

Mark Newson – Krisztina Szécsényi

# DATIVE AS THE UNMARKED UNMARKED CASE IN HUNGARIAN

## ABSTRACT

*Hungarian nominative and dative DPs alternate in particular constructions. We show standard theory, where cases are licensed by heads, is unable to cope with the data and present a different analysis of the distribution of these cases within Dependent Case theory in which nominative and dative are unmarked cases in different domains. The unmarked nominative domain is identified as the complement of a canonical final projection head (C, D and P) but the unmarked dative domain seems to lack a unifying property. We conclude that it is the elsewhere domain and dative is therefore the unmarked case of the unmarked domain. This has the advantage of giving a more explanatory account of the distribution of nominative and dative forms, including data with non-verbal predication.*

## KEYWORDS

*Dependent Case Theory; case domains; unmarked case; Phase Theory; possessive DP*

This paper attempts an analysis of the distribution of dative and nominative case which alternate in a number of Hungarian constructions. In (1) we see the well-known facts concerning the nominative-dative alternation on possessors in Hungarian possessive DPs:

- (1) a. Péter-Ø      kalap-ja / az      én      kalap-om  
         Peter-NOM    hat-3SG      the    I.NOM    hat-1SG  
         ‘Peter’s hat’                                  ‘my hat’
- b. Péter-nek    a    kalap-ja / nekem    a    kalap-om  
         Peter-DAT    the    hat-3SG      I.DAT    the    hat-1SG  
         ‘Peter’s hat’                                  ‘my hat’
- c. Péter-nek/\*-Ø    alsz-ik      a    vendég-e-Ø.  
         Peter-DAT/NOM    sleep-3SG    the    guest-3SG-NOM  
         ‘Peter’s guest sleeps.’

A nominative possessor appears after the determiner while a dative one appears in front of it, indicating that the latter is higher in the structure. Both kinds can be expressed either as a full DP or a pronoun (1a-b). The possessor can be extracted from the possessive DP, but only if it is dative (1c).

Clausal subjects also alternate between nominative and dative (2):

- (2) a. ... *hogy Péter-Ø lát-ja a kutyá-t*  
           that Peter-NOM see-3SG the dog-ACC  
           ‘... that Peter sees the dog’
- b. *Nem szeretne [csak Péter-Ø vonat-tal men-ni].*  
           not would.like only Peter-NOM train-with go-INF  
           ‘Peter would not like to be the only one to go by train.’
- (3) a. *Nem szabad [Péter-nek táncol-ni-a].*  
           not allowed Peter-DAT dance-INF-3SG  
           ‘Peter is not allowed to dance.’
- b. *Péter-nek muszáj alud-ni-a.*  
           Peter-DAT has.to sleep-INF-3SG  
           ‘Peter must sleep.’

Finite clauses have nominative subjects, but so do non-inflected infinitives when the subject is overt (2a-b) (see Section 4 and SZÉCSÉNYI 2018 for more properties of these clauses and further discussion). The inflected infinitive, however, has a dative subject (3). The dative subject can raise out of the infinitival clause (3b).

Finally, in (4) we see some of the facts concerning Hungarian agreeing adpositional phrases.

- (4) a. *Péter-Ø mellett*  
           Peter-NOM next.to  
           ‘next to Peter’
- b. *mellett-e [...] Péter-nek*  
           next.to-3SG Peter-DAT  
           ‘next to Peter’

The DP representing the “ground” of the relation expressed by the adposition may be nominative or dative. When nominative, there is no agreement morpheme on the adposition and when dative the adposition is inflected and the DP is obligatorily extracted.<sup>1</sup>

Although these constructions have their own individual properties, they also have much in common besides the dative-nominative alternations. For example, while there is no one-to-one correspondence between them, in each case where the dative appears so does an agreement morpheme. Moreover, the dative DP is extractable and, typically, the nominative one is not.

1 Pronouns behave differently, which we mention briefly on page 36.

We take these similarities to be an indication that we are looking at identical phenomena across these constructions and therefore we set out to provide a uniform analysis to account for these distribution patterns. The standard approach to the distribution of case marked DPs claims that case is licensed (assigned/checked) by certain heads. We will argue that this position cannot be maintained if a uniform account of the Hungarian nominative-dative alternation is to be provided. We will show that an analysis couched in terms of Dependent Case theory (MARANTZ 1991, BAKER 2015), in which case is assigned under configurational conditions, fares much better in this respect.

