

ATMOSPHERICAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN HUNGARIAN*

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Evidence can be cited that cross-linguistically there exists a class of 'subjectless' verbs that most commonly denote natural or atmospherical phenomena, conditions of the world or the weather. In many languages a 'dummy' pronoun may appear in sentences with these verbs and function syntactically – more or less – as 'subject'.¹ These topicless/thetic sentences are characterized as messages conveying a single unstructured kind of judgement involving only the recognition or rejection of some judgement material, without predicating this judgement of some independently recognised subject.

- (1a) *Esik (az eső).*
falls the rain
'It's raining.'
- (1b) *Havazik (*a hó).*
snows (the snow)
'It's snowing.'
- (1c) *Sötétedik (*a nap).*
darkens (the day)
'It's growing dark.'

Besides these verbal atmospherical constructions in Hungarian there is a second, syntactically different type of weather expression:

- (2a) *Hideg van.*
cold is
'It's cold.'
- (2b) *Nyár van.*
summer is
'It's summer.'

(1) and (2) are quite similar both semantically and pragmatically, but

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¹ In other languages nouns with a general meaning 'sky'/'world' are obligatorily or optionally used as the subject of some of these verbs. Cf.

- (i) *id-dúnya tš-shṭi*
the-world she-raining
'It is raining' (Palestinian Arabic; from Givón 1984: 90)
- (ii) *Dörög (az ég).*
thunders the sky
'It's thundering.' (Hungarian)
- (iii) *Inmar zorä.*
god/sky thunder
'It's thundering.' (Udmurt; from Székely 1904: 32. Székely's name is also worth mentioning for his 1904 monograph being the first reception of Brentano and Marty's theory of judgement in Hungarian linguistics; accordingly he treats sentences containing weather verbs as thetic sentences.)

- the first type (1a–c) is not productive; there are slightly more than a dozen of such verbs in the lexicon. These can be of at least two types: some of them (cf. 1a) can have (a restricted range of) lexical subjects, some (cf. 1b, c) cannot, mainly because they have a lexically incorporated subject.
- the second type, however, (2a, b) is a highly productive pattern which comprises not only descriptions of weather conditions, but alsothetic judgements with a broader 'atmospherical' interpretation. In the following I will call them **copular atmospherical constructions**.

Form

Beside the productive **NP+BE** pattern (cf. (3a–d)), we can also find some **AP+BE**² and **AdvP+BE**³ structures (cf. (4a–d)) among copular atmospherical predicates:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (3a) <i>Demokrácia van.</i>
democracy is
'There is democracy.' | (3c) <i>Rend van.</i>
order is
'There is order.' |
| (3b) <i>Ebédzünet van.</i>
lunchbreak is
'It's lunchbreak.' | (3d) <i>Gond van.</i>
problem is
'There is a problem.' |
| (4a) <i>Meleg/Hideg (idő) van.</i>
hot/cold (weather) is.
'It's hot/cold.' | (4c) <i>Bűdös(ség) van.</i>
stinky/stench is
'It stinks (in here).' |
| (4b) <i>Sötét(ség) van.</i>
dark(ness) is
'It's dark.' | (4d) <i>Késő van.</i>
late is
'It's late.' |

The VAN featuring in copular atmospherical constructions behaves like a stress-avoiding verb⁴ in neutral sentences, forcing the nominal/adjective to fill the preverbal verbal modifier slot (VM).⁵

² Although the pattern is not productive and there is a very small set of such adjectives in standard Hungarian (mostly *hideg* 'cold', *meleg* 'hot', *sötét* 'dark', *bűdös* 'stinky', *késő* 'late'), some dialects (eg. that spoken in the Bihar region, North-Western part of Romania) uses a richer variety of such structures especially with denominal adjectives, cf. *Felleg-es van* (cloud-y is 'It's cloudy.') ↔ standard Hungarian: *Felleget az ég.* (cloudy the sky 'The sky is cloudy'); *Sikos van.* (slippery is 'It's slippery.') ↔ standard Hungarian: *Síkos/ csúszós az út.* (slippery the road 'The road is slippery.'). or *Csúszik (az út).* (slips the road 'The road is slippery.').

