsler 2012). Yet the correlative pronoun is still impossible:

(29) *Két ember-rel szeret-né-m (*az-t) [hogy Péter találkoz-z-on].*
two men-INST like-would-1SG.O (that-ACC) that Peter meet-COND-3SG.S
'I want Peter to meet with TWO MEN.'

In other words, the kind of explanation that Kenesei gives to explan the absence of the correlative pronoun in (26) cannot hold up in general. They conclude that in this case the clause is a CP, rather than a DP.[4]

Finally, Coppock & Wechsler (2012) argue at length that both *valamennyi* 'each' and *minden* 'every' are determiners that head a projection below D. Yet *valamennyi* triggers the objective conjugation, unlike *minden*:

(30) *Eltitkol-om valamennyi találkozás-t.*
keep.secret-1SG.O each meeting-ACC
'I keep each meeting secret.'

It seems to be a difference in their semantics, rather than a difference in their syntax, that drives the difference in conjugation.

3 Lexical familiarity

3.1 The Lexical Familiarity Hypothesis

Coppock (2013) puts forth the *Lexical Familiarity Hypothesis*: If the referential argument of a phrase is *lexically specified* as familiar, then the phrase triggers the objective conjugation. The theory posits a semantically-motivated feature, [+DEF], which is introduced by lexical items that specify that their referential argument is familiar. A lexical item specifies that its referential argument is familiar if it requires either (i) that the referential argument is among the discourse referents in the common ground, or (ii) that the referential argument is connected to a discourse referent with such a requirement via a part-whole relation.

Some lexical items introduce a negative specification for the DEF feature. A lexical item introduces [−DEF] if it lexically specifies its referential argument as new. A lexical item specifies its referential argument as new if it introduces the discourse referent into the common ground. It is also possible to lack a specification for this feature entirely. Some determiners introduce [−DEF], some introduce [+DEF], and some are unspecified for the DEF feature. Some examples:

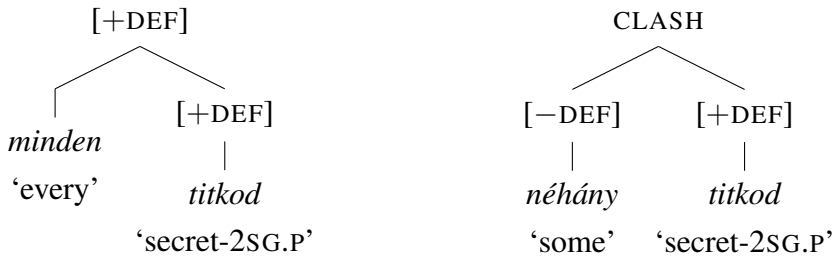
- *néhány* 'some', cardinal numerals: [−DEF]

[4] See also den Dikken 2018 for a recent discussion of this issue.

- *valamennyi* ‘each’: [+DEF]
- *minden* ‘every’: no DEF feature specification

D-linked *wh-* phrases like *melyik* are [+DEF] as well (Coppock 2013: 362). (In future research, it would be interesting to derive the [+DEF] feature from the semantics of *-ik*, which as É. Kiss (2018) points out is a common thread among *wh-* words that trigger the objective conjugation.)

Possessives are [+DEF]. This positive specification combines with the absence of specification on a determiner to produce a positive specification, or with a negative specification to produce a clash. For instance; unspecified *minden* ‘every’ combines with [+DEF] *titkod* ‘your secret’ to produce a [+DEF] phrase, and [−DEF] *néhány* ‘some’ combines with it to produce a clash:



The fact that the theory predicts a clash in these cases fits quite well with the sorts of reactions that these cases seem to elicit among Hungarian speakers. When faced with a clash, it seems that Hungarian speakers do not see the example as outright ungrammatical, but feel “squeamish” as they say in the presupposition literature, since there are multiple conflicting constraints that have to be satisfied simultaneously. This is quite consistently the reaction in cases where the theory predicts a clash.

Another success of this theory is that it explains why 1st and 2nd person non-reflexive pronouns trigger the subjective conjugation. 1st and 2nd person non-reflexive pronouns are not *anaphoric* but rather *purely indexical*. Hence they are not [+DEF]. 3rd person pronouns, as well as all reflexive and reciprocal pronouns, are *anaphoric*, hence [+DEF].

