# Plural agreement within possessive constructions in three varieties of Hungarian

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Handout

## FACTS AND EARLIER ANALYSES

## Two anti-agreement phenomena in Hungarian

**(i) PRONOMINAL POSSESSORS**
The morphological agreement between the possessor expression and the possessed noun is fully expressed, 'my book, your book, etc', except for the third person plural:

(1)  a.  az    én    könyv-em           d.  a    mi    könyv-ünk
         the   i     book-POSS.1SG          the  we    book-POSS.1PL

     b.  a     te    könyv-ed           e.  a    ti    könyv-etek
         the   i     book-POSS.2SG          the  you   book-POSS.2PL

     c.  az    ő     könyv-e            f.  az   *ő*   könyv-ük
         the   he    book-POSS.3SG          the  he    book-POSS.3PL

Unlike in subject positions of finite clauses, third person nominative pronominal possessors only occur in one invariable form within the noun phrase (*ő*, but *\*ők*).

(2)  az    ő / *ők       könyv-ük
     the   he / they     book-POSS.3PL
     'Their book'

NB1. Personal pronouns are only spelled out if there is emphasis or contrast involved.
NB2. The endings *-em/-ed*, etc. are glossed as POSS.1SG, POSS.2SG etc. because they are assumed to be composed of a suffix encoding possessedness plus a person/number agreement suffix. Cf. the cases of plural possessum, e.g. *könyv-e-i-m* book-POSS-PL-1SG 'my books' where it can be clearly observed (Cf. Bartos 2000: 676)

**(ii) LEXICAL POSSESSORS**
Plural agreement with a non-pronominal unmarked possessor is not grammatical, while it is acceptable for a group of speakers with dative-marked possessors (the 'liberal' dialect C in den Dikken 1999)

(3)  a.  a szerzetes-ek        könyv-e / *könyv-ük
         the monk-PL           book-POSS / book-POSS.3PL
         'The book of the monks'

     b.  a szerzetes-ek-nek    a      könyv-e / %könyv-ük
         the monk-PL-DAT       the    book-POSS / book-POSS.3PL
         'The book of the monks'

*External possessor / Possessor extraction:*
- dative-marked possessors can be extracted (unmarked possessors cannot)
- person/number agreement on the possessed noun is a true option (or even preferred by some speakers)

(4)  a szerzetes-ek-nek  elveszett  a  könyv-e / könyv-ük
     the monk-PL-DAT  got-lost  the  book-POSS / book-POSS.3PL
     'The book of the monks got lost.'

The source of the disconnected possessor can be either an operation of extraction from an originally noun phrase internal position (5a), or it may be assumed that the possessor expression is generated externally and is coindexed with an internal *pro* (5b).
⇒ only one of the derivations involves agreement on the possessed noun

(5)  a.  a szerzetes-ek-nek  elveszett  a  ~~a szerzetes-ek-nek~~  könyv-e
         the monk-PL-DAT  got-lost  the  book-POSS

     b.  a szerzetes-ek-nek$_i$  elveszett  a  pro$_i$  könyv-ük
         the monk-PL-DAT  got-lost  the  book-POSS.3PL

Den Dikken (1999): The anti-agreement effect with plural lexical possessors follows from configurational reasons (impossibility of Num-to-Agr movement, on the analogy of Welsh VSO clauses). The optional agreement with dative-marked possessors always involves a *resumptive pronoun strategy*.

Bartos (2000): with non-pronominal possessors, Agr is empty, while with third person singular pronominal possessor the morpheme sitting in Agr is Ø.

For possessor extraction in Hungarian, see Szabolcsi (1983), (1994); É. Kiss (2000)
For a distinction of three different types of external possession, and external possessors with an 'affected' theta role, cf. É. Kiss (2013)

# NEW OBSERVATIONS I.

## Diachronic data: Old Hungarian

Plural agreement with lexical possessors is well attested in Old Hungarian, with *both* dative-marked and nominative/unmarked possessors (the type is illustrated in (6)).

(6)  a szerzetes-**ek** / a szerzetes-**ek**-nek  könyv-**ük**
     the monk-PL  the monk-PL-DAT  book-POSS.3PL
     'The book of the monks'

NB. contrary to Modern Hungarian, no definite article before the head noun appears in either of the constructions, and the possessor is assumed to occupy Spec,DP in both constructions (cf. Egedi, *forthcoming*)

(7)  test-**ek**-nec  nauolya-**ok**-ert  kel uala  koldolnyok
     body-POSS.3PL-DAT malady-POSS.3PL-FINAL must be.PST  beg-INF-POSS.3PL
     'They had to beg for the malady of their bodies'  (Jókai C. 129)

(8)  es   a·  kèt   kiral-**ok**-nac   zủu-**ǫc**        eg lezen
     and  the  two   king-PL-DAT   heart-POSS.3PL  one become.3SG
     'The two hearts of the kings became one'                    (Vienna C. 164)