The paper is organised as follows. In Section 1 we present the standard approach, concentrating on SZABOLCSI'S (1984/94) analysis of the possessive DP. Showing this to have certain defects which follow from the assumptions of standard theory, we argue for a Dependent Case theory approach, the background for which is presented in Section 2. Section 3 contains our analyses of the relevant constructions. Section 4 attempts to identify the properties which draw unmarked nominative domains and unmarked dative domains together.

## 1 The Head Case Theory Approach

Standard case theory dates back to CHOMSKY – LASNIK (1977) and VERGNAUD'S (1977) response to this. It assumes that structural case phenomena emerge from the interaction between specific heads and DPs. Different versions exist today, all having in common the assumption that heads licence cases on DPs in one way or another. In order to avoid getting caught up in irrelevant details, we will call this group of approaches *Head Case Theory* (HCT).

From an HCT point of view, it is natural to assume that constructions in which a particular case appears share a head in common responsible for licensing it. However, if such a head cannot be found, it has to be assumed that the appearances of the case have little to do with each other. In the following discussion we will show how both these assumptions have led to problems in previous analyses of the data presented above.

### 1.1 Szabolcsi's analysis of the possessive DP

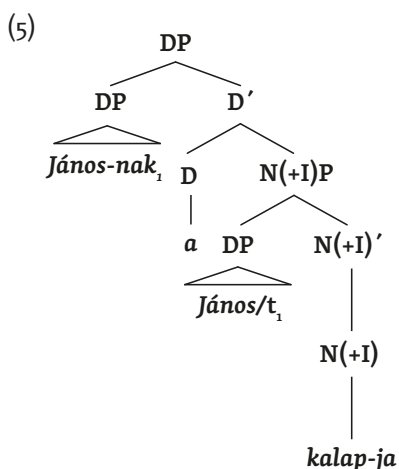
Based on the observations in (1), SZABOLCSI (1984) set out what has become the classic analysis of the Hungarian possessive DP, arguing that clause and DP structure have much in common.<sup>2</sup> Assuming an HCT stance, she noted that as the possessive DP and finite clause contain a nominative DP, the possessor and the subject respec-

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that everyone agrees with this analysis. Critics include DEN DIKKEN (1999) and É. KISS (2014). We do not have space here to give the details of these papers, neither of which extends their analyses to the extent that ours does, which we take to be a point in our favour.

tively, the same head must licence this in both. Following the standard assumption that agreement licenses nominative in finite clauses, she claimed that the nominative possessor has its case licensed by the agreement which appears on the posses- sum. As the nominative possessor is in a lower structural position than the dative one, the agreement must also be concomitantly lower in the structure.

That the dative possessor can escape the DP furthered her comparison between DP and clause structure as they both provide an “escape hatch” for the eloping phrase. The possessor picks up the “dative” morpheme in the specifier of this higher structure and, given that it must pass through this position on its way out of the DP, only a dative marked possessor can escape.

SZABOLCSI (1994) thus arrived at the following analysis:



The possessor originates in the specifier of the NP where it is thematically related to the noun. It is case marked by the agreement morpheme which forms a complex with the noun and hence in this position it is nominative. From here it may move to the specifier of the DP.

On the grounds that if Spec DP is equivalent to Spec CP it should not be a case position, Szabolcsi claimed that the *-nak* morpheme is not a case morpheme. Moreover, the possessor is already case marked in its base position. She supported this claim with the observation that the morpheme can attach to predicates in certain constructions:

- (6) a. *Tanár-nak tanár.*  
 teacher-NAK teacher  
 ‘As for being a teacher, he is a teacher.’  
 b. *Boldog-nak boldog.*  
 happy-NAK happy  
 ‘As for being happy, he is happy.’



- (7) *Tanár-nak / Boldog-nak len-ni jó.*  
 teacher-NAK happy-NAK be-INF good  
 ‘To be a teacher/happy is good.’

This, Szabolcsi claims, makes the morpheme “un-case-like” (SZABOLCSI 1994, 203), though she has nothing to offer as to what it actually is. The fact that *-nak* behaves exactly like other case morphemes in Hungarian does nothing to support Szabolcsi. Her argument that because it appears on nominal and adjectival predicates it is “un-case-like” is also unconvincing as the idea that predicate nominals are case marked is not unusual (see MAILING – SPROUSE 1995 and references therein). Moreover, the question remains: what else might this morpheme be in (6) and (7), if not dative? In what follows, we will assume that Szabolcsi is incorrect in claiming that *-nak* is not a dative case morpheme.

