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# THE DEFINITE ARTICLE AND ANAPHORIC POSSESSORS IN HUNGARIAN\*

## ABSTRACT

*The paper describes the grammar of anaphoric possessor strategies in Hungarian, and it outlines the framework of an analysis where the presence or absence of the definite article plays a crucial role in the determination of the referential dependency that anaphoric possessors are part of. The starting point is REULAND'S (2007, 2011) conjecture that predicts that dedicated reflexive possessors are only available in languages that do not employ definite articles. Definite articles define a phasal domain, which determines the local syntactic context for binding. Hungarian, being a DP language where possessive phrases are known to include definite articles, does not have a dedicated reflexive possessor. It does, however, have a range of anaphoric possessor strategies, and the definite article shows an interesting distribution across these. The paper argues that in the presence of a definite article the possessive DP acts as a phase, and the dependency between the anaphoric possessor and its antecedent is not local. The definite article is absent in another set of anaphoric possessor strategies, which results in the possessor being licensed at the edge of the possessive DP. Following DESPIC'S (2015) analysis proposed for other languages, I argue that anaphoric possessors of this latter type enter a local dependency with their antecedent in the embedding clause.*

## KEYWORDS

*anaphoric possessor; definite article; Hungarian; reflexive; reciprocal*

## 1. Introduction

REULAND (2007; 2011, 167ff.) observes that there is an interesting correlation between definiteness marking and the availability of a dedicated reflexive possessor

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in a language. Dedicated reflexive possessors are available in languages without prenominal definite articles (that is, in languages with postnominal definiteness marking or in languages with no definiteness marking), and languages with (pre-nominal) definite articles employ simple pronominals to code a referential dependency with a clause-mate antecedent. As REULAND (2011, 168) notes, Latin and its descendants contrast in an intriguing manner in this respect. Latin lacks definiteness marking, and two possessive pronominal strategies exist. *Suus* 'his' is a dedicated reflexive possessor, and *eius* 'his' is used in cases when no coreference is intended with the subject:

- |     |    |                            |                |                                       |               |                                |
|-----|----|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| (1) | a. | <i>Ioannes<sub>i</sub></i> | <i>sororem</i> | <i>suam<sub>i/i<sup>k</sup></sub></i> | <i>vidit.</i> | Latin                          |
|     |    | Ioannes                    | sister.ACC     | his                                   | saw           |                                |
|     |    | 'Ioannes saw his sister.'  |                |                                       |               |                                |
|     | b. | <i>Ioannes<sub>i</sub></i> | <i>sororem</i> | <i>eius<sub>i/k</sub></i>             | <i>vidit.</i> |                                |
|     |    | Ioannes                    | sister.ACC     | his                                   | saw           |                                |
|     |    | 'Ioannes saw his sister.'  |                |                                       |               | (BERTOCCHI - CASADIO 1980, 26) |

French, Portuguese, Spanish or Italian have prenominal definite articles, and the descendants of the Latin *suus* developed into possessive pronouns of the English type, with no dedication to force a dependency with a clause-mate antecedent:

- |     |                              |            |           |                          |            |                 |                     |
|-----|------------------------------|------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| (2) | <i>Gianni<sub>i</sub></i>    | <i>ama</i> | <i>le</i> | <i>sue<sub>i/k</sub></i> | <i>due</i> | <i>machine.</i> | Italian             |
|     | Gianni                       | loves      | the       | his                      | two        | cars            |                     |
|     | 'Gianni loves his two cars.' |            |           |                          |            |                 | (REULAND 2011, 168) |

Dutch, German and Modern Greek, among other languages, pattern up with Italian in having definite articles and lacking dedicated reflexive possessors; whereas Bulgarian, Czech, Icelandic, Norwegian, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and Swedish are like Latin in not having (prenominal) definiteness marking and licensing reflexive possessors.<sup>1</sup>

Dedicated reflexive possessors of the Latin type enter into a local dependency with their antecedents, which is licensed as such since the possessive noun phrase containing them does not constitute a binding domain.<sup>2</sup> As REULAND (2011, 168) argues, it is straightforward to assume that "the obligatory D-position marks and impenetrable domain" and the lack of an articulated DP-layer on the left edge of the

1 See DESPIĆ (2015) for a more comprehensive survey of the cross-linguistic distribution of the two possessive pronominal strategies illustrated in (1) and (2).