(9)  az  ǫrdǫg-**ǫk**-nec  feyedelm-**ek**        a luciper
     the devil-PL-DAT   sovereign-POSS.3PL  the Lucifer
     'The prince of the devils, Lucifer'                         (Bod C. 15r)

(10) az arato-**c**      hat-**oc**        mèǵèt
     the harvester-PL  back-POSS.3PL    behind
     'Behind the harvestmen'                                      (Vienna C. 3)

(11) èmber-**ec**        kèz-**ek**-nèc        mủuèlkedèti
     the man-PL        hand-POSS.3PL-DAT  action-POSS.PL
     'The acts of people's hands'                                 (Vienna C. 114)

Agreement is optional:

(12) Es   lezē   tèngernèc   kǫtèle   paztor-**ok**-nac   ńugolm-**oc**     es
     and  be-3sg sea-PL-DAT  cord-POSS shepherd-PL-DAT  rest-POSS.3PL  and
     barm-**ok-**nac    akl-a
     animal-PL-DAT   pen-POSS
     'And (the land of the Philistines) becomes seashore, the rest of the shepherds and fold
     for animals'                                                 (Vienna C. 280)

(13) Rauaȝ-**ac**-nac   l'ik-a-i        vadnac   es   meńńèi  repèſǫ-**c**-nᶜ   fèȝk-**ec**
     fox-PL-DAT       hole-POSS.PL  be-3sg   and  celestial flyer-PL-DAT   nest-POSS.3PL
     'Foxes have holes and celestial flyers have nests'          (Munich C. 14rb)[1]

The distribution of agreeing and not-agreeing constructions does not appear to be conditioned
by any syntactic or semantic criteria. Its rate of recurrences varies from text to text.


**Early Old Hungarian period**

→ number of texts is small, results are not conclusive!

Four text records, the so called "shorter text records from the age of the Árpád dynasty":

- Funeral Sermon and Prayer  (ca. 1195)
- The Königsberg Fragment and Ribbons (end of 12th c – beginning of 13th c.)
- The Old Hungarian Lamentations of Mary (beginning of 13th c.)
- Gyulafehérvár Lines (second half of 13th c.)

Out of 59 lexical possessive constructions, the possessor is plural in 11 cases, and none of the
possessed nouns show agreement.

|  | Tokens | Possessive constructions | Plural possessor | Agreeing possessum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Early OH records (4 texts) | 866 | 59 (38 DAT + 21 NOM) | 11 | 0 / 1? |

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[1] The same sentence (Matt 8:20) in later manuscripts (Jordanszky C. Pesti's NT) has agreement in both phrases.

A single, unsure example:
(14) mend   w   ſzentíí       eſ   unuttei         cuzicun
    all     he  saint-POSS.PL  and  self?-POSS.PL   midst-POSS.3PL
    'Among all his saints and the chosen (?)'               (Funerary Sermon and Prayer)


**Late Old Hungarian period**
→ A considerable increase of data, but manual search is a desperate task

*Corpus Query I.*
Automatic query in two morpho-syntactically annotated codices of the Old Hungarian Corpus (http://corpus.nytud.hu/rmk/). The codices are approximately of the same size (cf. the number of tokens) and both can be dated to the 15th century.
(NB. the original text of Jókai Codex is supposed to have been completed after 1370).

|  | Tokens | Dative-marked lexical possessor | Plural possessor | Agreeing possessum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jókai Codex | 22733 | 756 | 91 (+ 6 NOM) | 3 |
| Guary Codex | 21714 | 722 | 69 (+ 1 NOM) | 9 |

RESULTS:
In the two codices, no agreement can be observed with unmarked lexical possessors.
Jókai Codex (after 1370/c.1448): the possessed noun agrees with its possessor only three
        times out of the 91 cases where the dative-marked possessor is in plural **→ 3,29 %**
Guary Codex (before 1495): the possessed noun agrees with its possessor nine times out of
        the 69 cases where the dative-marked possessor is in plural **→ 13 %**


*Corpus Query II.*
An alternative counting method (in lack of annotation):
A much slower and less effective semi-automatic query can be carried out in texts which are normalized, but are not morpho-syntactically annotated (About the text processing levels, see e.g. Simon - Sass (2012) and further related information will be provided at the official website of the project to be launched this year.)

RESULTS:
Vienna Codex (after 1416/c.1450; 54423 tokens): out of 100 cases of plural lexical possessors
        (both dative and unmarked), 24 show agreement on the head noun  **→ 24 %**

Bod Codex (first half of the 16th century; 10084 tokens):
        for the whole codex, but only dative-marked possessors considered: there are 40
        plural dative-marked lexical possessors, and 3 has agreeing possessum  **→ 13 %**

Czech Codex (from 1513; 10998 tokens):
        for the whole codex, but only dative-marked possessors considered: there are 56
        plural dative-marked lexical possessors, and 3 has agreeing possessum  **→ 5,3 %**

NB. Dialectal variation must be taken into consideration in diachronic data as well.