### 1.2 Problems for Szabolcsi’s analysis

There are a number of theoretically driven problematic assumptions made in Szabolcsi’s analysis which lead us to question the theoretical framework she adopts. To maintain the correspondence between the DP and clause, she assumes the agreement in the DP to be the licenser of nominative. However, the agreement morpheme in the DP, while similar to the one in the clause, is not identical to it, as is shown in the following table:

(8)	nominal agreement	verbal agreement (definite)	verbal agreement (indefinite)
1SG	<i>kalap-om</i>	<i>lát-om</i>	<i>lát-ok</i>
2SG	<i>kalap-od</i>	<i>lát-od</i>	<i>lát-sz</i>
3SG	<i>kalap-ja</i>	<i>lát-ja</i>	<i>lát-Ø</i>
1PL	<i>kalap-unk</i>	<i>lát-juk</i>	<i>lát-unk</i>
2PL	<i>kalap-otok</i>	<i>lát-játok</i>	<i>lát-tok</i>
3PL	<i>kalap-juk</i> ‘pos hat’	<i>lát-ják</i> ‘subj see (it)’	<i>lát-nak</i> ‘subj see (something)’

Finite agreement in Hungarian has two paradigms, dependent on the definiteness of the object. In the singular, the nominal agreement corresponds to the definite paradigm, but in the plural the correspondence with either paradigm disintegrates. This would not be much of a problem were it not for the fact that the nominal agreement pattern can be found elsewhere. Specifically, we find exactly this pattern in inflected infinitives and agreeing adpositional phrases, presented in (2) and (3) above. All three paradigms are presented in (9).

(9)	nominal agreement	infinitival agreement	adpositional agreement
1SG	<i>kalap-om</i>	( <i>nekem</i> ) <i>lát-n-om</i>	( <i>nekem</i> ) ... <i>után-am</i>
2SG	<i>kalap-od</i>	( <i>neked</i> ) <i>lát-n-od</i>	( <i>neked</i> ) ... <i>után-ad</i>
3SG	<i>kalap-ja</i>	( <i>neki</i> ) <i>lát-ni-a</i>	( <i>neki</i> ) ... <i>után-a</i>
1PL	<i>kalap-unk</i>	( <i>nekünk</i> ) <i>lát-n-unk</i>	( <i>nekünk</i> ) ... <i>után-unk</i>
2PL	<i>kalap-otok</i>	( <i>nektek</i> ) <i>lát-n-otok</i>	( <i>nektek</i> ) ... <i>után-atok</i>
3PL	<i>kalap-juk</i> 'pos hat'	( <i>nekik</i> ) <i>lát-ni-uk</i> 'subj to see'	( <i>nekik</i> ) ... <i>után-uk</i> 'after pron'

Thus, this agreement pattern is distinct from the finite agreement, having its own distribution. We label the one demonstrated in (9) “non-finite agreement” (AgN). The observation that the agreement in nominal phrases is distinct from the finite agreement weakens Szabolcsi’s claim that they both license nominative case, but it does not invalidate it. However, that this morpheme appears on the inflected infinitive, which has a dative subject, not a nominative one, is a serious problem. Under Szabolcsi’s assumptions, two distinct heads licence the same case in different constructions, but one of those licences a different case in another construction. This is not at all attractive.

Perhaps Szabolcsi is simply mistaken about the case that AgN licenses. Given that a dative DP can, and in some constructions must, co-occur with this agreement, we might be better off assuming that it licenses dative. This leaves us with the question of what head licenses the nominative, if not the agreement. However, there is already a problem in this respect. The overt subject of the non-inflected infinitive is nominative, though there is no agreement morpheme (2b). Although SZABOLCSI (2009) proposes to analyse this as involving long distance and multiple agreement with the finite head, more recent accounts discussing the case of infinitival covert subjects identified as PRO, but under certain conditions alternating with an overt case-marked DP, raise several disturbing questions for HCT (e.g., MCFADDEN – SUNDARESAN 2011, 2018, SZÉCSÉNYI 2018). We, thus, have at least two instances of nominative case which cannot be linked to agreement, one in the possessive DP and one in the non-inflected non-finite clause, which HCT therefore fails to account for.

If we assume that AgN licenses dative, there will be a problem in accounting for the appearance of the dative in constructions such as (6) and (7), where there is no AgN. As to Szabolcsi’s claim that *-nak* is licensed by the determiner, this would preclude any attempt to provide a uniform account of the dative DPs in structures other than DP. Furthermore, DEN DIKKEN (1999) argues that the determiner cannot be a dative case assigner on the grounds that the specifier of DP can also host a demonstrative, which shows case concord with the DP it specifies:

- (10) [<sub>DP</sub> *Az-t* [<sub>D</sub> *a* [<sub>NP</sub> *kalap-ot*]]] *lát-t-am*.  
           that-ACC           the           hat-ACC       saw-1SG  
           ‘It was that hat that I saw.’

