

Hungarian anaphoric possessives*

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1. Introduction

Two well-known possessive constructions in Hungarian (Szabolcsi & Laczkó, 1992; Szabolcsi, 1994; Dikken, 1999; Bartos, 2000; É. Kiss, 2002; Chisarik & Payne, 2003; Laczkó, 2007):

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| (1) | János csont-ja
John bone-POSS
'John's bone' | (2) | János-nak a csont-ja
John-DAT the bone-POSS
'John's bone' |
|-----|---|-----|---|

Focus of this talk: anaphoric possessives.

- (3) a. János barát-ja el-men-t, Péter-é itt marad-t.
John friend-POSS away-go-PST.3SG Peter-é here stay-PST.3SG
'John's friend left, Peter's stayed here.'
- b. Ez a csont Jánosé.
this the bone John-é
'This bone is John's.'

These differ from the English anaphoric *one* construction in not allowing phrasal modification of the anaphoric noun:

- (4) these two white ones of John's
- (5) Jánosé (*eme) (*két) (*fehér) (*csont-ja)
John-é this two white bone-POSS
'these two white ones of John's'

If the possessor in the non-anaphoric construction would have suffixes, these remain overt and lean onto the possessor+é complex for phonological support. However, the possessedness suffix must disappear.

- (6) János csont-ja-i-t
John bone-POSS-PL-ACC
'John's bones'
- (7) János-é-i-t
John-é-PL-ACC
'John's ones'

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- (8) *János-é-ja
 John-é-POSS
 ‘John’s’

Simonyi (1914, p. 193.) stated that he knew no similar morpheme in other languages. The view that *-é* is a special morpheme that has no exact equivalents in other languages is also shared by the non-generative, descriptively oriented approaches of Korompay (1992, p. 350); Fodor (1999, p. 139); and Mártonfi (2004, p. 71).

Aim: to account for the syntax of *-é* and show that it not at all that exceptional.

Question No1: What is the syntactic status of *-é*?

Question No2: How should we account for these co-occurrence restrictions?

2. Background to Hungarian possessive constructions

The possessum bears the possessedness suffix *-ja/je/a/e*, the exponent of the Poss head. Poss is between NP and NumP in the hierarchy (9), it is an interpretable functional head (not agreement).

- (9) János csont-ja-i
 John bone-POSS-PL
 ‘John’s bones’

- (10) NumP > PossP > NP

The possessum agrees with pronominal possessors. The possessive agreement is in a functional head dominating NumP, it is called AgrP in the literature.

- (11) az én csont-ja-i-m
 the I bone-POSS-PL-POSS.1SG
 ‘my bones’

- (12) AgrP > NumP > PossP > NP

Possessors are merged in spec, PossP and move to the left periphery of the DP. Morphologically unmarked possessors move to spec, AgrP (14), dative possessors move above DP (they are topicalized or DP-adjoined) (15).

- (13) *az én/te/ő/mi/ti/ők
 the I/you/he/we/you/they

- (14) [_{DP} az [_{AgrP} én csont-ja-i-m]]
 the I bone-POSS-PL-POSS.1SG
 ‘my bones’

- (15) János-nak (ez) a csont-ja
 John-DAT this the bone-POSS
 ‘John’s bone/this bone of John’s’

The hierarchy:

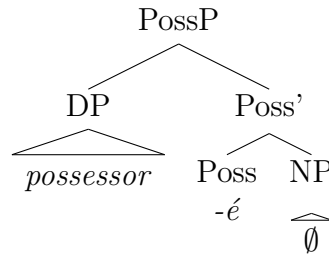
- (16) dative possessor > DP > AgrP > NumP > PossP > NP

3. Previous analyses

3.1. -é as the Poss head

Bartos (2001, 2000); Knittel (1998): -é is an alternative exponent of the Poss head (intransitive Poss or takes an empty anaphoric NP complement). It leans onto the unmarked possessor for phonological support.