³ To my knowledge there is only one such adverb, *korán* ('early'), that is parallel with both the adjectival and adverbial use of the *késő-későn* ('late') pair. Cf. *Késő_{Adj} van.* (late is 'It's late.'). *Az előadás/ pro későn_{Adv} van.* (the performance/ pro late is 'The performance is late on') and: *Korán van.* (early is 'It's early.'). *A gyűlés korán van.* (the meeting early is 'The meeting starts early.'). This structure (*Korán van.*) thus may be analysed on a par with AP+BE constructions. In fact both the AP+BE and the AdvP+BE pattern can be considered idiomatic, and/or – as diachronic data suggests – can be traced back to elliptical structures, such as *Késő este van* (late evening is 'It's late in the evening') → *Késő van* (late is 'It's late.').; *Korán reggel van* (early morning is 'It's early in the morning') → *Korán van* (early is 'It's early.').; *Hideg idő van* (cold weather is 'It's cold.'). → *Hideg van* (cold is 'It's cold.').; etc. Some NPs and APs show parallel structures and have the same meaning, cf. (4b, c).

⁴ Komlósy 1989 calls 'stress-avoiding' a class of phonologically defective verbs that require a designated argument/verbal modifier to precede the verb in neutral sentences.

⁵ A verbal modifier is a non-referring expression (verbal particle, adjective, postposition, bare noun) that precedes the verb in neutral sentences forming a phonological word with it. Semantically a VM+V unit is considered to be some kind of 'complex predicate'. É. Kiss 2002 defines VMs as phrases consisting of a mere head, and assumes that they occupy the specifier of an AspP projection (and the verb is raised into the empty Asp head). Csirmaz 2004 makes a distinction between light and heavy verbal modifiers. Light VMs consist of a mere head, heavy VMs are of a phrasal status. Csirmaz assumes that phrasal VMs have to move to Spec, PredP,

Meaning

Though in English or in Hebrew these atmospherical predicates do not seem to be limited to predicates of any particular semantic type (cf. Hazout 2004: 400), in Hungarian they certainly are.

We mainly find nouns denoting ‘socio-economical or political states of affairs’ (*verseny* ‘competition’, *sajtószabadság* ‘freedom of press’, *veszély* ‘danger’ *szavazás* ‘voting’, *diszkrimináció* ‘discrimination’ etc. + VAN ‘be’), event denoting nominals (*meccs* ‘match’, *háború* ‘war’, *buli* ‘party’, *bál* ‘dance’, *élet* ‘life’, *karnevál* ‘carneval’, *mise* ‘religious ceremony’, *vita* ‘debate’, *földrengés* ‘earthquake’ etc. + VAN ‘be’), expressions concerning the weather or other circumstances (*tél* ‘winter’, *köd* ‘fog’, *vihar* ‘storm’, *sár* ‘mud’, *fagy(ás)* ‘freezing’, *csend* ‘silence’, *zaj* ‘noise’ *sötét(ség)* ‘dark(ness)’, *jég* ‘ice’, *hó* ‘snow’, *szag* ‘smell’, *bűz_N/bűdös_{Adj}* ‘stench’ etc. + VAN ‘be’), or time-related expressions (*február* ‘February’, *este*, ‘evening’ *5 óra* ‘5 o’clock’, *fél három* ‘half past two’, *április elseje* ‘the 1st of April’, *hétvége* ‘weekend’, *péntek* ‘Friday’, *(szép) idő* ‘(nice) weather’ etc. + VAN ‘be’).