If the determiner assigns dative case to the possessor, we would expect the demonstrative to be dative as well.

All the problems identified in this section follow directly from the assumption that cases are licensed by heads. For neither nominative nor dative case can a straightforward candidate for a head which licenses them be found. In the absence of such heads, it is difficult to see how a HCT-based analysis can be maintained so another approach should be sought. In the next section we will outline the principles of Dependent Case Theory (DCT) in preparation for a potential analysis of the distribution of the Hungarian dative and nominative cases.

## 2 Dependent Case Theory

MARANTZ (1991) proposed that case is assigned in accordance to the following hierarchy:

- i) lexical case
- ii) dependent case
- iii) unmarked case
- iv) default case<sup>3</sup>

Once a DP is assigned a case, it is no longer considered for determining what case the remaining DPs can be assigned. Lexical cases are assigned to specific arguments of specific predicates and, therefore, have a consistent semantic value. These are assigned first, meaning that they are impervious to the structural conditions that affect the later assigned cases. Dependent case may be assigned in a transitive configuration to the object or the subject, in which case we call it accusative or ergative respectively.<sup>4</sup> Unmarked case is assigned to any DP which has not been assigned a lexical or dependent case. Nominative is the unmarked case for those languages which assign dependent case to the object and absolutive is unmarked for those languages assigning dependent case to the transitive subject. If it is not assigned a lexical case, unmarked case will be assigned to the subject of an intransitive clause as dependent case cannot be assigned when there is only one DP.

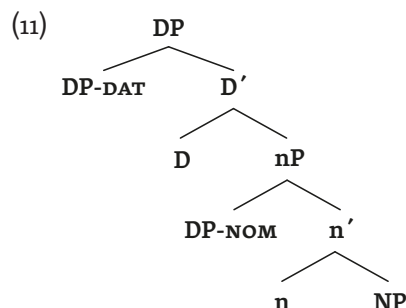
BAKER (2015) develops these ideas, introducing the notion of a domain which has two important functions in the theory. First, a domain is a section of a structure within which the principles of case theory operate. Therefore, only DPs within the same domain can interact with each other to determine whether dependent case can be assigned. The second function is to determine the identity of the cases assigned. Dependent and unmarked cases can be realised as different cases in different domains.

<sup>3</sup> Default case is irrelevant to this paper and we will say nothing about it here. See NEWSON (2018, 2019) for an account of default case in DCT.

<sup>4</sup> BAKER (2015) argues that dependent case can be assigned to both DPs, in which case we end up with the tripartite system, or to neither, where the neutral system emerges.

For example, Sakha has a dependent accusative case in the clausal domain, but a dependent dative in the verbal one. Some languages have the same dependent cases across different domains. Shipibo, for example has ergative subjects in transitive clauses and ergative possessors in the nominal domain. The identity of the unmarked case is also determined individually for different domains. Following MARANTZ'S (1991) suggestion, Baker claims that genitive is generally unmarked in the nominal domain.

BAKER (2015) identifies TP, NP and VP to be case domains crosslinguistically and therefore equates them with the spell-out domains of Phase Theory (CHOMSKY 2000). We will adopt this assumption too, though we will accept a more articulated structure of the nominal phrase. The nominal domain will be whatever the complement of D is, which could be a number of possible functional projections above NP (e.g. NumP). However, from our perspective the most important of these is the one that introduces the possessor, which we take to be nP. It will be safe to ignore the possible functional structure which may intervene between D and nP as these do not introduce any DP which might affect case assignment. Thus, the structure we assume is as follows:



If it is correct that case domains are spell-out domains, this extends the range of data available for the investigation into phases themselves. Observations from case phenomena are just as valid to glean information from as observations concerning movement. We will argue below that observations concerning the distribution of cases in Hungarian suggest that there are phases which have not been detected by considering data from movement phenomena.

### 3 Analysis

From the perspective of DCT it is important to establish what kinds of cases we are dealing with: lexical, dependent or unmarked.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> A reviewer raises questions about the use of dative in Hungarian in constructions which we do not discuss here. Crosslinguistically, dative is used as either a lexical or a structural case (see BAKER





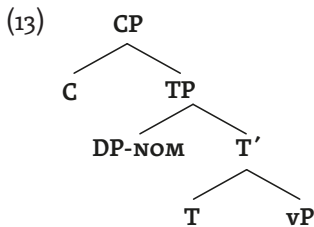
Nominative is the archetypical unmarked case and so we will assume without argument that this is unmarked in Hungarian wherever it appears.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the domains in which we find nominative DPs, which we will identify in the following sections, are ones for which nominative is selected as the unmarked case. The subject of the inflected infinitive is dative in both transitive and intransitive contexts, which indicates that not only is dative a structural case but also unmarked, as the subject of intransitive clauses can only be assigned unmarked case.

