

Microvariation in scope expression within deverbal nominal constructions in Hungarian¹

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In Hungarian, complex-event denoting deverbal nominal constructions are so verbal (Alexiadou *et al.* 2007, 477–613) that dependents of the verb embedded in the deverbal nominal head (Fu *et al.* 2001) can take DP-internal scope (Meaning_{int}), in addition to DP-external scope (Meaning_{ext}).

This ambiguity is exemplified in (1a-b) as follows. The scope taking *each*-quantifier that serves as a possessor can be interpreted externally, that is, relative to the main verb of the clause (*ellenez* ‘oppose’). With a slightly modified (less smooth) stress pattern, however, it can also be interpreted noun-phrase-internally, that is, relative to the deverbal nominal head, or more precisely, relative to the verb *elbocsát* ‘dismiss’, embedded in it. The two translations, and especially their supplements, show that the two meanings can clearly be differentiated even model-theoretically.

- (1) a. *Ellenzem* [mindkét fiú(-nak az) *elbocsát-ás-á-t*].
oppose.1SG both boy(-DAT the) dismiss-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC
Meaning_{ext}: ‘It holds for each of the two boys that I am against his dismissal.
[Both should be kept.]’
Meaning_{int}: ‘I am against the simultaneous dismissal of the two boys.
[One of them can be sent away, I do not mind.]’
- b. [Mindkét fiú(-nak az) *elbocsát-ás-á-t*] *ellenzem*.
both boy(-DAT the) dismiss-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC oppose.1SG
Meaning_{ext}: the same as Meaning_{ext} in (1a)
Meaning_{int} (triggered by a contrastive-topic intonation on the DP):
the same as Meaning_{int} in (1a)

The possibility of external-operation interpretation can be regarded as a manifestation of a universal rule concerning the percolation of (arbitrary) operator features. It is the universal rule that Horvath (1997, 548) bases her theory on *wh*-feature percolation in certain Hungarian interrogative subordinate constructions (Horvath 1997, 547–557) and Kenesei applies to certain focus constructions in Hungarian (Kenesei 1998, 223–225). Kenesei (1998) provides the rule in question (formulated according to the 1995 version of Chomsky’s Minimalist Program) as a minimalist reformulation of a rule by Höhle (1982) and Selkirk (1984). Note also that both authors’ relevant ideas immediately rest upon Ortiz de Urbina’s theory on operator feature percolation in the Basque language (e.g. Ortiz de Urbina 1990), who follows Webelhuth (1992, ch. 4). We thus apply the rule to (some kind of) universal quantifier feature, an *each*-feature. Determining components of the rule are that (i) the original position of the percolating feature should be an argument, and not an adjunct (Horvath 1997, 540–546; Kenesei 1998, 228), and (ii) it ceases to constitute an operator (of the given kind) (Horvath 1997, 549–550). As for formal details, while the quantifier determiner prefix *mind-* ‘each’ is morphologically attached to an element of a DP-internal argument, the pragmasemantic contribution of the *each*-feature counts as if it were attached to (the head of) the matrix DP.

The ambiguity may also emerge if an operator feature belongs to a non-possessor argument of the embedded verb (2), independent of its post- (2a) or prenominal position (2b) (NB: the prenominal placement requires an attributivized form).

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- (2) a. *Ellenzem [Péter felbérel-és-é-t mindkét munkára].*
 oppose.1SG Péter up.hire-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC both job.SUB
 Meaning_{ext}: ‘It holds for each of the two jobs that I am against hiring Péter to do it. [Péter is not allowed to work for us at all.]’
 Meaning_{int}: ‘I am against hiring Péter to do both jobs. [Péter can do one of them, I do not mind.]’
- b. [*Péter mindkét munkára való felbérel-és-é-t ellenzem.*]
 Péter both job.SUB ATTR up.hire-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC oppose.1SG
 Meaning_{ext}: the same as Meaning_{ext} in (2a)
 Meaning_{int} (triggered by a contrastive-topic intonation on the DP):
 the same as Meaning_{int} in (2a)

The possible variants, however, do not show the ambiguity in every case. The ambiguity of the examples in (2a-b) can be attributed to the fact that an unmarked possessor determines the matrix DP. The unmarked possessor masks the definite article, in the presence of which, as presented in (3a), the construction must unambiguously be associated with the DP-internal scope. The definite article serves as an obstacle for the percolating operator feature: it avoids the feature from being visible from outside.

- (3) a. [*A mindkét munkára való felbérel-és-ed-et ellenzem.*]
 the both job.SUB ATTR up.hire-NMLZ-POSS.2SG-ACC oppose.1SG
 Meaning_{int}: the same as Meaning_{int} in (2a-b)
- b. ^{(?)/*}[*Mindkét munkára való felbérel-és-ed-et ellenzem.*]
 both job.SUB ATTR up.hire-NMLZ-POSS.2SG-ACC oppose.1SG
 Meaning_{ext}: the same as Meaning_{ext} in (2a-b)

How should (3a) be modified in order to get the external-scope interpretation? The single solution is to omit the definite article (3b). This variant, however, is not acceptable for all speakers, as shown by the alternative grammaticality judgments. The microvariation is presumably due to the inclination for accepting an attributivized expression as the article-masking determiner of the matrix DP.

If the matrix DP is placed postverbally (4), evoking the external-scope interpretation is scarcely available (“??”) even for speakers of the microvariation in question, who sufficiently readily accept the kind of nominal expressions determined by the determiner of their non-possessor dependents (instead of own determiners).

- (4) ^{??/*}*Ellenzem [mindkét munkára való felbérel-és-ed-et].*
 oppose.1SG both job.SUB ATTR up.hire-NMLZ-POSS.2SG-ACC
 Meaning_{ext}: the same as Meaning_{ext} in (2a-b)

Finally, we illustrate the fact that if the nominal head and the potentially scope taking DP-internal constituent are not a deverbal nominal and its argument, no (external) scope is available, without any microvariation.

- (5) **[Mindkét Koreából való síelő] megjelent a sajtótájékoztatón.*
 both Korea.ELA ATTR skier appeared the press_conference.SUP
 Intended meaning: ‘Both the South Korean skier and the North Korean skier appeared at the press conference.’

Alexiadou et al. 2007 *Noun Phrase in the Generative Perspective*. De Gruyter ♣ Fu et al. 2001 The VP within Process Nominals. *NL<*19:549–582 ♣ Horvath 1997. The status of ‘wh-expletives’ and the partial wh-movement construction in Hungarian. *NL<*15:509–572 ♣ Höhle 1982. Explikationen for ‘normale Betonung’ und ‘normale Vorstellung’. *Satzglieder in Deutschen*. 75–154. G. Narr ♣ Kenesei 1998. Argumentumszerkezet és VP-fókusz. *A mai magyar nyelv leírásának újabb módszerei* III. 223–242. Szeged: JATE. ♣ Ortiz de Urbina 1990. Operator Feature Percolation and Clausal Pied-Piping. *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 13, 193–208. ♣ Selkirk 1984. *Phonology and syntax*. MIT Press ♣ Webelhuth 1992. *Principles and Parameters of Syntactic Saturation*. New York: OUP.