(17)



Explains:

- complementary distribution with the possessee and the possessedness marker (-é and the possessedness marker compete for the same position, -é selects an anaphoric complement)
- no complementary distribution with the plural, possessive agreement, and case (all merged above Poss, no reason to expect complementarity)

Doesn't explain:

- complementary distribution with phrasal modifiers of the unpronounced possessee: adjectives, numerals, relative clauses, demonstratives (all merged above Poss)
- -é participates in demonstrative concord

demonstrative concord with the plural and case:

(18) ez-ek-et a vár-ak-at
 this-PL-ACC the castle-PL-ACC
 'these castles'

If the possessor is -é marked, its demonstrative modifier also bears -é

(19) [_{possessor} ez-é a fiú-é] [_{possessee} ∅]
 this-é the boy-é
 'this boy's one/that of this boy'

But the garden variety Poss exponent -ja/je/a/e doesn't take part in demonstrative concord (and Poss doesn't form a natural class with the plural marker and case)

(20) ez-(*je) a csont-ja
 this-POSS the bone-POSS
 'this bone of his'

3.2. -é as the Genitive

Bartos (2001): -é is the Poss head, but a case-like variety of Poss: it is the Genitive case in Hungarian.

We know that the garden variety Poss exponent, *-ja/je/a/e* is definitely not a case. Bartos argues that one category can have both case-like and non case-like members. Hungarian adpositions also come in two varieties: caselike (taking unmarked DP complements) and non case-like (taking casemarked complements).

Objection No1: research has shown that the so-called caselike adpositions are genuine, morphologically free cases, inserted in K. Non case-like adpositions are inserted higher, above K.

→ the two types are not inserted in the same place. Thus there is no category that has both case-like and non case-like members.

Objection No2: even if the same head could be filled by case-like and non case-like elements, Poss is way too low in the structure to be a position for case.

Explains:

- complementary distribution with the possessee and the possessedness marker (-é and the possessedness marker compete for the same position, -é selects an anaphoric complement)
- no complementary distribution with the plural, possessive agreement, and case (all merged above Poss, no reason to expect complementarity)
- -é participates in demonstrative concord (all cases do so)

Doesn't explain:

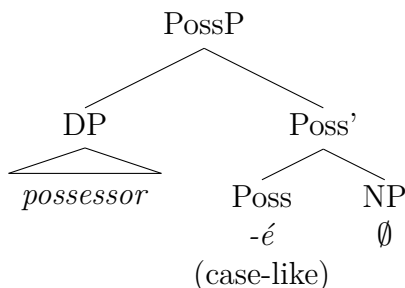
- complementary distribution with phrasal modifiers of the unpronounced possessee: adjectives, numerals, relative clauses, demonstratives (all merged above Poss)

4. -é is the Genitive case

The idea: -é is the Genitive case indeed, but not a Poss head. It is a garden variety case in the K head.

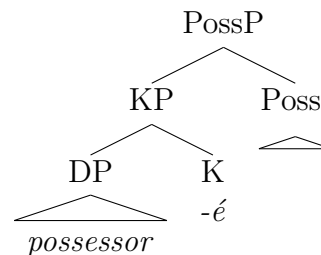
Bartos (2001):

(21)



Our alternative:

(22)



4.1. Syntactic arguments

4.1.1. Demonstratives

Bartos (2001); É. Kiss (2002): the unmarked possessor is not Nominative marked but caseless. Argument from the distribution of demonstratives: the morphologically unmarked demonstrative may be a subject, but it cannot be a possessor (or modifier of a morphologically unmarked

possessor).

Morphologically unmarked, as subject

- (23) a. Ez régi.
this old
'This is old.'
- b. Ez a ház régi.
this the house old
'This house is old.'

Morphologically unmarked, as (modifier of a) possessor

- (24) a. *Ez ház-a régi.
this house-POSS old
'The house of this (one) is old.'
- b. *[Ez a tanár] ház-a régi.
this the teacher house-POSS old
'This teacher's house is old.'

Dative marked as (modifier of a) possessor

- (25) a. Ennek a ház-a régi.
this.DAT the house-POSS old
'The house of this (one) is old.'
- b. [Ennek a tanár-nak] a ház-a régi.
this-DAT the teacher-DAT the house-POSS old
'This teacher's house is old.'

Bartos (2001): demonstratives need case; they can get Nominative in subject position, but as unmarked possessors they remain caseless.

Demonstratives can be possessors when they are *-é* marked:

- (26) a. Ez-é le-ég-ett.
this-é down-burn-PST.3SG
'This one's has burnt down.'
- b. [Ez-é a fiú-é] le-ég-ett.
this-é the boy-é down-burn-PST.3SG
'This boy's has burnt down.'