2 This is true at least of simple noun phrases which contain no potential internal binders. Nominalizations, picture noun phrases and the like may deviate from the core possessive configuration in this respect. I only discuss simple possessive noun phrases in this paper.



possessive noun phrase is what makes possessive reflexives available.<sup>3</sup> REULAND (2011) argues furthermore that in languages that have definite articles but do not employ them in the presence of pronominal possessors, the D-position is occupied by a covert form of the article:

(3) John loves [<sub>DP</sub> ∅ [his beautiful cars]].

The D-position either spells out the left edge of a phase domain, or it causes a minimality intervention, a choice that REULAND (2011) leaves open. The phase-based approach to pronominal possessors has been elaborated by DESPIĆ (2011, 2013, 2015), whose account rests on the following three assumptions: (i) binding domains are phase-based, (ii) DPs are phases, and (iii) the DP is not universal (see, among others, BOŠKOVIĆ 2005, 2014).<sup>4</sup> Thus, since Latin is a DP-less language, the possessive noun phrase in (1) does not constitute a phase, and the classical complementary distribution between two types of pronominal possessors surfaces, with *suus* functioning as a locally bound reflexive anaphor. In Italian (2) or in English (3), a DP layer is present in the possessive noun phrase, and it defines a phase. The dependency between the possessive pronoun and its antecedent is not local therefore, and, for the same reason, no special anaphoric reflexive possessor is licensed.<sup>5</sup>

This paper aims at a description of anaphoric possessor strategies in Hungarian, a language that has not been investigated in the line of research just surveyed. Hungarian is well-known to be a DP-language with a possessive construction that has been much discussed in the literature (see, among others, DÉKÁNY 2011, DEN DIKKEN 1999, 2006, É. KISS 2000, LACZKÓ 1995 and SZABOLCSI 1987, 1994). Since it is a DP-language, it straightforwardly follows from Reuland's conjecture that it has no dedicated reflexive possessors. While this indeed holds, Hungarian does have a range of anaphoric possessor strategies, which show what may at first appear to be a puzzling variation in definite article use: the definite article is compulsory with some anaphoric possessors, optional with some others and illicit with yet another set of anaphoric possessor strategies. These facts have received scarce attention in the literature, and it seems a *prima facie* problem to accommodate them within a model construed in the spirit of Reuland's conjecture. My goal in this paper is to show that the Hungarian data do fit in well with a Reuland–Despić type of analysis, and in fact provide further evidence for it.

3 Or, indeed, the presence of a dedicated reflexive strategy is strongly expected in such circumstances.

4 See MARELJ (2011) for an alternative approach.

5 Reciprocal possessors, which are obviously grammatical in English, are discussed in 3.3.

## 2. The possessive construction and anaphoric possessors in Hungarian: an overview

The Hungarian possessive construction has two varieties. The unmarked possessor occurs in a functional projection FP inside the possessive DP (often labelled as PossP in the literature). The possessive head is marked for possessive morphology and, in the case of pronominal possessors, for agreement. In (5a), the possessor is a proper name. Personal names do not combine with the definite article in standard Hungarian, but a possessive construction with a personal name possessor may take one in some dialects of Hungarian. This is one of SZABOLCSI'S (1994) arguments to show that the definite article is licensed in the outer D-head of the possessive noun phrase.

- (5) a.  $[_{DP}(a)$   $[_{FP}Kati$   $sál-ja]$   
           the               Kate           scarf-POSS.3SG  
           'Kate's scarf'
- b.  $[_{DP}a$   $Kati-nak$   $[_{DP}^*(a)$   $[_{NP}sál-ja]]]$   
           the               Kate-DAT           the           scarf-POSS.3SG  
           'Kate's scarf'

The possessor can also be dative-marked, which licenses its extraction from the possessive noun phrase. Even if it is not extracted (as in (5b)), the definite article is mandatory in the D-head of the possessive construction. I follow É. KISS (2002) and DÉKÁNY (2011) in assuming that dative possessors themselves are in a DP-adjoined position.