APPROACHES

The literature deals only with adjectival copular weather expressions of the *Hideg van* (cold is ‘It’s cold.’) type. Komlósy (1994) mentions the *Tavaszi van* (spring is ‘It’s spring’) type, too, but he also disregards those **NP+BE** atmospherical constructions that are not weather expressions in the strict sense.

- in the **traditional analyses** of the Hungarian descriptive grammars the nominal constituent of these copular atmospherical construction is regarded as the grammatical subject of the verb BE.
- similarly to weather verbs, copular weather constructions are considered by **Komlósy (1994)** to be subjectless (that is, to contain predicate nominals rather than subjects), and to bear a default agreement marker 3SG in all contexts where agreement is a grammatical requirement. Komlósy’s arguments are mainly based on: (i) the syntactic behaviour of adjectives, (ii) the modifiability of *hideg* (‘cold’) in copular weather expressions, (iii) ways of contrastive topicalization, (iv) lack of ability to occur in syntactic constructions and/or be input to derivational processes where they are required to have a subject slot (no participial, gerundival forms and no nouns with a „fact of activity” meaning), (v) equi contexts, (vi) raising contexts. As a problem for the subjectlessness hypothesis Komlósy mentions that nonfinite weather expressions can occur with matrix predicates such as *fog* ‘will’, *szokott* ‘used to’, *kezd* ‘starts to’, *kell(ene)* ‘should/would’ (possibly raising verbs), and *akar* ‘wants to’, *tud* ‘to know’ (control/ ‘equi’ verbs). These posit no problem for Tóth’s theory (below).
- weather verbs and copular weather expressions are claimed by **Tóth (2000, 2001)** to behave identically; when embedded under modals they both behave on a par with personal resultatives in that they are grammatical with inflected infinitives. 3SG agreement on the infinitive is claimed to be mandatory in these constructions. Concerning impersonal resultatives, Tóth concludes on the basis of theoretical considerations and cross-linguistic empirical data that the EPP is not universal, and thus Hungarian does not have null expletive subjects in impersonal resultatives.

and light VMs can incorporate into the verbal head, or move to Spec,PredP themselves. PredP is considered to dominate the verb selecting the VM.

Tóth shows that Komlósy's claim (that weather verbs and weather expressions are subjectless) cannot be maintained, as these are grammatical when embedded in inflected infinitival clauses.

(5) *Havazik* → *Március-ban már nem kellene havaz-ni-a.*
 snow-3SG March-INESS already not should snow-INF-3SG
 'It's snowing.' 'In March it shouldn't be still snowing.'
 (Tóth 2000, 14a., 16a.)

(6) *Itt nagyon meleg van* → *Eb-ben a szobá-ban nem szabadna [ilyen*
 here very hot is this-INESS the room-INESS not should so
meleg-nek len-ni-e].
 hot-DAT be-INF-3SG
 'It is very hot here.' 'It should not be so hot in this room.'
 (Tóth 2000, 14c., 16c.)

Thus, on a par with the weather verbs, copular weather expressions are considered to contain a phonetically empty quasi-argument as their subjects (that can check the ϕ -features [third person, singular] against AgrS triggering 3SG agreement on the verb shown by the agreement on an embedded infinitive, as in (5), (6)). This argument is supposed to have an atmospheric theta-role.

- For the *havazik* ('to snow') type of weather verbs **Viszket (2002)** claims that in the GB+MP framework they can be considered to have a quasi-argument as their subjects, in the LFG framework they either do not have a subject or have a *pro* subject, and in the GASG framework they can be taken to be subjectless, introducing only a 'situational referent' that can be anaphorically referred to. Using the contrastive topicalization tests of Komlósy (1994), **Viszket (2003)** sustains that there are two structures that can be associated with the *Hideg van* (cold is 'It's cold.') type of weather expressions: one in which the AP is a predicative adjective, and one where it functions as a subject. The difference between the two structures is to be derived from both the argument structure of the two VANs (a copula or 'semi-auxiliary', with the adjective functioning as part of the complex predicate, and an existential verb with the adjective functioning as subject), together with other lexical dissimilarities, such as the existence of an infinitive counterpart of VAN (in the case of *Hideg van* 'There is (such thing as) cold' – with VAN being closer to an existential verb interpretation) or the non-existence of it (in the case of *Hideg van* 'It is cold' with the adjective being part of the predicate). She admits though that with the predicate analysis of the adjective a problem arises: if *hideg* is an adjectival predicate, why is the copula still present, cf. *Beteg (*van) (ő)*. (sick *is he 'He is sick.')