→ the demonstrative in (26-b) and (26-a) must bear case, most plausibly, that case is *-é* (no other visible difference bw. the good and the bad examples)

NB: in previous analyses (26-b) and (26-a) contain an garden variety unmarked possessor (serving as a phonological host of *-é*, which has nothing else to lean onto), therefore these examples should be grammatical

4.1.2. Some other pronouns

Interrogative and relative pronouns have a distribution like demonstratives. They can be subjects when they are morphologically unmarked, but they cannot be (or modify) unmarked possessors. They must bear Dative case as possessors (Szabolcsi & Laczkó, 1992).

- (27) a. Ki van itt?
who be here
'Who is here?'
- b. Mi van itt?
what be here
'What is here?'

- c. Aki jön, az csoki-t kap.
 who.REL come.2SG that chocolate-ACC get.3SG
 ‘Those who come will get chocolate.’
- (28) a. Ki-*(nek) csont-ja van itt?
 who-DAT bone-POSS be here
 ‘Whose bone is here?’
- b. Mi-*(nek) csont-ja van itt?
 what-DAT bone-POSS be here
 ‘The bone of what is here?’
- c. az a fiú, aki-*(nek) csont-ja
 that the boy who.REL-DAT bone-POSS
 ‘the boy whose bone’

Proposal: if their distribution is like that of demonstratives, the explanation should be the same, too → these pronouns need case
 These pronouns can be possessors if they bear *-é*.

- (29) a. Ki-é van itt?
 who-é be here
 ‘Whose (one) is here?’
- b. Mi-é van itt?
 what-é be here
 ‘The one of what is here?’
- c. Aki-é a tudás, az-é a hatalom.
 who.REL-é the knowledge that-é the power
 ‘Those who have knowledge have power.’

→ the demonstratives in (29) have case, the case marker is most plausibly *-é*

NB: in previous analyses (26-b) and (26-a) contain an garden variety unmarked possessor (serving as a phonological host of *-é*, which has nothing else to lean onto), therefore these examples should be grammatical

4.1.3. Descriptive possessors

Descriptive possessors can be unmarked but not Dative marked.

- (30) a. Budapest város-a
 Budapest city-POSS
 ‘the city of Budapest’
- b. húsvét ünnep-e
 Easter festival-POSS
 ‘the festival of Easter’
- (31) a. *Budapest-nek a város-a
 Budapest-DAT the city-POSS
 ‘the city of Budapest’
- b. *húsvét-nak az ünnep-e
 Easter-DAT the festival-POSS
 ‘the festival of Easter’
- (32) húsvét ünnep-e tavasszal van, *karácsony-é december-ben
 Easter festival-POSS spring.INS be.3SG Christmas-é December-in
 ‘The festival of Easter is in the spring, that of Christmas is in December.’

→ an argument against analyzing *-é* as Poss (in that analysis *-é* leans onto the unmarked possessor for phonological support, so (32) should be OK)
 doesn’t follow from the Genitive analysis, but it is compatible with it

4.2. Typological arguments

4.2.1. Suffixaufnahme

Suffixaufnahme for case: the noun bears case "on its own right", and also shows case agreement with a noun it modifies.

(33) [noun2-case2-case1 [noun1-case1]]

(34) woliǰí-**w-des** aqí-**w-des** ḡón-**des**
old-GEN-ABL man-GEN-ABL house-ABL
'from the old man's house'
(Lander, 2009, p. 585. ex. 7.)

Awngi

Sometimes the possessor doesn't bear Suffixaufnahme, only its modifiers (eg. adjectives) do.

(35) kliše-**n-i** [sasupevel-isa [ca-ta-ǰsa-**n-i**]]
key-PL-NOM kindgom-GEN heaven-OBL.PL-GEN-PL-NOM
'(the) keys of the kingdom of (the) heavens'
(Plank, 1995, p. 14. ex. 9.)

Old Georgian

The pattern in (35) also occurs in Hungairan. We have seen that the possessor's *-é* is copied onto the demonstrative.

(36) ez-*é* a fiú-*é*
this-*é* the boy-*é*
'this boy's one'

Any suffix that follows *-é* modifies (belongs to) the unpronounced possessee.