The pronouns and the anaphors that are grammatical as clausal objects are all licensed as morphologically unmarked anaphoric possessors in the possessive construction. (6) presents an overview of these strategies:<sup>6</sup>

- (6) A  $fűk$   $felfedezt-ék$  ...  
       the boys           discovered-3PL
- a. (a)  $pro$   $határ-a-i-k-at$ . pro-drop  
       the  $pro$  limit-POSS-PL-3PL-ACC  
       'The boys discovered their limits.'
- b.  $^*(az)$   $ő$  ( $kis$ )  $határ-a-i-k-at$ . pronoun  
       the he (little) limit-POSS-PL-3PL-ACC  
       'The boys discovered their (little) limits.'

6 The coreferential use of overt personal pronoun possessors is stylistically marked for most speakers (see BARTOS 1999, 36). The acceptability of such examples improves if adjectival modification is added to the possessum, hence the insertion of the adjective *kis* 'little' in (6b). This issue is irrelevant in the context of the current inquiry, and the more immediate point is that the constraints on the use of the construction in (6b) are stylistic, but not grammatical in nature.



c.	* <sup>(a)</sup>	<i>maguk</i>	<i>határ-a-i-t.</i>	primary reflexive
		the themselves	limit-POSS-PL-ACC	
		‘The boys discovered their (own) limits.’		
d.	<sup>(?)</sup> az	<i>önmaguk</i>	<i>határ-a-i-t.</i>	complex reflexive
		the themselves	limit-POSS-PL-ACC	
		‘The boys discovered their (own) limits.’		
e.	<sup>(?)</sup> az	<i>egymás</i>	<i>határ-a-i-t.</i>	reciprocal
		the each other	limit-POSS-PL-ACC	
		‘The boys discovered each other’s limits.’		

Assuming that Reuland’s conjecture is valid not only as a cross-linguistic universal but also as an explanatory model of intralinguistic patterns, we expect the definite article to be compulsory with personal pronoun possessors (6a-b), and ungrammatical if the possessor is a reflexive or a reciprocal anaphor (6c-e). The attested distribution of the article is, however, different from this idealized picture. In the next section, we discuss each of these anaphoric possessor strategies in detail and argue that on closer inspection, the distribution of the definite article does follow the pattern expected under the assumption that the Hungarian DP is a phase.

### 3. The anaphoric possessor strategies of Hungarian

#### 3.1 Overt and covert personal pronoun possessors

If the personal pronoun possessor is overt, the definite article is compulsory in every variety of Hungarian (7):

(7)	<i>Szeret-em</i>	* <sup>(az)</sup>	<i>én</i>	<i>kis</i>	<i>sál-am-at.</i>
	like-1SG	the	I	little	scarf-POSS.1SG-ACC
	‘I like my little scarf.’				

The possessor is anaphoric to the pro-dropped subject in (7), but the obligatory nature of the definite article is not sensitive to whether the overt pronoun possessor has a clause-mate antecedent or not. Assuming that the definite article marks a phase boundary, the grammaticality of a subject-coreferential pronoun possessor is expected since the antecedent and the pronoun possessor are not in the same local domain.

In accordance with the pro-drop nature of Hungarian, pronominal possessors are usually pro-dropped unless they bear a discourse function. The definite article is added by default in this case, too, but it may be optional in possessives under what SZABOLCSI (1994, 181) describes as “descriptively complex conditions”. The dropping of the article is acceptable if the possessive phrase identifies a saliently

unique possessum, normally in the case of relation noun heads. This is arguably a pragmatic constraint, and it is important to stress that the omission of the article is never compulsory.<sup>7</sup> Compare (8a) and (8b) in this respect: the article can be dropped in (8b), but its omission is distinctly awkward in (8a).

- (8) a. *Szeretem*            #(az)       *ablak-om-at.*  
like-1SG                the       window-POSS.1SG-ACC  
'I love my window.'
- b. *Szeretem*            (az)       *anyá-m-at.*  
like-1SG                the       mother-POSS.1SG-ACC  
'I love my mother.'