- (12) a. *Nem szabad [Péter-nek olvas-ni-a könyv-ek-et].*  
 not allowed Peter-DAT read-INF-3SG book-PL-ACC  
 ‘Peter is not allowed to read books.’  
 b. *Péter-nek muszáj alud-ni-a.*  
 Peter-DAT has.to sleep-INF-3SG  
 ‘Peter must sleep.’

We therefore conclude that both nominative and dative are unmarked cases in Hungarian. This is only possible if they are defined as the unmarked cases of different domains. The question is: what are these domains?

### 3.1 The domains of the unmarked nominative

We find nominative DPs as subjects of finite clauses, as is standard in nominative-accusative languages. With TP accepted as the clausal spell-out domain, as complement of C, it can be naturally concluded that TP is a domain with an unmarked nominative:



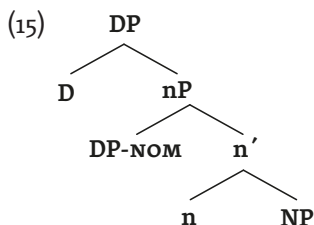
2015) in different languages. In Hungarian, it is used as both. In this paper, however, we deal only with its structural use. Its use as a lexical case is unremarkable and it behaves very much like other lexical cases being lexically determined. DCT deals with lexical cases in much the same way as other theories do.

<sup>6</sup> A reviewer asks whether it is assumed that nominative possessors and nominative finite subjects are indeed truly nominatives pointing out a line of research which argues that “nominative” possessors are in fact caseless, unlike finite subjects, which are truly nominative. Under the DCT approach assumed in the present paper such a distinction cannot be made as it does not allow case competitors to surface with no case form. From our perspective, this is a positive aspect of the theory, as it allows us to unify phenomena which would have to be seen as disparate under the assumption that some unmarked forms are caseless.

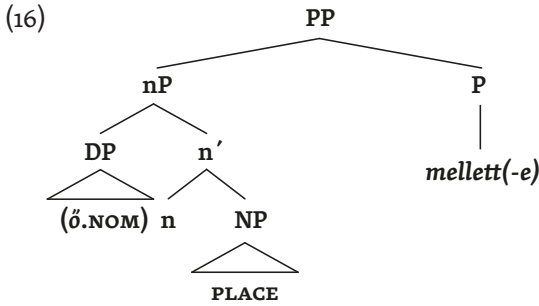
Empirical evidence supports the claim that non-inflected infinitives are also complements of C defining a nominative domain. Usually the subject of these infinitives is an unpronounced PRO, however, given the right conditions, e.g. in the presence of an *only*-phrase with an obligatory focus position, the subject can be overt. These overt subjects unambiguously have a nominative form (14). This suggests that PRO is also nominative, as has been claimed recently (MCFADDEN – SUNDARESAN 2011). Whether we have overt or covert subjects in infinitival clauses is determined by factors independent of case, such as obviation or emphasis.

- (14) *Péter-Ø nem szeretne [csak ő vonat-tal men-ni].*  
 Peter-NOM not would.like only 3SG-NOM train-with go-INF  
 ‘Peter would not like to be the only one to go by train.’

In the DP, D is standardly assumed to be a phase head and its complement is therefore a spell-out domain. Given that the possessor in the lower structural position, specifier of nP, is nominative, we conclude that in Hungarian the complements of both C and D are domains with unmarked nominative:



The role of the PP in Phase Theory is less extensively discussed (though see SAB- BACH 2007 on PP as a spell-out domain), but the fact that a pronoun representing the ground in the agreeing PP is nominative leads us to conclude that some structure in the PP is a case domain and hence a spell-out domain. The structure of Hungarian PPs which these facts suggest seems compatible with that proposed in DÉKÁNY (2018), where locative adpositions take a possessive nominal complement ultimately headed by an abstract noun PLACE, which is possessed by the DP representing the ground. For a uniform analysis, we will assume that this nominal phrase is simply an nP with the ground DP in its specifier and the abstract place NP in its complement. In turn this structure is the complement of the adposition. Our argument is that it is the specifier of this nP that is the position of the nominative (pronoun) DP. This is based on the observation that pronouns cannot escape the PP and so are placed fairly low in the structure. This position is in fact equivalent to the nominative possessor in DP, which also cannot escape from this position:



In Dékány’s analysis, there is an extra projection above this PP structure which she labels FP and which contains the agreement morpheme. We will return to this when discussing the dative DP in agreeing PPs. For now, however, we identify the nP complement of P as a case domain and claim that P is amongst the phase heads.

