

Reflexivity marking in Hungarian PPs

0. Overview This talk investigates an area of Hungarian grammar that, up to my best knowledge, has received relatively little attention so far. The encoding of reflexivity in PPs is subject to cross-linguistic variation that constitutes a non-trivial challenge for binding proposals. The Hungarian data are intriguing, but upon closer inspection, it turns out that we can accommodate them within a predicate-based approach to binding, like that of Reinhart & Reuland (1993). For ease of exposition, I use the term *PP* here to refer to postpositional and oblique case-marked phrases alike.

1. Background Languages fall into two typological groups with respect to how they mark reflexivity in locative PPs (see Faltz 1985 for an overview). In some languages, like English (1a), French, Spanish, Hebrew or Japanese, both pronominal and anaphoric forms license reflexive readings in these contexts; and descriptive grammars of English remark that many speakers actually prefer the pronominal (see Huddleston & Pullum 2002:1489). In other languages, like German (1b), Hindi, Latin, or Serbo-Croat, only the anaphor is grammatical.

- (1) a. *John_i saw a snake near him_i/himself_i.*
b. *Hans_i sah eine Schlange neben *ihm_i/sich_i.*

Thus there are two types of variation that need to be explained. First, we should understand why the two groups of languages differ, and, second, we need an explanation for the apparent non-complementarity of the pronominal and the anaphor in (1a).

Existing attempts at the latter problem all utilize the fact that the preposition in (1a) is predicative. In the GB literature in the 1980s it was proposed that (1a) is structurally ambiguous. The preposition can project a small clause, in which case it constitutes a separate binding domain (\rightarrow *him*), or, alternatively, no small clause is present, and we have only one binding domain (\rightarrow *himself*). If one does not assume such a structural ambiguity, and rejects the small clause analysis in particular, then in principle two possible roads of explanation are open. Possibly, the binding constraints referring to pronominals and anaphors are not defined over the selfsame binding domain: a pronominal cannot be bound in the *coargument domain* (satisfied in (1a), given that the preposition is predicative), and an anaphor must be bound in the *minimal nucleus containing a subject* (cf. Dalrymple 1990). On the alternative approach, the definition of binding domain (whether positive or negative) is not subject to such flexibility. In the predicate-based binding proposal of Reinhart & Reuland (1993), the predicative preposition *near* constitutes its own binding domain, and this is the binding-theoretically relevant domain both for *him* and for *himself*. The grammaticality of *him* is trivial then, and *himself* is acceptable in the selfsame construction because it does not function as a true anaphor, but as a *logophoric* element. Since logophors are subject to discourse licensing, they do not need to occur within the regular syntactic binding domain (cf. also Pollard & Sag 1992).

The contrast between English and German, or between the following French and Dutch examples (adopted from Reuland 2006:65), requires independent explanation.

- (2) a. *Jean_i parle de lui_i/lui-même_i.*
'Jean talks of him/himself.'
b. *Jan_i praat over *zich_i/*hem_i/zichzelf_i.*
'Jean talks of himself/him.'

Reuland (2001, 2006) presents an analysis in which the unacceptability of pronouns in reflexively interpreted PPs is derived from the fact that the preposition in the respective languages enters a dependency with the verb *independently of the binding relation*. It is known, for example, that Dutch allows preposition stranding, whereas French does not. Reuland argues that stranding is licensed by a specific relation between the preposition and the verb, and he takes this relation to involve incorporation (reanalysis) in covert syntax. Because of this dependency, *only one syntactic binding domain* is present in (1b) and (2b), and hence only true anaphors can mark the predicate as reflexive.

Hungarian at first seems to pattern up with German and Dutch, cf. (3):

- (3) *János_i látott egy kígyó-t *mellett-e_i / maga mellett.*
John saw a snake-ACC beside-3SG himself beside
'John saw a snake beside him/himself.'

However, a subset of speakers find first and second person pronouns acceptable alongside anaphors in PPs, cf. (4):

- (4) *Látt-am egy kígyót mellett-em / magam mellett.*
saw-1SG a snake beside-1SG myself beside
'I saw a snake beside me/myself.'

The speakers who accept the pronoun in (4) do not form a regional or a social dialect: it is simply the case that some speakers find it fully grammatical, whereas others do not (this variation is mentioned in den Dikken et al. 2001: ft. 9., though they do not mention the contrast between third and non-third person). Even the more restrictive speakers find, however, the pronoun less degraded in (4) than in (3).

In this talk, I first show that the less restrictive speakers fully repeat the English pattern for first and second persons, and the existing variation within this domain can be explained in the framework of Reinhart & Reuland's (1993) reflexivity approach. Second, I try to seek an explanation for why Hungarian, unlike English, exhibits a contrast between third and non-third person.

2. The less restrictive dialect of Hungarian [judgements are given wrt this dialect]

The default case in English is for pronouns and anaphors to be non-complementary in PPs, the choice being dependent primarily on discourse factors. The default can be overridden, but all such cases are covered by the predicate-based approach to binding. I show that the same factors determine the distribution of pronouns and anaphors in English and in Hungarian alike, except that this variation is restricted to non-third person in Hungarian.