I assume that the definite article has a zero variant in these contexts, and therefore the D-position is occupied either by an overt or a covert article in each of the examples above. Thus we have the following scenarios:

- (9) a. [<sub>DP</sub> *az*            [<sub>FP</sub> *én*            [<sub>NP</sub> *anyá-m*]]]                   overt pronoun possessor  
          the                I                mother-POSS.1SG  
          'my mother'
- b. [<sub>DP</sub> *az*/<sub>DEF</sub>        [<sub>FP</sub> *pro*            [<sub>NP</sub> *anyá-m*]]]                   pro-dropped possessor  
          the                mother-POSS.1SG  
          'my mother'

In sum, the presence of a DP-layer is compulsory with both overt and pro-dropped personal pronoun possessors. Under the current set of assumptions this means that they are embedded in their own phasal domain, which excludes their potential clause-mate antecedents.

### 3.2 The primary reflexive as a possessor

The primary reflexive can also be used as a possessor, and it requires the obligatory presence of the definite article (10b).

- (10) a. *János látja magát*            *a tükör-ben.*  
John sees himself-ACC   the   mirror-in  
'John sees himself in the mirror.'

<sup>7</sup> This is a weaker instance of the constraint found in Italian. The definite article is compulsory in Italian possessive phrases with pronominal possessors, but it is absent if the possessum is a relational noun. Compare (2) with (i) below:

(i) *Gianni ama sua sorella.*  
Gianni loves his       sister  
'Gianni loves his sister.'

- b. János látja \*(a) maga korlát-a-i-t.  
 John sees the himself limitation-POSS-PL-ACC  
 'John sees his own limitations.'

If we want to maintain the assumption that the definite article is the marker of the left-edge of the DP-phase, then the conclusion that the relation between the reflexive and its clausal antecedent is not local is inevitable. Arguably, the reflexive has a marked character in most possessive constructions (see É. Kiss 1987, 197–202), and this is due to the fact that it does not act as a reflexivizer element in this position. It has two, often overlapping functions, which I briefly discuss here.<sup>8</sup>

The reflexive possessor is frequently logophoric in nature. Consider (11) as an illustration.

- (11) John feels that ... : \*  
 I feel that ... : √  
 Ez a változás mintha \*(a) magam bense-jé-t is megváltoztatta volna.  
 this the change as.though the myself inside-POSS-ACC too changed COND  
 'As though this change had altered my own inner side, too.'

Note first of all that there is no clause-mate antecedent for the reflexive. Furthermore, the example is only compatible with the supertext that introduces the speaker's perspective (*I feel that ...*). This means that the reflexive acts as a logophor here, and as such, it requires a discourse antecedent whose perspective is described in the segment that includes the reflexive. There is no requirement that this discourse-level antecedent should be available in the local syntactic domain.<sup>9</sup>

It is also typical for reflexive possessors to occur in examples wherein the underlying possessive relation is naturally reflexive, as in the two examples in (12).

- (12) a. Mi csinált-uk \*(a) magunk dolg-á-t.  
 we did-1PL the ourselves work-POSS-ACC  
 'We went about our own work.'

<sup>8</sup> See RÁKOSI (2014) for a more detailed discussion of the data.

<sup>9</sup> A reviewer asks whether the regular (non-possessive) reflexive contrasts with the possessive reflexive in terms of logophoricity. In argument positions, as well as in most of the classic contexts that license logophoric uses of the English reflexive (coordinate structures: *John and myself are not happy about this*, like-phrases: *Physicists like myself were never too happy about this*, etc.), complex reflexives tend to outcompete the primary reflexive for logophoricity in Hungarian. One such complex reflexive is discussed here in 3.4 (and see RÁKOSI 2009, 2011 for more on complex Hungarian reflexives). Thus while in English a single element serves as the primary vehicle for both anaphoric and logophoric uses across the board, the Hungarian facts are more complex in this respect. Logophoric construals of the primary reflexive *maga* 'himself' are available outside of the possessive construction nevertheless, but *maga* is probably less frequently used logophorically than the English *himself*. I am not aware of any literature that discusses this issue.



- b. *Él-em*      \*(a)      *magam*      *élet-é-t*.  
 live-1SG      the      myself      life-POSS-ACC  
 'I live my own life.'