To summarise so far, we have identified the case domains which select nominative as unmarked to be those spell-out domains which are the complements of C, D and P heads.

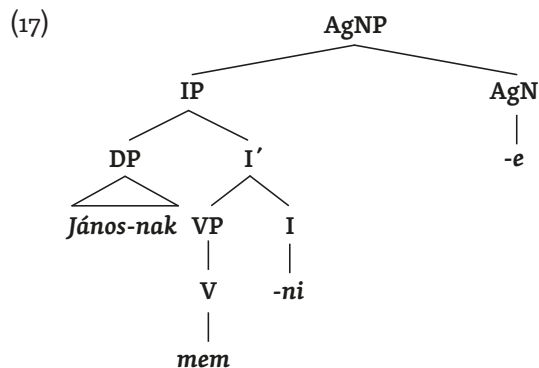
### 3.2 The domains of the unmarked dative

Since CHOMSKY (1995) it has become standard to assume that agreement is a feature rather than an actual head. However, the morphological status of agreement in Hungarian forces us to assume that, even if a feature, agreement is a feature on a rather specific head whose function, other than to carry the feature and to house the morpheme which realises it, is obscure. We might hedge bets and call this functional head “F” until we discover its true nature. However, our analysis of the domains in which we find dative DPs forces us to assume that the morpheme which realises non-finite agreement, which we have been terming AgN, has properties distinct from those of the finite agreement morpheme. Specifically, we claim that AgN is a phase head, defining its complement as a case domain. Given that it is the agreement properties of this head which distinguish it from finite agreement, we will go against current wisdom and assume in this case that agreement is a head itself, not just a feature on some other head. We claim that finite agreement does not have the same property of being a phase head and therefore remain agnostic as to whether this is a head or a feature.

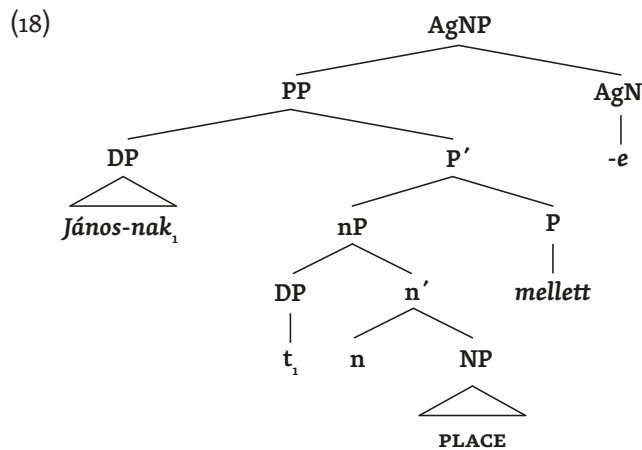
The morphological makeup of inflected infinitives with the agreement marker outside the infinitive indicates that AgN is high in the clause. AgN, being a phase head, defines its IP complement as a case domain. In this domain the subject is invariably dative.<sup>7</sup> The absence of an alternative nominative form can be put down to the lack of a nominative layer within the infinitival verb and the fact that IP is not

7 The minimal case domain containing the dative subject is the IP complement of AgN. This will be

the complement of C, which would make it an unmarked nominative domain. IP as the complement of AgN is an unmarked dative domain.



At this point we can extend our discussion of DÉKÁNY’S (2018) analysis of the PP, which proposes an extra level of structure above the PP termed FP. As this projection contains the agreement morpheme, we claim that her FP is equivalent to the AgNP proposed in the present paper as shown in (18). The resulting structure is strikingly parallel to the infinitival pattern in (17). In both cases, a high AgN, a phase head, defines its complement (PP and IP, respectively) as a domain for dative case.



Although there is more to be said about the syntax of the Hungarian PP, the basic facts still fit with our proposal: the fact that dative lexical DPs have to leave the PP is compatible with the claim that only dative DPs are extractable, since they are the ones that occupy a high position within the PP. Despite the obligatory extraction, we still want to maintain the claim that these lexical DPs come from within the PP,

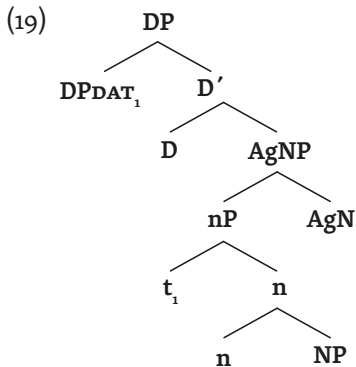
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true no matter whether the subject has raised out of Spec,vP or not, as there is no domain intervening between the vP and IP.



since without this assumption the source of dative case would be extremely hard to identify. We argue that the difference between PPs with nominative and dative DPs is the result of the different positions the respective DPs occupy.