3.2 Challenges for the lexical familiarity hypothesis

The lexical familiarity hypothesis has been challenged in two main arenas. The first has to do with 1st and 2nd person objects; the second concerns possessives. In this section, I present these challenges along with responses that can be given in defense of the LFH.

3.2.1 Person agreement

Recall that the LFH correctly predicts that object agreement should be absent with 1st and 2nd person objects to the extent that they are indexical, rather than anaphoric. But Bárány (2015b) challenges this explanation with examples involving so-called “fake indexicals”, which are semantically non-indexical (arguably) despite exhibiting 1st or 2nd person morphology. In

the following example from Bárány (2015b), the object appears to be interpreted as a bound anaphor, even though it surfaces as 2nd person (Kratzer 2009).

(31) *Csak te hisz-ed, hogy **téged** fog-nak megválaszt-ani.*
only you believe-2SG.O that you.ACC will-3PL.S vote_for-INF
'Only you believe that they will vote for you.'

If indeed *téged* is interpreted as a bound variable, it should satisfy the conditions for [+DEF]. If so, then the person facts cannot be given a unified semantic explanation.

Luckily for the LFH, there is relatively recent work on fake indexicals arguing that the indexical feature is in fact interpreted, called 'focus-based theories' (Jacobson 2012; Sauerland 2013; Bassi 2019). On this sort of view, "ϕ-features on pronouns are always semantically interpreted as expected at the level of the uttered sentence (the 'prejacent'), but their content doesn't have to project to the level of focus alternatives of the prejacent" (Bassi 2019: ex. (2)). I refer the reader to those papers for data and argumentation. To the extent that these arguments are convincing, the LFH can be maintained, as the pronouns in these cases are genuine indexicals after all.

Another imaginable solution would be that the objective conjugation is simply specified for 3rd person. But this hypothesis is hard, if not impossible to maintain. First, as Coppock & Wechsler (2010: 174) point out, this hypothesis would render the objective conjugation incompatible with 1st and 2nd person reflexive objects, which trigger the objective conjugation. Furthermore, É. Kiss (2013; 2017) gives examples of the objective conjugation with 1st and 2nd person plural objects and same-person subjects.[5] The following examples are from É. Kiss (2017: exx. (6a-b)).

(32) *Én minket* { *ajánl-om* / **ajánl-ok* }.
I us.ACC { recommend-1SG.O / recommend-1SG.S }
'I recommend us.'

(33) *Te titeket* { *ajánl-od* / **ajánl-asz* }*?*
you.SG you.PL.ACC { recommend-2SG.O / recommend-2SG.S }
'Do you (sg.) recommend you all?'

These examples challenge both a brute-force 3rd person requirement for the objective conjugation and the LFH. If *minket* 'us.ACC' and *titeket* 'you.PL.ACC' are indexical, then they are not predicted to trigger the objective conjugation under the LFH. É. Kiss's (2017) alternative proposal is that object agreement is governed by her Inverse Agreement Constraint, ruling out object agreement unless the subject is higher than the object (or the subject and object are both on the lowest level of the hierarchy). Her proposed animacy hierarchy for Hungarian is as

[5] See also den Dikken et al. 2001 and Bárány 2015b.

follows:

$$1sg > \left\{ \begin{array}{c} 1pl \\ 2sg > 2pl \end{array} \right\} > 3$$

Combined with the Inverse Agreement Constraint, this hierarchy captures the full range of data on person sensitivity, including the use of the special *-lak/-lek* form in the case of first person singular subjects and second person objects.

Nevertheless, I would like to argue that the LFH can be defended in the light of this data as well, and that these cases are in some ways the exceptions that prove the rule. Note first that, as É. Kiss (2013) observed, such examples are ameliorated by making the object reflexive (examples (11a,c) from É. Kiss 2013, judgments hers):

(34) *Én* { *magunkat* / ?*minket* } *is beleveszem a névsorba.*
I { ourselves.ACC / us.ACC } also include-1SG.O the namelist-into
'I also include ourselves/?us on the list of names.'

The reflexive pronoun option is the "optimal solution" according to É. Kiss (2013). This improvement is expected under a version of Condition B that rules out overlapping reference between subject and object (e.g. Lasnik 1989).