One normally goes about one's own work and lives one's own life, and the possessor in these cases is therefore generally anaphoric to the subject. The reflexive does not create this anaphoric relation: it feeds on the reflexivity inherently coded in the extended predicate including the possessive phrase. It can even be omitted without changing the reflexive nature of this relation:

- (13) a. *Mi*      *csinált-uk*      *a*      *pro*      *dolg-unk-at*.  
 we      did-1PL      the      pro      work-POSS.1PL-ACC  
 'We went about our work.'
- b. *Él-em*      *az*      *pro*      *élet-em-et*.  
 live-1SG      the      pro      life-POSS.1SG-ACC  
 'I live my life.'

The pro-dropped examples in (13) do not appear to be truth-conditionally different from the respective examples in (12).

Thus the reason why reflexive possessors require the presence of the definite article is that they do not act as reflexivizers in Hungarian, unlike the reflexive possessors of Latin and other languages with dedicated reflexive possessors. Hungarian does not have a dedicated reflexive possessor, and the default strategy for coding anaphoric possessors is pro-dropping them. Reflexive possessors represent a marked strategy with a logophoric tendency and a preference for contexts where the predicate denotes a reflexive relation that includes the possessor. Crucially, this dependency between the reflexive and its antecedent is not local.

### 3.3 The reciprocal anaphor as a possessor

The reciprocal anaphor is also licensed as a possessor, and it contrasts with the primary reflexive in this use in two important ways. Consider the following examples.

- (14) a. *A fiúk felfedezt-ék*      (\*<sup>m</sup>az) *egymás*      *határ-a-i-t*.  
 the boys discovered-3PL      the each\_other      limit-POSS-PL-ACC  
 'They boys discovered each other's limits.'
- b. *Level-et küldt-ünk*      (\*<sup>m</sup>az) *egymás*      *szül-e-i-nek*.  
 letter-ACC sent-1PL      the each\_other      parent-POSS-PL-DAT  
 'We sent a letter to each other's parents.'

In the presence of a clause-mate antecedent, the reciprocal possessor is not compatible with the definite article. It is typically absent in corpus data of this sort,

and most of the native speaker participants also rejected it in a pilot questionnaire survey that I conducted.<sup>10</sup> It is also interesting to note that when examples like (14) are mentioned in the literature in discussions of Hungarian binding phenomena, they appear with no definite article without much comment on this fact (see, for example, É. KISS 1987, 2002).

The second property that distinguishes reciprocal possessors from reflexive possessors is that they have no marked character in any sense. Reciprocal possessors in examples like (14) are regular, non-exempt anaphors. This means that they enter a local dependency with their clause-mate antecedents, and the absence of the definite article plays a crucial role in this process. It is important to note in this respect that reciprocals, unlike reflexives, are  $\varphi$ -deficient since they have the same form in each person. This is a potential drive for them to find a local antecedent.

It is well-known that English reciprocals are also grammatical in the possessor position (see the English translations of the sentences in (14)). DESPÍĆ (2015, 212f.) revisits this fact in the context of the current issue and gives a summary of the arguments that have been proposed in favour of the claim that reciprocal possessors occupy a higher position in the English possessive noun phrase than pronominal possessors. In particular, he proposes that whereas pronominal possessors are in Spec, PossP, reciprocal possessors occupy the specifier position of the possessive DP:

- (15) a. { [<sub>DP</sub> each other [<sub>DP</sub> 's | [<sub>PossP</sub> my/his/their } [<sub>NP</sub> friends]]]}

Being at the edge of the DP phase, reciprocals can be bound within the higher phase domain (the vP). Since possessive pronouns are in the complement of the D head, this option is not open for them.

Hungarian is like English in this respect, except for the fact that the definite article plays a prominent role in the understanding of the data. As we have seen in 3.1, the definite article is compulsory by overt pronominal possessors, and it is only optional in certain contexts when the possessor is pro-dropped. In contrast, reciprocals require the absence of the definite article, which is strong indication that they are positioned in the DP-layer of the possessive phrase. I assume here that they get there via movement from the functional projection that harbours possessors:<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This was a pilot survey where participants were asked to evaluate sentences containing an anaphoric possessor and a preceding definite article. With an overt definite article present, the reciprocal possessor was the second most rejected alternative (52 rejections). The complex reflexive anaphor *jómagam* 'myself' fared worst in the survey with 58 participant not accepting it in this construction. This reflexive element is not discussed in this paper, but see RÁKOSI (2011, 2014) for some discussion.