We are now in a position to discuss the dative possessor in the DP. We know that the dative possessor sits in a high position in the possessive DP, standardly assumed to be the specifier of DP itself.<sup>8</sup> Obviously, in this position, the possessor is no longer in the domain in which it is assigned unmarked nominative: the nP, but in a domain where it is assigned unmarked dative. But what domain is this? The domains above the DP, vP and IP, are not associated with unmarked dative and if the case of the raised possessor were to be determined in these domains, we would predict that a different case would be assigned depending on whether the possessive DP is a subject or an object. Equally obvious is the role played by AgN in determining this domain, as discussed for inflected infinitives and PPs above. The problem is that the agreement morpheme which attaches to the noun possessum is generally assumed to be situated below the determiner and in this position, it cannot define the DP to be a case domain:

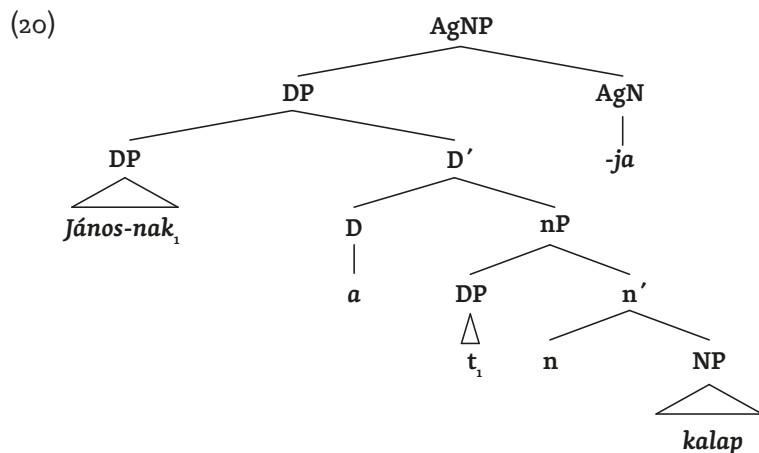


Before providing an alternative analysis, it is useful to review the general reasoning behind the assumption of (19). Most of these come from Szabolcsi’s analysis discussed in Section 1.1. Recall, she claimed that the agreement is responsible for assigning nominative case and given that the nominative possessor is lower in the structure, the agreement must also be low. Furthermore, under Szabolcsi’s analysis, D is equivalent to C in the clause as it provides an escape hatch for the eloping possessor. However, both these arguments are by now invalid. We have argued that

<sup>8</sup> A reviewer asks why a possessor which is assigned nominative in its original position moves to the higher position. DCT, since its inception in MARANTZ (1991), has claimed to be a theory of the distribution of case rather than one which concerns the distribution of DPs. From this perspective the effects of the Case Filter are no longer the concern of case theory but are to be explained by other principles. Limited space means that in the present paper we concentrate on the issue of which case a DP bears in which position, not on the separate issue of why it occupies those positions.

neither AgN nor indeed any head is responsible for assigning nominative case. Being an “escape hatch” is nothing peculiar to the DP or CP to warrant them as having the same special status. What they have in common is that they are headed by phase heads, which is not unique to these constructions and does not indicate that they should have other properties in common.

As DP appears to be a case domain which selects an unmarked dative and as AgN is a phase head selecting for such a domain in the constructions we have reviewed earlier, it is clear that analysis of the possessive DP should be as in (20):



Like the other constructions, AgNP is high, this time taking DP as its complement. It follows from what we have argued so far that DP is therefore a case domain with an unmarked dative.

The last thing to discuss in this section is the constructions in which the predicate is dative, presented in (6) and (7). There are a number of interesting issues that these constructions raise, not least of which is how DCT is to deal with case marked predicates. BAKER (2015) discusses how predicate nominals display unmarked case even in languages with marked nominative and absolutive. But this discussion is more about the nature of marked nominatives and absolutives than it is about the case assigned to predicates. We do not have space here to build a full theory of predicate case, but we will assume that predicates are assigned case under the same conditions that arguments are. The difference is that they do not take part in the same competitions that arguments do. Under DCT assumptions, case assignment is determined by the number of case competitors in a domain. If there are two DP arguments, then dependent case can be assigned to one (or both) of them. On the understanding that predicates do not compete with arguments and as there can only be one predicate in a clause, it follows straightforwardly that predicates can only be assigned unmarked case. What the Hungarian data indicate is that exactly the same domains relevant for

arguments are relevant for predicates. Predicate nominals and adjectival predicates are nominative whenever the unmarked case for arguments is nominative and they are dative whenever the unmarked case is dative:<sup>9</sup>