PROBLEMS

I agree with Tóth (2000, 2001) in that weather verbs have a quasi-argumental subject, but I am forced to think that this is not the case with the atmospherical copular constructions. Below I intend to show that the tests used in the literature are not conclusive.

- **Example 1. – 'vÁn' adjunct participle clauses**

Tóth (2001: 63) uses participial adjunct clauses with *-vÁn* to test the weather expressions' subject position: *-vÁn*-participles can have a nominative marked DP or a pronominal

subject (as opposed to *-vA*-participles that cannot have a lexical subject due to lack of case). Still *-vA*-participles can never be formed from weather verbs,⁶ *-vÁn*-participles, however, are grammatical.⁷

- (7) *Hajnalodván/*-va, pro elindultunk hazafelé.* (Tóth 2001, 27)
 dawn-VÁN/-VA start-1PL home-towards.
 'Dawn coming, we started for home.'

Though Tóth's *-vÁn*-participle test seems convincing at first, we find that impersonal resultatives considered to be subjectless by Tóth can also be used with *-vÁn*-participles, cf.

- (8) *A szobában is ki lévén takarítva, más dolgom már nem akadt.*
 the room-INCESS also VM be-VÁN clean-VA, other task-POSS.1SG
 already not occurred
 'The room being tidied up, too, I had no other tasks to complete.'
- (9) *A kályhába be lévén gyújtva, nem szívesen hagyom magára a gyereket a szobában.*
 the stove-INCESS VM be-VÁN light-VA not gladly leave-1SG alone
 the kid the room-INCESS
 'The stove being warm, I'm reluctant to leave the kid in the room.'

(8) and (9) above are expected to be ungrammatical under the assumptions that (a) *-vÁn*-participles are only compatible with DP/*pro* subjects, and (b) these 'household-expressions' are subjectless (cf. Tóth 2000, 2001).

On the other hand there are grammatical examples that suggest that the syntactic behaviour of *-vA* and *-vÁn*-participles is not completely understood: for instance, (10a) below is fully acceptable as an object control construction with embedded *-vA* participle, but marginal with *-vÁn*; as the ungrammatical (10b) shows, *pro* subject with *-vÁn* seems to be licensed only if there is a matrix argument that can be taken to corefer with it (otherwise there is no way to identify the number and person features of *pro*).

- (10a) *Az iskolába érve/?vén, a kollegáim azzal fogadtak, hogy sikerült a vizsgám.*
 the school-ILLAT reach-VA/?-VÁN, the colleagues
 that-INSTR greeted (me), that succeeded the exam-POSS.1SG
 'Arriving at school, my colleagues greeted me (with the news) that I passed my exams.'
- (10b) **pro Hazaérvén, kiment a biztosíték.*
 home-arrive-VÁN VM-went the fuse
 intended: 'When I got home, the fuse blew.'

⁶ This is unexpected if we consider (following Komlósy 1994) weather verbs to be subjectless, but it is easily accommodated under Tóth's quasi-argumental subject analysis. It may be the case then that what excludes these structures is the lack of an argument in the matrix clause that could control the PRO subject of the weather verb's *-vA*-participle (in the case of *-vÁn* there is no need of a controlling matrix argument). If both the matrix clause and the participle clause contain a weather verb, the control relation can be established, cf.:

(i) PRO *Beesteledve, mindig fagyott.*
 VM-evening-D-VA always froze (D = derivational, verbalizing affix)
 'Getting dark, it was always freezing.'