<sup>11</sup> It has been suggested in the pertinent literature on Hungarian that certain lexical possessors (for example, proper names) are either generated or move into the DP-layer of the possessive phrase (see BARTOS 1999, É. KISS 2002 and DÉKÁNY 2011). The choice between the two implementations of the DP-account is not crucial in the current context, and I simply assume a movement analysis.



of these differences, and focus here only on data concerning modification for the purposes of illustration. Personal names can take adjectival modification, which necessitates the use of the definite article (17a). The primary reflexive *maga* cannot be so modified (17b), whereas the complex reflexive *önmaga* can (17c).

- (17) a. *a korábbi János*  
 the former John  
 'the former John'
- b. \**a korábbi maga*  
 the former himself  
 'his former self'
- c. *a korábbi önmaga*  
 the former himself  
 'his former self'

This suggests some syntactic parallelism between personal names and the complex reflexive.

As noted above, the definite article may or may not surface with personal name possessors, subject to dialectal variation. I repeat (5) as (18) to illustrate.

- (18) [<sub>DP</sub> (a) [<sub>FP</sub> *Kati sál-ja*]]  
 the Kate scarf-POSS.3SG  
 'Kate's scarf'

The article is absent in the standard, and the personal name undergoes movement to the DP in these cases (see É. KISS 2002, 166).

- (19) a. [<sub>DP</sub> *Kati* [<sub>FP</sub> *Kati* [<sub>NP</sub> *sálja*]]]  
 Kati scarf  
 'Kate's scarf'
- b. [<sub>DP</sub> *önmaga* [<sub>FP</sub> *önmaga* [<sub>NP</sub> *határ-a-i*]]]  
 himself limit-POSS-PL  
 'his own limits'

The complex reflexive undergoes the same movement to the DP-layer of the possessive phrase (19b). This edge position allows it to be bound directly in the higher vP phase, in essentially the same configuration that we argued for in the case of reciprocal possessors (3.3). The motivation behind this movement is different for the two: reciprocals move because they are  $\phi$ -deficient, whereas *önmaga* moves because it is characterised by an increased level of referentiality, rendering it similar to personal names in this respect.

## 4. Conclusion

I surveyed the strategies that are available in Hungarian to code possessors anaphoric to a clause-mate antecedent. The starting point of the discussion was a correlation observed in REULAND (2007, 2011) and further elaborated in DESPIĆ (2011, 2015). Reuland's conjecture draws a parallel between the absence of pronominal definiteness marking and the availability of dedicated reflexive possessors. In languages with definite articles, dedicated reflexive possessors are not expected to be present since the article sets up a phasal DP domain and thus no local dependency is licensed between the anaphoric possessor and its antecedent.

The conjecture is parametric in nature and it predicts that Hungarian lacks a dedicated reflexive possessor, since Hungarian is a DP language with a well-known presence of the definite article in possessive phrases. There is, nevertheless, an interesting variation in article use by anaphoric possessors and I tried to show that we can better understand this variation if we interpret the data in a framework of a Reuland–Despić type. In particular, I argued that whenever the D-position of the possessive noun phrase is filled by a definite article (which can be covert under certain conditions), the anaphoric possessive stays below the DP layer and does not enter into a local referential dependency with its antecedent. This is the case of overt or *pro*-dropped pronominal possessors, as well as of the primary reflexive, which was shown not to be a local reflexivizer in possessor positions. The definite article can be genuinely absent if a reciprocal or a complex reflexive has a c-commanding clause-mate antecedent. In these cases, the pronominal is a true anaphor, licensed and locally bound from the embedding clause at the edge of the possessive DP. The paper thus outlines a framework for an analysis in which the Hungarian possessive DP is phasal, and it functions as a binding domain in the presence of the definite article. I leave the study of further consequences of this analysis for future research.

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