It has often been observed that Condition B effects are mitigated by collective interpretations. Fiengo & May (1994) point out that (35-a) has an acceptable reading, and Reinhart & Reuland (1993) point out that adding *both*, and thereby forcing a distributive interpretation, renders the example ungrammatical.

(35) a. *Max*$_1$ *and Lucie talked about him*$_1$
b. *Both Max*$_1$ *and Lucie talked about him*$_1$

Similarly, they observe that *We elected me* is better than ?*We voted for me*. The same is true for English versions of examples like É. Kiss's, where the plural pronoun is in object position; Kiparsky (2012) points out that (36) is acceptable in English under a collective interpretation.

(36) *I like us.* ('us as a couple')

Kiparsky makes the following suggestion for handling apparent exceptions to Condition B: cases like *We elected me* and *I like us* need not involve overlap if the plurals are analyzed as *groups*, as opposed to *sums* (Landman 1989). If Barker's (1992) analysis of groups is right, then groups are individuals that do not contain individual parts. If *us*, under the acceptable reading of *I like us*, denotes a group, then there is no overlap in reference between the subject and the object. Hence, Condition B is satisfied.

Suppose that the plurals in examples like É. Kiss's (32) and (33) must denote groups, not sums, in order to avoid a Condition B violation. This immediately explains the obligatorily

collective interpretation of the plural pronouns in these same-person configurations. The slight reduction in acceptability could then be explained as a consequence of the cost of introducing a group-forming operator. Furthermore, the discourse referent for the pronoun would be non-indexical, as the group referred to is not one of the discourse participants. Then we correctly predict that the objective conjugation should appear in these apparent Condition B violations with plural objects. It seems, then, that there is an independently motivated set of assumptions that is compatible with both the lexical familiarity hypothesis and É. Kiss's examples (32) and (33).

The inverse agreement theory does have the advantage of tying together the special *-lak/-lek* ending with the objective conjugation in Hungarian, and the existence of inverse agreement among other languages in the Sprachbund. But it must be acknowledged that special exceptions have to be made for third person under this analysis: The inverse agreement constraint contains this *unless* clause, pertaining to 3rd person: "unless both the subject and the object referents represent the lowest level of the Animacy Hierarchy" (É. Kiss 2017: ex. (9)). As Coppock & Wechsler (2010) argue, it is no less elegant to stipulate that *-lak/-lek* is a special form that is used when the subject is first person singular and the object is second person; see also Coppock & Wechsler (2012: 735–736). Another question that arises under the inverse agreement approach is why object agreement is allowed with first and second person singular reflexive objects, as in "I love myself" and "You love yourself". An exception to the Inverse Agreement Constraint needs to be made for these cases. I conclude, then, that the LFH remains a viable contender in the face of this data.

3.2.2 Possessives

Another challenge that Bárány raises for the LFH involves possessives in the so-called "*mihi est* construction", the type of possessive involving a dative possessor and a copular verb.

(37) *Mari-nak nincs macská-ja.*
Mari-DAT NEG.COP cat-3SG.P
'Mari doesn't have a cat.'

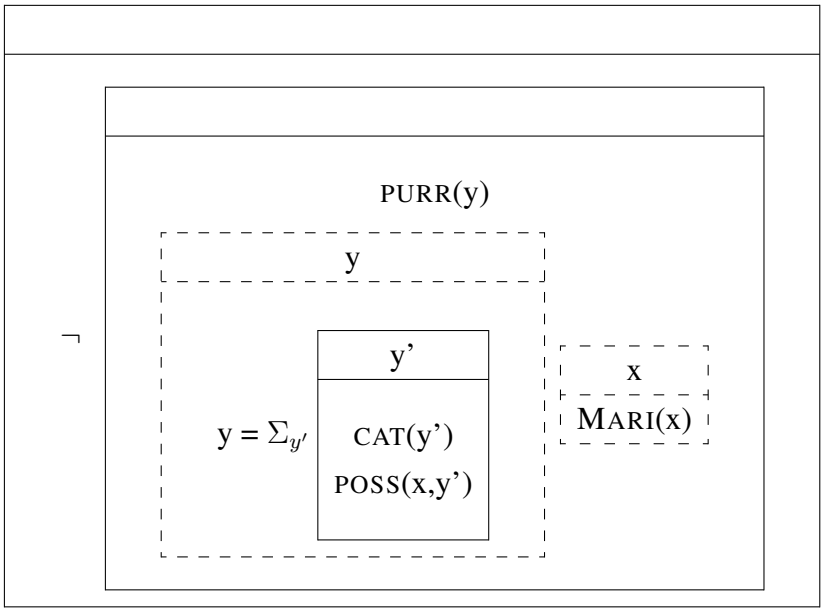
Despite the possessive, (37) carries no presupposition of existence. This is problematic for the assumption that possessives come with a lexical familiarity specification.