(37) a te város-a-i-d-at
the you city-POSS-PL-POSS.2SG-ACC
'your cities'

(38) a ti-*é-pro*-i-d-et
the you-*é-pro*-PL-POSS.2SG-ACC
'your ones'

If the unpronounced possessee bears synthetic case marking (Accusative or Superessive), that case also appears on the demonstrative of the *-é* marked possessor.

(39) ez-*é-t* a diák-*é-t*
this-*é-ACC* the student-*é-ACC*
'this student's one'

(40) [possessor ez-*é* a diáké]- \emptyset -t \Rightarrow [possessor ez-*é-t* a diáké]- \emptyset -t
this-*é* the student-*é- \emptyset -ACC*

(41) ez-*é-n* a diák-*é-n*
this-*é-SUP* the student-*é-SUP*
'on this student's one'

(42) [possessor ez-*é* a diáké]- \emptyset -n \Rightarrow [possessor ez-*é-n* a diáké]- \emptyset -n
this-*é* the student-*é- \emptyset -SUP*

Suffixaufnahme with case is cross-linguistically typical of Genitives.

- (43) Plank (1995, p. 83.): (modifiers) "practicing Suffixaufnahme are prototypically the Genitive, whose prototypical function is to encode nominal attributes, especially those denoting possessors".
- (44) Malchukov (2009, p. 636): "The most widespread pattern of Suffixaufnahme involves the genitive signalling the dependency within the NP in combination with an external case signalling agreement with the head"
- (45) Moravcsik (1995, p. 417): "In almost all languages, if the internal case involved in Suffixaufnahme is a case other than that of the possessor, the case of the possessor may also be involved in Suffixaufnahme"

→ this supports the Genitive analysis of *-é*

4.2.2. Blake hierarchy

Bartos (2001): the advantage of the Genitive analysis is that it is no longer the case that Hungarian has 17(+) cases but no Genitive

New typological argument: Blake (1994) observes that there is a correlation bw. the number of cases and the types of cases a language has. If a language has a case on the hierarchy in (46) then it will typically also have the cases to the left of it.

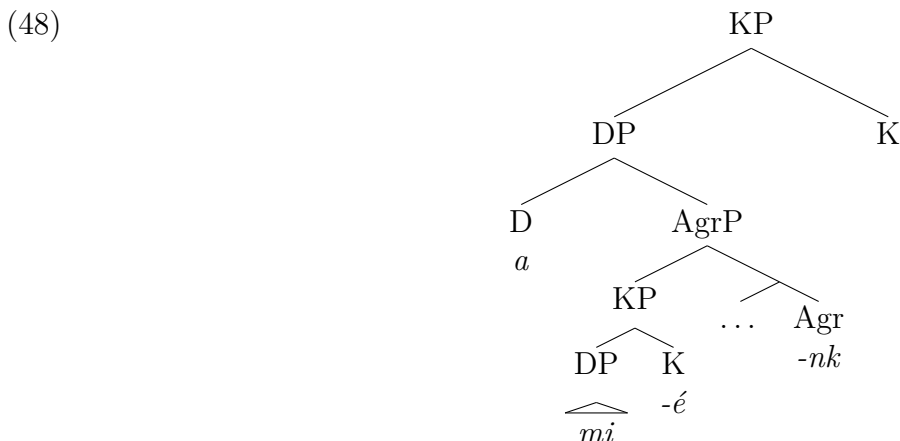
- (46) NOM – ACC/ERG – GEN – DAT – LOC – ABL/INST – others

If *-é* is the Genitive case, Hungarian is no longer an exception to this generalization.

5. The co-occurrence restrictions

The surface position of *-é* possessors: same as unmarked possessors (they follow the definite article) → they are in spec, AgrP

- (47) a *mi-é-nk*
 the we-é-POSS.1SG
 'ours'



5.1. Colloquial Hungarian

The functional sequence:

- (49) DP > AgrP > PrtcP > DemP > PrtcP > NumP > PrtcP/AP > PossP > NP

Colloquial Hungarian: it appears to be the case that no NP-modifier merged below Agr can appear overtly; participles, demonstratives, numerals, the plural, adjectives, and the possessedness marker are all out.

(50) %a hal-ak a barát-om-é
 the fish-PL the friend-POSS.2SG-é
 ‘the fish are my friend’s’

(51) DP > AgrP > **PrtcP** > **DemP** > **PrtcP** > **NumP** > **PrtcP/AP** > **PossP** > **NP**

Assumption: anaphoric possessives in Hungarian involve a *pro*-form (rather than ellipsis). The phonological form of the *pro*-form is zero, regardless of whether its number specification is singular or plural.