⁷ In present-day Hungarian the *-vÁn* construction works mainly with unaccusative verbs, most frequently with the verb 'to be' (*lévén* WILL.BE-VÁN; the root is the verb *lesz*, that is the synthetic future form of the copula).

Taking all these into account, the test cannot be safely used to support or deny the existence of a subject with weather verbs or weather expressions.

• **Example 2. – Embedding under modals**

Tóth (2000) discusses two constructions where overt subjects cannot appear in Hungarian (impersonal resultative participles of 'household verbs' and expressions containing weather verbs). The cornerstone of the argumentation is that there is a difference in grammaticality between weather verbs and impersonal passives embedded under modals that take infinitives, and this difference is claimed to be related to the inflection on the infinitive. Tóth assumes that the ungrammaticality of inflected infinitives with impersonal passives embedded under modals is due to a special property of agreement marking on infinitives, namely that 3SG agreement marking on the infinitive can never be the morphological spell-out of default agreement, it is always 'real' agreement triggered by the checking ϕ -features.

However, this argumentation can be questioned on the basis of empirical data: not all impersonal resultative participles embedded under modals are ungrammatical with inflected infinitives, cf.:

- (11) *Most látogat meg először az anyósom,*
 now visits VM for the first time the mother-in-law-POSS.1SG
úgyhogy muszáj még a kályha mögött is kitakarítva lennie.
 so must even the stove behind also clean-VA BE-INF-3SG
 'It is for the first time that my mother-in-law visits us, so there must be cleaned up even behind the stove.'⁸

Such data casts doubts on the validity of the conclusions based on the above arguments. Following this line of thought it can be questioned that 3SG agreement on infinitives is always 'real', or that 'household verbs' are truly subjectless.

On the other hand, as the data show, infinitival atmospheric predicates embedded under modals are grammatical both with inflected⁹ and with non-inflected¹⁰ infinitives, contra

⁸ There is another interesting contrast showing that the fact that the impersonal resultative participle of 'household verbs' embedded under modals is ungrammatical with an inflected infinitive might not only be related to the subject position of these verbs.

- (i) *Mire megérkezünk, a szobában kiszellőztetve kell *lenni/ *lennie.*
 by the time VM-arrive-2PL the room-INESS VM-aired-VA must BE-INF/ BE-INF-3SG
 'By the time we arrive there must be aerated in the room.'
- (ii) *Mire megérkezünk, CSAK A SZOBÁBAN kell kiszellőztetve lennie,*
 by the time VM-arrive-2PL only the room-INESS must VM-aired-VA BE-INF-3SG
a konyhában nem.
 the kitchen-INESS not
 'By the time we arrive, only in the room must there be aerated, not in the kitchen, too.'

I have no explanation for this contrast. (In (i) *a szobában* ('in the room') has a topic function, while in (ii) it is the focus.)

⁹ The grammaticality of (i) below is compatible both with a quasi-argument subject analysis and an analysis taking the NP to be the subject of VAN (cf. (ii), with *vihar* 'storm' as the subject of the sentence):

- (i) *Nem kell ahhoz csendnek lennie, hogy tudjak aludni.*
 not must that-ALLAT silence-DAT BE-INF-3SG COMP can-SUBJ-1SG sleep-INF
 'There is no need for silence for me to be able to sleep.'
- (ii) *Nem kell ahhoz nagy viharok tombolnia, hogy a gyerek féljen.*
 not must that-ALLAT great storm-DAT rave-INF-3SG COMP the kid fear-SUBJ-3SG
 'There is no need for it to blow great guns for the kid to be frightened.'