A possible way out here would be through *local accommodation* (Heim 1983; van der Sandt 1992; Beaver & Zeevat 2007; Elbourne 2013). It is well-known that presuppositions can be accommodated in context; local accommodation occurs when the content of a presupposition is accomodated within the scope of another operator in the sentence. An example in which local accommodation might well apply is in *Every nation cherishes its king*, which can be taken to mean 'Every nation, *if it has a king*, cherishes that king.' The "if it has a king" condition is the result of local accommodation of the presupposition associated with the possessive, *its king*. In

a dynamic framework, local accommodation can be achieved by updating the context with the content of a presupposition (such as the "it has a king" presupposition) after dynamic evaluation of another operator in the sentence. In this case, dynamic interpretation of the universal quantifier involves a temporary context update with "x is a nation"; local accommodation adds "x has a king" to that temporary update, yielding an interpretation where universal quantification ends up being over nations with kings.

To see in a bit more detail how the presuppositions of possessives might work in a dynamic framework, consider the discourse representation structure (DRS) that would be derived under Coppock's (2013) analysis for *Mari macskája nem dorombol* 'Mary's cat doesn't purr'. As is standard in Discourse Representation Theory (Kamp & Reyle 1993), the DRS consists of a universe of discourse referents, shown in the top row of the box, and a set of conditions, in the body of the box. Following van der Sandt (1992), the dotted lines indicate presupposed DRSs. The sum operator Σ is contributed by the silent definite article in the prenominal possessive construction, giving the maximal set of cats possessed by x (Mary).

(38)

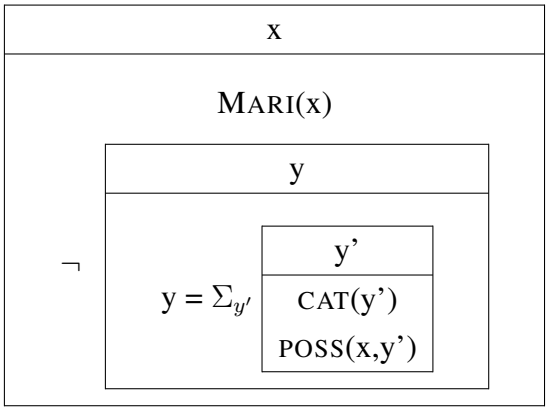


The presupposed DRSs must be resolved at some level, not necessarily the level at which they are initially represented. If the presuppositions are globally accommodated, then the sentence as a whole will presuppose that Mary has a cat. But if the possessive presupposition is accommodated below the scope of the negation operator, then the sentence will not carry that presupposition; it will merely entail that there is no purring cat possessed by Mary.

In this case, it is not clear that local accommodation is available, at least not without explicit support from a continuation such as "... because Mary doesn't *have* a cat!" or equivalent. As a constraint on the range of predicted available interpretations, it has been suggested that local accommodation is only possible whenever global accommodation would lead to inconsistency (Heim 1983). But even with such a constraint, we would predict that local accommodation should be applicable in cases like (37).

Without getting into detail about the semantics of existential and possessive constructions, suppose that (37) *Marinak nincs macskája* 'Mary doesn't have a cat' is represented as a version of (38) without the 'PURR(y)'. Then, with local accommodation, the presuppositions could be resolved as follows, giving the reading 'Mary doesn't have a cat':

(39)



Example (37) is a case where global accommodation would lead to inconsistency, so local accommodation should in principle be an available option.

A third problem for the analysis that Bárány (2015b) raises is that the subjective conjugation can appear with possessed objects, as in (40)–(42).

(40) %*Látt-unk kutyá-d-at.*
see.PST-1PL.S dog-2SG.P-ACC
'We saw a dog of yours.'
'We saw your dog [OK for some speakers].'