- (21) a. *Péter-Ø tanár / boldog Ø/volt.*  
 Peter-NOM teacher.NOM happy.NOM is/was  
 ‘Peter is/was a teacher/happv.’
- b. *Péter-Ø akar [tanár / boldog len-ni].*  
 Peter-NOM wants teacher.NOM happy.NOM be-INF  
 ‘Peter wants to be a teacher/happv.’
- c. *Nem szabad [Péter-nek tanár-nak / boldog-nak len-ni-e].*  
 not allowed Peter-DAT teacher-DAT happy-DAT be-INF-3SG  
 ‘Peter is not allowed to be a teacher/happv.’

It follows from this approach that those cases where we find dative-marked predicates without an AgN morpheme also involve unmarked dative domains:

- (22) a. *Tanár-nak tanár. / Boldog-nak boldog.*  
 teacher-DAT teacher happy-DAT happy  
 ‘As for being a teacher, he is a teacher.’  
 happv.
- b. *Tanár-nak / Boldog-nak len-ni jó.*  
 teacher-DAT happy-DAT be-INF good  
 ‘To be a teacher/happy is good.’

Both of these constructions are very limited and even though the dative predicates in (22b) are inside an uninflected infinitive, which as we have seen is typically an unmarked nominative domain, it would be very difficult to argue that they are clausal complements of C. The fact that complements of C are identified as unmarked nominative domains leads us to conclude that these clauses are not such complements. However, it is difficult to identify what phase head determines the case domains in these constructions. One reasonable assumption to make is that they are spell-out domains by default in the same way that the root node is a spell-out domain without being a complement.

## 4 Defining domains

Now we are in the position to take stock of our observations regarding the distribution of unmarked dative and nominative case in Hungarian and attempt to generalize regarding the properties of these different case domains.

<sup>9</sup> For an extensive discussion of dative case and predication in Hungarian, see ÜRÖGDI (2006).

Starting with nominative DPs, we find that they appear in the following three environments:

- T/IP directly within CP;
- Nominal phrases (nP) within DP;
- Nominal phrases (nP) within PP.

This is by no means random distribution. As pointed out in BAKER (2015), the clause and nominal phrase often act as a single domain. CP, DP and PP are also the typical highest extended projections, in the sense of GRIMSHAW (2005), of verbal, nominal and prepositional elements, though if our analysis of the position of AgNP is correct, this is not always the case. Let us say that these phrases are canonical final projections. We can then identify the domain with unmarked nominative case as in (23):

- (23) The nominative domain (domain taking nominative as unmarked case): that Spell-out domain which is the complement of a canonical final projecting phase head.

The distribution of dative case is by contrast rather random. We find it in PPs and possessive DPs, where it alternates with a nominative DP and in inflected infinitives, where it does not, sometimes it even surfaces on predicates. Particularly in the latter cases, where we are unable to determine a phase head which gives rise to the domain, it seems hopeless to be able to define the unmarked dative domain in terms of the properties of their phase heads. It is standard in such cases to identify a non-uniform set as the remainder after other uniform sets have been isolated. In other words, the unmarked dative domain counts as the elsewhere condition: the set of domains which are not in the complement position of canonical final projecting phase heads. In DCT the unmarked case is defined as the elsewhere case, assigned to DPs once we subtract those with lexical and dependent case. Taking on this usage, we therefore claim that the domain which selects dative as its unmarked case is the unmarked domain and therefore dative is the unmarked case of the unmarked domain.

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper we have presented arguments in favour of a Dependent Case Theory approach to the distribution of nominative and dative case in Hungarian. Starting with the data and the seminal proposal of SZABOLCSI (1987, 1994), we highlighted both empirical and theoretical problems that Head Case accounts face. Taking a DCT perspective and using the same data we identified two domains in Hungarian associated with different unmarked case. We have demonstrated that it is possible to provide a principled way to delineate these and that they are not just random.



A particularly welcome consequence of our proposal is how straightforwardly it carries over onto various realisations of predication.

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*Mark Newson*

Department of English Linguistics  
 Eötvös Loránd University  
 Rákóczi út 5., 1088 Budapest  
 Hungary  
 newson.mark@btk.elte.hu

*Krisztina Szécsényi*

Department of English Linguistics  
 Eötvös Loránd University  
 Rákóczi út 5., 1088 Budapest  
 Hungary  
 szecsényi.krisztina@btk.elte.hu



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