Tóth, who claims that weather verbs – and implicitly – weather expressions) can never cooccur with the uninflected infinitival form of the copula. Tóth states that non-inflected infinitives (embedded under an impersonal matrix predicate) are only compatible with a null subject interpreted arbitrarily (PRO_{arb}) implying the feature [+human]. More precisely she says, that „null subjects of uninflected infinitives are interpreted arbitrarily when there is no lexical DP in the matrix clause which can control the null subject of the infinitive and thus give referential content to it. The presence of a matrix controller forces referential (non-arbitrary) reading, independently from the presence or absence of AGR on the infinitive:

- (12) *János-nak_i kellemetlen [PRO_i korán felkel-ni-(e)]*
 John-DAT unpleasant early up-get-INF-(3SG)
 'It is unpleasant for John_i [PRO_i to get up early].'" (Tóth 2001: fn. 15)

The analysis in (12) posits a problem as the presence or absence of the agreement marker on the infinitive is known to correlate with the subcategorization properties of the matrix predicate, cf. É. Kiss 2001.

- (13) *V/N [DP_{DAT}/pro ... V + *(Agr)]*
 (14) *V/N/Adj DP_{DAT} [PRO...V + *(Agr)]*

According to É. Kiss (2001), there is no 'optionality' of the agreement marker on the infinitive; instead there are two different syntactic structures: one with an obligatory agreement morpheme on the infinitive and a lexical or *pro* subject (13), and one where the

¹⁰ The data is from the online corpora of the Hungarian National Corpus. Eg.:

- (i) *A Nap nincs az égen, pedig már reggelnek kellett volna lenni.*
 the sun is not the sky-SUPERESS however already morning-DAT must-PAST BE-COND BE-INF
 'The sun has not yet arisen, though there should have been morning by this time.'
- (ii) *Rímei apadhatatlanul ömölnek, mikor csendnek muszáj lenni.*
 rhymes-POSS.3SG endlessly flow-3PL, when silence-DAT must BE-INF
 'His rhymes endlessly flow, when there must be silence.'
- (iii) *Ősz van, ősznek kell lenni.*
 autumn is, autumn-DAT must BE-INF
 'It's autumn, it must be that.'
- (iv) *Mire visszajött, a konyhában sötétnek kellett lenni.*
 by the time back-came the kitchen-INCESS dark-DAT must-PAST BE-INF
 'By the time he came back, the kitchen had to be dark.'
- (v) *Muszáj az építményben hibának lenni?*
 must the building-INCESS error-DAT BE-INF
 'Must there be errors in the building?'
- (vi) *Nagyon komoly bibinek kell ott lenni.*
 very serious problem must there BE-INF
 'There must be a serious problem there.'
- (vii) *Padlástól pincéig felforgathattunk mindent, de a műhelyben rendnek kellett lenni.*
 attic-ABL basement-TERM rummage-POT-PAST-1PL everything-ACC, but the hovel-INCESS
 order-DAT must-PAST BE-INF
 'We could rummage everything from the attic to the basement, but in the hovel there had to be order.'
- (viii) *Itt is versenynek kell lenni, hogy talpon maradjunk.*
 here too competition-DAT must BE-INF that foot-SUPERESS remain-SUBJ-1PL
 'There must be competition here, too, so that we could stay on our feet.'
- (ix) *Hanem az Imrussal valami más bajnak is kell lenni.*
 but the Imrus-COMIT some other problem-DAT too must BE-INF
 'But with Imrus there must be some other problem, too.'

agreement marker on the infinitive is illicit, and there is a matrix controller for the PRO subject of the non-finite clause (14).¹¹

In the above examples from the corpora, however, the dative marked NP cannot be regarded to be the argument of the matrix (epistemic or non-directed deontic) modal predicate, which is monadic.¹² Similarly the subject of the (uninflected) infinitive cannot be interpreted arbitrarily. In the light of the above correlation between the agreement marking on the infinitive and the need for a subject that bears case, it is then problematic for the data cited both to posit a quasi-argument subject (which works with weather verbs), and to regard the nominal/adjectival part of atmospherical copular constructions as a subject.¹³

Thus both the data and the argumentation above suggests that this test cannot be conclusive either.