(41) %*Péter-nek olvas-t-unk vers-é-t.*
Peter-DAT read-PST-1PL.S poem-3SG.P-ACC
'We read poems by Peter.'

(42) *Fi-á-t ismer-ek, de lány-á-t nem ismer-ek.*
son-3SG.P-ACC know-1SG.S but daughter-3SG.P-ACC not know-1SG.S
'I know sons of his/hers, but no daughters.'

(The third is an attested example discussed by author János Arany (Bárány 2013).) As Bárány points out, there's no obvious source for [−DEF] in these cases.

It is worth noting, first, that the status of these cases is unclear. In Bárány & Szalontai's experimental survey, (43-a), with the subjective conjugation and a possessed bare noun, was rated 1 out of 5 on a 1-5 acceptability scale, with or without a full dative possessor nominal. Although (43-b) was not rated as perfect, its average rating was much higher, around 3 out of 5.

(43) Context: Petőfi was a famous poet.

a. **Mari olvas-ott (Petőfi-nek) vers-é-t.*
Mari read-PST.3SG.S Petőfi-DAT poem-3SG.P-ACC

b. *?Mari olvas-t-a (Petőfi-nek) vers-é-t.*
Mari read-PST-3SG.O Petőfi-DAT poem-3SG.P-ACC

So at least in this experimental context, the relevant example more or less came out as ungrammatical. So it may not be among our goals to be able to rule in those cases.

A reviewer points out that there do seem to be examples of possessed objects with obligatory subjective conjugation:

(44) *A vádlott-nak még mindig találnak/*találják titkos*
the defendant-DAT still always find-3PL.S/find-3PL.O secret
bankszámláit.
bank_account.P.PL.ACC
'They still keep finding secret bank accounts of the defendant.'

Talál 'find' is one of the verbs that Szabolcsi (1986) identifies as requiring a non-specific object, barring non-canonical discourse status, and this may be a cause of the difference.[6]

For cases in which the subjective conjugation can occur with a possessed object, a possible solution is to posit a [−DEF] null determiner, with the semantics of an existential quantifier like *some*. The [−DEF] determiner would clash with the [+DEF] specification on the possessive, yielding variation and squeamishness. If the verb *talál* 'find' imposes a non-specificity constraint, then the [−DEF] feature on the null determiner may take precedence over the [+DEF] feature in cases like (44) as a consequence. The typical preference for the objective conjugation with possessed objects even with [+DEF] quantifiers like *néhány* 'some' suggests that [+DEF] tends to win in a clash. But perhaps in cases like (44), [−DEF] gets help from the non-specificity requirement imposed by the verb, allowing it to win out. On this view, [+DEF] and [−DEF] would have to be seen as mutually incompatible competitors, and the process of resolving a conflict would be sensitive to multiple factors, including the relative inherent strength of [+DEF] and [−DEF] and requirements imposed by the grammatical context. As far as I can see, then, this data is consistent with the Lexical Familiarity Hypothesis.

It seems worth pointing out, moreoever, that for cases like (41), where the possessor is extracted, Bartos (2001) assumes that the DP layer is eliminated. This assumption is crucial in order to maintain the DP-hood hypothesis, as these cases involve the subjective conjugation. The elimination of this layer would have to eliminate the trace of the dative possessor, because

[6]Szabolcsi (1986) reports that (i) *Találták a könyvet* 'they found the book' is not grammatical but (ii) *Tegnap találták a könyvet* 'They found the book YESTERDAY' is. In the judgment study described in Footnote (ii), I was not able to corroborate this idea, although the sample means differed in the predicted direction; the mean judgment for (i) was 4.54/5, vs. 4.83/5 for (ii) ($p \approx 0.2$). It seems that the difference, if it is indeed reliable, may be too subtle to detect through this method.

it sits in Spec, DP. Eliminating the trace would in turn destroy the semantic relation between the extracted possessor and the possessed nominal.[7] Now, perhaps the possessor is not extracted, but rather base-generated outside the object phrase, so that no DP is ever projected. It is not entirely clear to me how to achieve the interpretive link between the possessor and the object in this case. Another way of salvaging the DP-hood hypothesis would be to say that the possessor is base-generated below the DP-level, and does not in fact move through an "escape hatch" in the specifier of DP, contra Szabolcsi (1994), despite her arguments that it does move through that position. In any case, the DP-hood hypothesis appears to be incompatible with independently-motivated assumptions about the structure of possessed nominals and the nature of semantic interpretation.