## Questions:

– If the agreeing construction is a true option and can be attested in most of the OH texts in both external and internal possessives, why does it disappear with internal possessors?

– Considering that plural agreement is also attested with unmarked/nominative possessors in OH, can we assume that the agreeing construction is the more ancient one, gradually disappearing from the language (cf. end of reverse *S*-curve)?

– If the agreeing construction is an outgoing construction, why is it much more frequent with dative-marked possessors which are definitely newcomers in the history of Hungarian? Related question: Why is it preserved today with dative-marked possessors only?

# ELABORATION AND HYPOTHESES

CLAIM 1          The **N N-Px** pattern (unmarked lexical possessor + agreeing possessum) is an ancient construction, inherited form proto-Ugric.

Contrary to the views according to which possessive affix in its invariable form appears on the head noun under Old Turkish influence (É. Kiss *forthcoming*). For a survey of constructions in Finno-Ugric languages: Honti (2007); for Tundra Nenets: Nikolaeva (2002)

*Comparative considerations (Khanty)*

→ Possessive constructions in present-day Khanty, one of the closest relative languages of Hungarian (Ob-Ugric language family). The data here used come from Obdorsk and Synja dialects, after Nikolaeva (1999: 52 and 59) and from the linguistic material collected during the *Workshop on Khanty Syntax* (27-28 April 2013, Pázmány Péter Catholic University) with the collaboration of Synja speakers.

In Khanty possessive constructions, normally, there is no morphological marking of the possessive relationship, i.e. both members are unmarked and they are directly juxtaposed (15a). As a rule, an agreement affix appears on the possessed noun in case of a pronominal possessor (15b). However, if the possessor is topicalized, not only can it be separated from the possessed noun by clause-level constituents, but in this case the agreement suffix on the head noun is obligatory (15c).

(15)  a.  juwan  xo:t              b.  (ma) xo:t-em                c.  juwan  xo:t-**əl**
         John    house                  I    house-1SG                  John    house-3SG
         'John's house'               'my house'                     'John's house'

As it was repeatedly tested during the above mentioned workshop, Khanty speakers were very liberal in using (15c). The paradigm of agreement suffixes is full, which means that with a plural lexical possessor, the third person plural suffix is used!

In the Khanty (15c) as well as in the hypothetical corresponding proto-Hungarian construction, a *resumptive pronoun strategy* may be assumed to work (**N$_i$ (pro$_i$) N-Px**). At a certain point, the use of possessive affixes generalized to all of possessive constructions. The sporadically attested plural agreement with unmarked possessors in Old Hungarian is the remnant of this archaic construction.

CLAIM 2        The dative-marked (external) possessor emerged as a new strategy, and the unmarked possessor expression cannot leave the DP domain any more.

*Reconstruction of the process:*    **I.** Topicalized / left-adjoined unmarked possessors have been reintegrated into the specifier of the DP in accordance with Elly van Gelderen's (2008:250) third universal economy principle, the so-called 'Specifier Incorporation' (which claims that elements coming from outside tend to be a specifier rather than an adjunct). **II.** At the same time, head-marking of the possessum grammaticalized with lexical possessors as well. **III.** Plural agreement must have been preserved for a period, as sporadic Old Hungarian records of agreeing internal possessive construction indicate.

*Two possessive constructions in Old Hungarian*
→ Unmarked possessors are always internal, cannot be separated by clause-level elements
→ Dative-marked possessors can freely be extracted / generated outside the DP as an *external* possessor. In the latter case, it involves an (overt or null) *resumptive pronoun strategy*, that is why plural agreement re-emerges and becomes more frequent with dative-marked possessors. Note that the pronominal element is often spelled out in OH:

(16)  mert    megkǫuèredet **è nep-nèc**      ǫ    **zủu-ǫc**
      because  grow.fat        this people-DAT he   heart-3PL
      'Because the heart of this people got fat'                    (MünchK 19va)

(17)  Ad'ad   ennekem   **ember-ek-nek**   ǫ    **lelk-ek-et**
      give    to.me     man-PL-DAT        he   soul-3PL-ACC
      'Give me the souls of the people'                             (BodK 8v)

→ Dative-marked possessors, even though historically coming from outside, *may be* internal (integrated into Spec,DP) as indicated by its incompatibility with the definite article and the demonstratives (Egedi, *forthcoming*), and by the increasing number of anti-agreeing constructions. Old and new strategies co-exist.

CLAIM 3        Anti-agreement (lack of plural agreement) is secondary.