Proposal: with an *-é* possessor, the complement of Agr is a phrase-level *pro*-form (on phrase-level *pro*, see Uriagereka, 1995; Corver & Delfitto, 1999, on phrase-level pronouns, see Weerman & Evers-Vermeul, 2002; Neeleman & Szendrői, 2007). This is why in the context of *-é* possessors so many NP-modifiers are out (they would be inserted where *pro* is).

Two potential problems: inflecting demonstratives and possessors.

Possessors: according to the literature, inserted in spec, PossP or spec, nP. This is below Agr, yet the possessor appears in anaphoric possessives, of course.

Proposal: as there is no PossP in the structure, *-é* possessors are inserted in spec, AgrP as a kind of last resort.

Inflecting demonstratives: according to the literature, inserted in spec, DP (Kenesei, 1992; Bartos, 1999).

(52) ez a fiú
 this the boy
 ‘this boy’

Proposal: we have evidence for a phrase for demonstratives below DP. This is the position where non-inflecting demonstratives are.

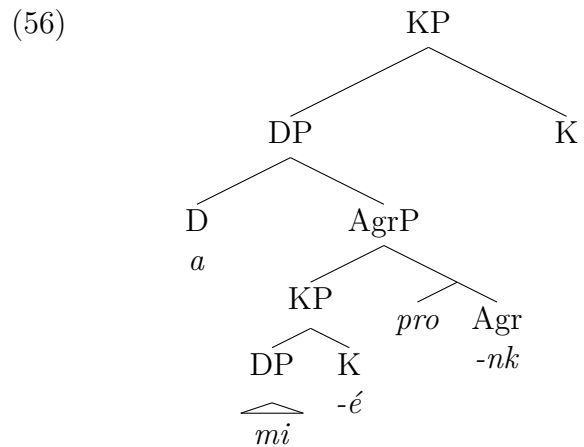
(53) a mi eme kocsí-nk
 the our this car-POSS.1PL
 ‘this car of ours’

(54) [DP a [AgrP mi [DemP eme [kocsí]] -nk]]

Proposal: inflecting demonstratives, too, come from DemP; they are inserted in spec, DemP and undergo movement to spec, DP. Cf. Bernstein (1997); Giusti (2002); Brugè (2002); Alexiadou et al. (2007); Roberts (2011) and many others for the proposal that demonstratives originate below DP (also tentatively adopted in É. Kiss, 2002, p. 154 for Hungarian).

Summary: in colloquial Hungarian, all NP-modifiers merged below Agr are absent with anaphoric possessives, including both phrases (adjectives, numerals, participles, inflecting demonstratives) and heads (possessedness suffix, plural, non-inflecting demonstratives). This is because the complement of Agr is occupied by the phonologically zero anaphor.

(55) a mi-é-nk
 the we-é-POSS.1SG
 ‘ours’



5.2. Standard Hungarian

Standard Hungarian is like colloquial Hungarian, except in allowing the plural marker of the anaphoric possessum to appear overtly.

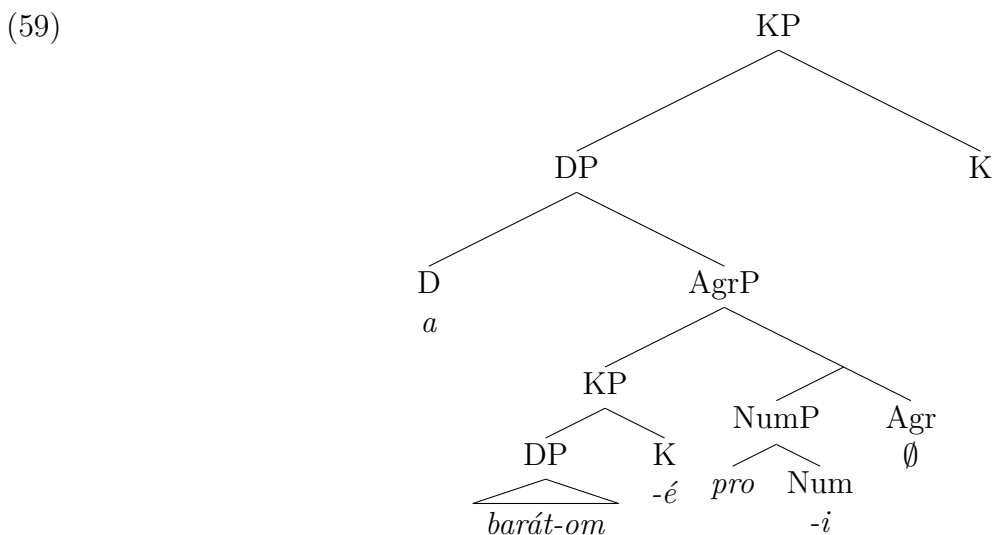
(57) %a hal-ak a barát-om-é
 the fish-PL the friend-POSS.2SG-é
 ‘the fish are my friend’s’