The final objection to the LFH that I would like to discuss also has to do with possessives. As background, observe the contrast between (45-a) and (45-b) (examples from Bárány 2013).

(45) a. *Mari két fi-a*
Mari.NOM two boy-3SG.P
'Mari's two sons'
b. *Mari-nak két fi-a*
M-DAT two boy-3SG.P
'two of Mari's sons'

Subjective vs. objective conjugation aside, there seems to be a difference *in meaning* between nominative possessors and dative possessors, where the former is "maximal"; according to Bárány (2013: 25), (45-a) implies that Mari has only two sons and (45-b) does not.[8] These examples are both self-contained nominal constituents that could be used as answers to a question or fronted at the beginning of a sentence, so we cannot attribute the difference to extraction of the dative possessor.

The apparent problem for the LFH is that when we have a nominative possessor and a cardinal determiner or *egyik*, only the objective conjugation is possible (Bárány 2013: ex. (23b)):

(46) *Olvas-t-a Mari öt könyv-é-t.*
read-PST-3SG.O Mary.NOM five book-3SG.P-ACC

[7] See also Bárány 2018: 34, fn. 13 for further critical discussion of the DP-hood hypothesis: "This is not a completely satisfactory analysis. If Szabolcsi (1994) is right that speakers of the majority dialect always require object agreement, even with non-specific possessed direct objects, a syntactic analysis of object agreement must assume that those speakers analyse all possessed DOs as including a (null) D head and person features. This gives rise to a mismatch not found with other types of objects: non-specific objects triggering object agreement. While this is not problematic per se, the analysis risks becoming circular at this point: the choice between sbj and obj is determined by the presence or absence of (null) D, but there is little evidence for postulating such a head if there is no difference in meaning."

[8] This judgment is disputed. While (45-a) is more likely to imply maximality than (45-b), that implication is not strictly required: Péter Siptár offers the example *Mari két fia katona, a harmadik meg tűzoltó* 'Two sons of Mary / two of Mari's sons are soldiers, and the third is a fireman'.

'He read every one of Mary's five books.'

(47) *Ismer-i Péter egy-ik barát-já-t.*
know-3SG.O Peter one-IK friend-3SG.P-ACC
'S/he knows a certain one of Peter's friends.'

The LFH predicts the subjective conjugation to be possible here, *under the assumption* that both *öt* and *egyik* are [−DEF] determiners. To underline this point, Bárány (2013) points out that there are cases like (48) and (49), where subjective conjugation co-occurs with a dative possessor:

(48) *Az egri kávés-nak két lány-á-t ismer-ek.*
the Eger.FROM coffee_seller-DAT two girl-3SG.P-ACC know-1SG.S
'I know two of the coffee seller from Eger's daughters.'

(49) *Petőfi-nek három arckép-é-t ismer-ek.*
Petőfi-DAT three portrait-3SG.P-ACC know-1SG.S
'I know three portraits of Petőfi.'

... but there are no comparable examples with subjective conjugation and a nominative possessor. (These are from a Hungarian folk song and discussed by author János Arany, respectively.) Again we see a contrast between nominative and dative possessors, where the former seem more staunchly [+DEF]. This is not a contrast that is expected under Coppock's (2013) assumptions. Examples like (48) and (49) are in fact correctly predicted to be at least marginally possible under those assumptions, because the cardinal introduces [−DEF], even though the possessive introduces [+DEF]. On the other hand, however, the absence of the subjective conjugation in (46) and (47) is puzzling under Coppock's (2013) assumptions.

I think the problematic component of Coppock's (2013) set of assumptions here is not the LFH; rather, it rests with cardinal determiners and *egyik*. In other words, the LFH is consistent with this data; its the assumptions about the lexicon that are faulty. If neither cardinals nor *egyik* contributes [−DEF], then in combination with a possessor, the objective conjugation should be triggered obligatorily.

I suggest that cardinals like *öt* 'five' have a [−DEF] reading, as Coppock (2013) proposes, but they also have a reading that is not specified for definiteness. Indeed, Rothstein (2017) argues that cardinals can be modifiers that restrict the number of atoms (a cardinal interpretation), or they can really introduce an existential quantifier (a quantifier interpretation).