*Scenario 1*    Reasons why plural agreement disappeared – in the spirit of den Dikken (1999):
By the grammaticalization of N N-Px pattern as an internal possessive construction, the resumptive pronoun strategy becomes redundant. AgrP is always projected within DP because of N-Px forms, but according to the configuration that den Dikken (1999) suggested, the possessor sits in a position from which a specifier-head relationship with Agr cannot be established, and the result is a default singular agreement with the lexical possessor.

*Scenario 2*    Plural agreement did not disappear, but has been replaced by a possessedness marker ("birtokoltságjel" which is distinct from agreement morpheme, cf. Bartos 2000:672-679).

*Factors that might advance this process:*
–   It is possible that linguistic contact of proto-Hungarian with Old Turkish did promote the simplification of the system and the agreement suffix's reanalysis as a generalized possessedness marker
–   economy: to avoid marking plurality twice, cf. Szabolcsi (1994:271). See also Bartos' (2000:682) comments with respect to the anti-agreement of the type (1f).
–   disambiguation of the number of the possessed referents (see below):

Number specification of the possessed noun suppressed in agreeing constructions:
Simultaneous marking of the plurality of the *possessum* and that of plural agreement with the possessor was impossible in Old Hungarian, because the sufficient morphological form (*könyve-i-k*) did not exist. (Korompay 1985:157) Consequently, in the case of agreeing constructions number specification of the possessed noun remains suppressed:

(18) èlèibè kèlènç    nèki       az    Aſſirioſ-**oc**-nac    kèm-**èc**
     in.front go-3PL  DAT-3SG    the   Assyrian-PL-DAT        spy-**POSS.3PL**
     'The Assyrians' spies went on before him/her'                          (Vienna C. 32)

(19) Tahat  ordeitanac   az    Aſſirioſ-**oc**-nac    zallaſ-**i**
     CONJ   shout-3PL     the   Assyrian-PL-DAT        camp-**POSS.PL**
     'So the Assyrians' camps were shouting'                                (Vienna C. 45)

In (19), plurality of the possessed noun is not expressed morphologically, although verbal agreement proves that there are more *spies* in action. On the contrary, not-agreeing possessum in (16) can freely take the plural marker *-i*, thus the number of the *possessum* be specified.

## Conclusions

For the proto-Hungarian stage:
- Agreement marker appears regularly on the possessed noun by the reanalysis of N N-Px construction (originally involving a resumptive pronoun strategy), as an internal possessive structure
- Anti-agreement follows from the reanalysis of the agreement suffix as a general possessedness marker in the case of lexical possessors.

For the Old Hungarian stage:
- Plural agreement with unmarked possessors is extremely rare, although still attested (→ outgoing pattern).
- Plural agreement with the dative-marked possessors is much more frequent, these constructions involve an (overt or null) resumptive pronoun strategy. Practically, the "new" dative-marked construction subsumed the function that was originally fulfilled by the proto-Ugric N N-Px pattern.

# NEW OBSERVATIONS II.

## Dialectal data: Csango

Csango dialect (generally considered to have preserved many archaic features) developed a very particular system of (anti-)agreement, which, on the one hand, seems to preserve plural agreement with unmarked possessors, and, on the other hand, doubly marking of plurality is also permitted with pronominal possessors. Moreover, if anti-agreement arises with pronominal possessors, it is the possessed noun that drops the agreement suffix instead of using the third person pronoun in singular.

Data come from the *Workshop on Csango Syntax*
(16-17 March 2013, Research Institute for Linguistics, HAS; Organized by the Hungarian Generative Diachronic Syntax team and by the Linguistics Doctoral Programme of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University)

The dialect of the informants: *southern Csango* (Bacău County, eastern Romania)

| POSSESSOR | POSSESSUM |
|---|---|
| a gyerek-ek /az ő-k | kutyá-juk / kutyá-ja |
| the child-PL / the pron:3PL | dog-POSS.3PL / dog-POSS |
| a gyerek-ek /az ő-k | kutyá-i-k / kutyá-i |
| the child-PL / the pron:3PL | dog-POSS.PL-3PL / dog-POSS.PL |

Summarizing the most interesting facts:
– the form of third person plural pronominal possessor is always *ők* (and *\*ő* )
– plural agreement with unmarked possessors is OK (*az gyerekek kutyájuk/kutyáik*)
– anti-agreement with both types of possessors is OK (*az gyerekek(nek) kutyája/kutyái*)
– anti-agreement with plural pronominal possessor is OK (*az ők kutyája/kutyái*)

Questions:
- Are these agreeing constructions similar to those found in Old Hungarian texts?
- Do the Southern Csango third person pronouns have a different internal structure from the one in standard Hungarian?
- What factors limit this apparently extra-liberal variation?

⇒ More fieldwork needed!

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