colloquial Hungarian

(58) %a hal-ak a barát-om-é-i
 the fish-PL the friend-POSS.2SG-PL-é
 ‘the fish are my friend’s’

standard Hungarian

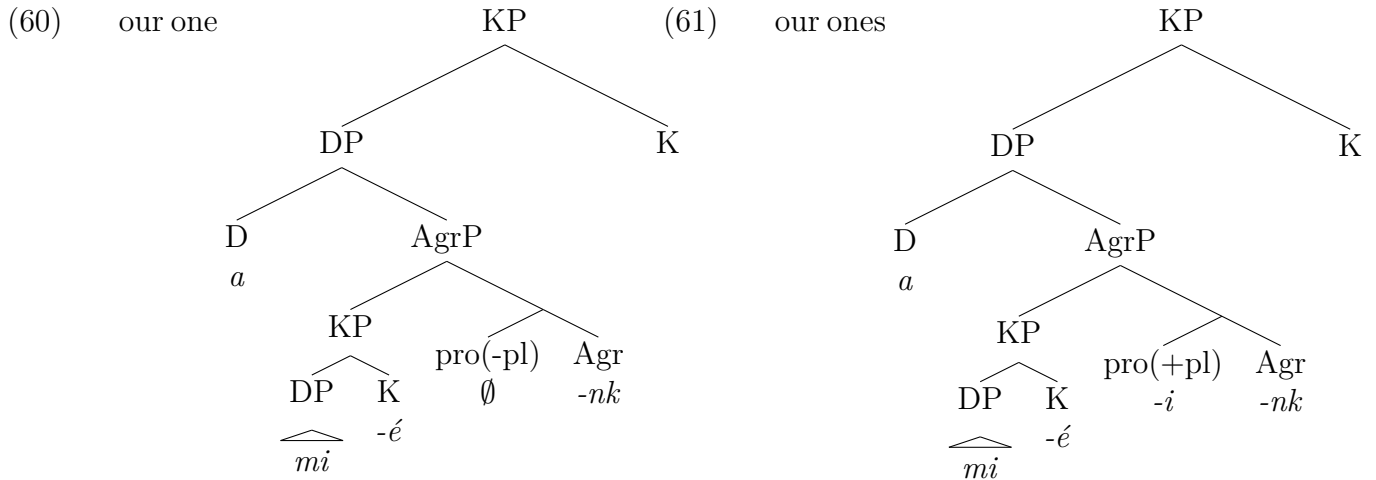
All previous analyses take this plural to be the garden variety plural sitting in the Num head. For me, this would result in the structure below.



This leaves a number of issues unaccounted for:

- if the head of NumP can be filled overtly, why is it that numerals cannot occur in its spec?
- if NumP can be projected, why not AP, too (merged below Num)?
- if NumP can be projected, why not PrtcP and DemP (merged bw. NumP and AgrP)?

Proposal: the *-i* that we see with *-é* possessors is not the garden variety plural. In standard Hungarian, as opposed to colloquial Hungarian, the *pro*-form with plural specification has a non-zero spellout; its phonological form is *-é*.



5.3. Conclusions

Question No1: What is the syntactic status of *-é*?
 The suffix *-é* is the Genitive case in Hungarian.

Question No2: How should we account for these co-occurrence restrictions?
 Anaphoric possessives in Hungarian involve a *pro*-form in the complement of Agr, so no NP-modifier merged below can be present. In colloquial Hungarian, this *pro*-form is phonologically zero both with singular and plural specification. In standard Hungarian, the *pro*-form is zero with a singular specification and *-i* with a plural specification.

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