If the preposition is selected by the predicate, or if it forms part of an idiomatic unit, only the anaphor is grammatical.

- (5) a. *Don't you believe in *you/yourself?*
b. *She was beside *her/herself with rage.*

This is expected under the reflexivity approach of Reinhart & Reuland (1993), since non-compositional prepositions do not have predicative content. As an overt reflex of incorporation, such idiomatic PPs often function as verb modifiers in Hungarian, ruling the pronominal out for everyone even in non-third person (6a). Even if no overt incorporation takes place, idiomatic readings are ruled out in the presence of a pronoun. (6b) has the “inward-eye” reading (said by, for example, a fortune teller) with the anaphor, but the pronoun is only acceptable when true visual experience is meant.

- (6) a. **Alatt-am / magam alatt vág-om a fá-t.*
 under-1SG myself under cut-1SG the tree-ACC
 ‘I am cutting my own throat.’ [lit. ‘I am cutting the tree under myself.’]
 b. *Lát-ok egy ház-at előtt-em / magam előtt.*
 see-1SG a house-ACC in.front.of-1SG myself in.front.of
 ‘I see a house in front of me/myself.’ [Only the anaphor licenses the idiomatic, “inward-eye” reading.]

Factors that facilitate the use of the pronoun include, among other things, focussing of the PP (not shown), and contexts in which the antecedent is an internal argument but the PP is an event-modifier (see Reinhart & Reuland 1993 for a discussion of such data in English and Dutch, and for a possible explanation).

- (7) *Mögött-ed /[?]magad mögött vizsgáll-ak meg téged.*
 behind-2SG yourself behind examine-1SG PREV you
 ‘I examine you behind you/yourself.’

If such factors are filtered out, either a non-third person pronoun or an anaphor is acceptable for speakers of the less restrictive dialect to encode reflexivity in PPs. I show that, just like in English, the anaphor is often used to express point of view, and needs discourse licensing as such. In certain cases, the choice may have clear truth conditional consequences.

- (8) *Csak én lát-ok egy kígyó-t mellett-em / magam mellett*
 only I see-1SG a snake-ACC beside-1SG myself beside
 ‘Only I see a snake beside me/myself.’ [only the pronoun licenses the strict, co-reference reading]

The coreference reading (‘nobody can see a snake beside me, except for me’) is only licensed by the pronoun, whereas the anaphor is used to encode the sloppy, bound-variable reading (‘nobody can see a snake beside himself but me’).

3. Towards an explanation

Given that not strictly referential expressions often function as verb modifiers in Hungarian, it is not unexpected that the anaphor is generally preferred in standard Hungarian in PPs. Recall that in Reuland’s (2001, 2006) approach, the P-element loses its potential to set up its own binding domain if it enters into a dependency with the verb, or if it incorporates (whether overtly or covertly). Indeed, if the VM position is filled by another element and the PP cannot therefore incorporate, a pronoun is generally possible (better for speakers of the less restrictive dialect). Consider the following pair:

- (9) a. *Ki-rúgt-am a labdá-t alól-am / magam alól.*
 out-kicked-1SG the ball-ACC from.under-1SG myself from.under
 ‘I kicked the ball out from under me.’
 b. **Alá-m / magam alá rúgt-am a labdá-t.*
 to.under-1SG myself to.under kicked-1SG the ball-ACC
 ‘I kicked the ball (to) under me/myself.’

The relevant difference between (9a) and (9b) is that in the former case the VM position is independently occupied.

This cannot, however, be the full story, since third person pronouns are ungrammatical (or at least degraded for everyone) in all the contexts represented by (5-9). Note that this division is not a quirk of Hungarian: non-third person pronominals, but not third person pronominals, can be locally bound in certain Germanic and Romance languages. Reuland (2008) attempts at deriving this restriction from general conditions on chain formation (roughly, the interpretation of non-third person pronominals is kept constant per reportive domain - contrast a first person <I, me> chain with a third person <he, him> chain-, therefore non-third person chains may need no special marking of reflexivity). But in Hungarian, unlike in these languages, non-third person pronominal marking of coreference is restricted to PP contexts, which is in need of explanation. It is illustrative in this respect that the unmarked form of an inflecting P-element is always (identical with) the 3SG form. Certain P-elements are reduplicated as VMs, normally bearing this default 3SG form (see É. Kiss 2002 & Surányi 2007 for details of such dependencies). Only the anaphor is grammatical then, cf. (10):

- (10) *Hoz-zá-szorított-am a gyerek-et *hoz-zám / magam-hoz.*
 to-3SG-pressed-1SG the child-ACC to-1SG myself-to
 ‘I pressed the child against me/myself.’

I will suggest that a 3SG PP either overtly incorporates (possibly as the head of a dependency, as in (10)), or it does so covertly. In either case, a pronominal form cannot be utilized to mark reflexivity, since the P-element does not form an independent binding domain. It should follow that 3PL pronouns are not necessarily ungrammatical as reflexive markers in the contexts represented by (5-9). I show that this is in fact the case for speakers of the less restrictive dialect, though they still find 3PL pronouns less acceptable than non-third person pronominals in reflexively interpreted PPs.

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