- $\lambda x \,.\, |x| = 2$ (unspecified for DEF)
- $\lambda Q \lambda P \,.\, \exists x[P(x) \wedge Q(x) \wedge |x| = 2]$ [−DEF]

The former does not introduce a discourse referent, so it is expected to be unspecified for DEF.

The latter is expected to be [−DEF]. I conjecture that both interpretations are available in Hungarian, but the [−DEF] variant is incompatible with the semantic requirements of the nominative possessor.

In Coppock (2013), I only gave the lexical entry that corresponds to the latter, where an existential quantifier is introduced. But if we were to augment the lexicon with the first one, then we would have an additional lexical entry that is independently motivated. I believe that such a lexical entry is independently motivated by cases like *a két...*, where the meaning is something like 'the plurality made up of two atomic individuals which...'. If this predicate-like entry is the one that is used in the case that we have a nominative possessor, then we correctly predict that the objective conjugation should appear.

Now, the question arises: Why is the objective conjugation *obligatory* in (46)? Couldn't the [−DEF] version of a cardinal be combined with a nominative possessor, yielding a clash, and thereby opening the door for the subjective conjugation? Why would a nominative possessor require the cardinal that is unspecified for definiteness? To answer this question, and to explain the difference in interpretation between dative and nominative possessed nominals ((45-a) vs. (45-b)) at the same time, I suggest that we follow Bartos (2001) in assuming that nominative possessors come with a silent definite determiner with the semantics of *az* 'the'. As far as I can see, there is no evidence that is inconsistent with this possibility. It would ensure maximality with nominative possessors, and it would also mean that the quantificational determiner would not be compatible with nominative possessors, because a quantificational cardinal determiner would yield an output that could not combine semantically with the definite determiner. If there's an underlying *az* that's deleted, then the [−DEF] version of the cardinal would not be compatible with the underlying structure, so we would not generate the [−DEF] version, and the objective conjugation would be predicted to be required.

Let us turn now to *egyik*. Observe that *egyik* triggers the objective conjugation even when unaccompanied by *az* 'the':

(50) *... és egy-ik ember-t próbál-t-ák újraéleszteni.*
... and one-IK man-ACC try-PST-3PL.O resuscitate.INF
'... and they tried to resuscitate one guy.'

(51) *... és egy-ik lány-t sem becsül-i meg.*
... and one-IK girl-ACC not appreciate-3SG.O PERF
'... and he doesn't appreciate any of the girls.'

These are attested examples, found on the web, and I've checked the translations with multiple Hungarian speakers. Speakers generally agree that (51) is fully acceptable, with the negation, but in positive contexts, as in (50), some speakers feel that the definite determiner *az* 'the' should be included. In any case, in both contexts, the objective conjugation is triggered. Given this, I assume that *egyik* is lexically [+DEF] due to partitive specificity, like *mindegyik* 'each'.

(Ultimately, this feature of these words should be derived from a compositional analysis of the extraordinarily fascinating *-ik* suffix; relevant work to draw on for future work on this includes É. Kiss & Tánczos (2018: 741ff.) and the paper presented by Marcel den Dikken at ICSH in Potsdam.)

So far, what I've argued is that if I make certain assumptions, then I can resuscitate the LFH in the face of the challenges that have been brought up for it. The assumptions are as follows: (i) a focus-based theory of fake indexicals; (ii) Condition B-threatening plurals must be interpreted as groups; (iii) local accommodation is possible; (iv) some dialects have a null [−DEF] D; (v) nominative possessors are obligatorily accompanied by a silent *az*; and (vi) cardinal numbers have a lexical entry that is unspecified for the DEF feature. If I have not managed to convince the reader of the superiority of the LFH, I hope I have at least helped to clarify what theoretical assumptions are at stake in the choice between the two.

4 Hybrid account

Now, let us compare the revised LFH account to Bárány's (2013) hybrid syntactic/semantic account. So far, what I've argued is that if I make certain assumptions, then I can resuscitate the LFH in the face of the possessive data, and then my predictions become at least equal to the predictions of the hybrid account. But there are contrasting predictions between these two accounts, still; they don't make exactly the same predictions. Under the LFH, *minden* and *néhány* should behave differently with respect to possessed NPs, because *minden* carries no feature, and *néhány* carries a [+DEF] feature. But the hybrid account does not predict such a contrast.

Under Bárány's (2013) proposal, there is a feature [D] located in the DP. A noun phrase has [D] when either: (i) a determiner with matching semantics is spelled out in D, or (ii) DP has a sufficiently local possessor in its specifiers. Note that this alone does not explain the specificity of nominative possessors. Both *minden* 'every' and *néhány* 'some' should be equally capable of occurring with the subjective conjugation in possessed NPs, because neither determiner has semantics matching [D].

Bárány (2013) is aware of this, and gives examples where *minden* + possessed NP triggers the subjective conjugation.

(52) *... elfeled-tet* *minden bánat-od-at.*
... forget-CAUS.3SG.S every sorrow-2SG.P-ACC
'... that it makes you forget all your sorrows.'

But Bárány (2013) himself gives this footnote (fn. 11): "An anonymous reviewer points out that '[t]he grammaticality of the examples [here] are rather dubious. It is quite unlikely that a native speaker of Hungarian would utter a sentence like this on purpose.'" So it's unclear exactly what the status of these cases is. In any case, it seems that there is a slight difference in status between

the *minden* cases and the *néhány* cases. Any extent to which a difference exists is good for the LFH.

5 Conclusion

This paper has defended the Lexical Familiarity Hypothesis (LFH) for the Hungarian objective conjugation: Selected lexical items are assigned a definiteness feature in virtue of a certain type of familiarity presupposition that they carry; this feature can be positive, negative, or unspecified; and a clash arises when a positive specification combines with a negative one. I hope to have shown that the LFH can be maintained in the face of evidence that has been presented as a challenge to it, if we: (i) adopt a focus-based theory of fake indexicals; (ii) assume that Condition B-threatening plurals denote groups; (iii) allow for local accommodation; (iv) assume that nominative possessors are accompanied by *az*; (v) assume for some dialects a null [−DEF] D; (vi) add a DEF-unspecified lexical entry for cardinal numbers; and (vii) assume that *egyik* is always [+DEF].

In fact, the LFH carries certain advantages: It allows for the objective conjugation to be triggered by categories other than DP, and for CP we have evidence that it can be; and it explains the *minden*/*néhány* contrast. The second advantage is a little bit less tangible, but the prediction is that in clash configurations with both [+DEF] and a [−DEF], there will be a kind of squeamishness, where speakers feel that the sentence is not really ungrammatical, but it's somewhat uncomfortable. My impression from working with Hungarian speakers is that this is indeed the nature of the problem; the clash analysis sheds light on the kind of vexation that arises in the relevant configurations.

That said, there are certain issues that remain unresolved, even still. One question is what to do about the kinds of inherently unique definites that trigger weak articles in languages with weak/strong distinctions (Schwarz 2009: i.a.) – if the standard thinking on these types of cases is right, and these kinds of definites are non-familiar definites, then they should not trigger the objective conjugation, and I suspect that this is not a correct prediction, although I have not tested this directly. Perhaps "weak familiarity" in Roberts's (2003) sense suffices; that is, it suffices that a discourse referent can be accommodated.

A more daunting challenge is posed by cases involving indefinite demonstratives like *this guy* in *So I met this guy yesterday* (Abbott 2010: i.a.). Hungarian has a similar phenomenon (Bárány 2018):

(53) *Mari tegnap lát-ta ez-t a fickó-t.*
Mari yesterday see-PST.3SG.O this-ACC the guy-ACC
'Mari saw this guy yesterday.'

Here, the proximal demonstrative *ez* seems to introduce a new discourse referent, which would make it [−DEF], and yet it triggers the objective conjugation. These uses of proximal demon-

stratives are specific, but as we have seen, specificity does not automatically guarantee that the objective conjugation will be used. I leave it as an unresolved issue whether there is some sense in which these cases count as familiar in the relevant sense.

Stepping back, this conclusion supports a view of the Hungarian objective conjugation on which it fits into the larger landscape of differential object marking (DOM) fairly comfortably. DOM is generally thought to be conditioned by semantic factors like animacy and definiteness, rather than syntactic ones. According to the view being put forth here, the Hungarian objective conjugation is not different from other cases of DOM in that respect, although the semantic factor is mediated through a syntactic [DEF] feature. On this view, then, the semantic factor governing DOM in this instance can be seen as active but partly grammaticalized.

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