• **Example 3. – Contrastive topicalization**

The contrastive topicalization test does not work in the way presupposed by Komlósy (1994) or Visket (2002, 2003). They both claim that the APs/NPs of atmospherical copular expressions pattern with predicate nominals and adjectives rather than with complement and adjunct phrases in that these can be topicalized by left-dislocating a copy of a predicate nominal or adjective supplied with dative case ending. In fact this kind of topicalization is possible for all predicative items of the sentence, irrespective of their syntactic status. Thus, from the *hidegnek hideg van* (cold-DAT cold is) type of topicalization doesn't follow that these adjectives cannot be considered syntactic subjects. Unquestionable subjects (or even objects, adjectival modifiers, etc.) can be topicalised in this manner under the condition that they are NPs, not NumPs or DPs. Cf.

- (15) *Versnek verset írt, de nem volt benne egy rím sem.*
poem-DAT poem-ACC wrote-3SG but not was it.INESS one rhyme not
'As for poems, it was a poem that he wrote, but there was no rhyme in it.'
- (16) *Fegyvernek fegyver volt nála, de csak egy játékpisztoly.*
weapon-DAT weapon-NOM was he.DEL, but only a toy-gun
'As for weapons, there was a weapon on him, but it was just a toy-gun.'
- (17) *Szépnek szép lányt vett el, de szegény nem nagyon okos.*
beautiful-DAT beautiful girl-ACC took VM, but poor not very smart
'As for beauty, he married a beautiful girl, but poor her, she is not very smart.'

On the other hand, it is not an argument for the subjectlike behaviour of the NPs/APs in atmospherical copular constructions that they can be contrastively topicalized just like

¹¹ If there is no such matrix controller, arbitrary interpretation results.

¹² As regards (vii), for instance, it is not very plausible semantically to interpret it as 'It was a necessity for the order that it should exist in the hovel.' Tóth's questionnaire also show that there seems to be no clear correlation between the agreement marking on the infinitive and the type of the matrix modal predicate. She concludes that „If there is lexical dative (either a structural subject or an experiencer argument), then the presence of agreement marking seems to be subject to dialectal and/or idiolectal variation.” (Tóth 2002: 148).

See also:

- (i) *Ilyen hidegben muszáj [a tónak befagyni-(a)]* (Tóth 2002: 3a)
such cold-INESS must the lake-DAT freeze-INF-3SG
'In such a cold weather the lake must freeze.'
- (ii) *Ilyen hidegben muszáj [pro befagyni-*(a)]*

¹³ The case marking of these nouns/adjectives is of no help either: dative case marking can appear both on predicative nominals/adjectives and on subjects of infinitivals.

complement and adjunct phrases (DP subjects, objects etc.) with a 'resumptive pronoun', a pronominal 'copy' in contrastive topic position. Cf.:

(18) *Kati, az beteg volt.*

Kate that sick was

'As for Kate, she was sick.'

(19) *Csend, az van, de ez nem jelenti azt, hogy tanulni
is lehet ott.*

silence that is but this not mean-3SG that COMP learn-INF
too possible there

'Silence, there is, but this doesn't mean that one can learn there.'

This kind of topicalization is fine with nominal predicates, too, and we certainly do not want to say, that in (20) *beteg* ('sick') is/behaves like a subject of the sentence:

(20) *Beteg, az Kati volt (Péter csak nem akart iskolába menni).*

sick that Kate was (Peter.NOM only not wanted school-INNESS go-INF)

'Sick, that was Kate (Peter just didn't want to go to school).'

The reason for the grammaticality of both (18) and (20) could be that the *az*-type 'resumptive pronoun' can have a predicative use¹⁴ as well as a referential use.

Copular weather constructions allow both kinds of topicalizations, albeit with different interpretations (compare (21b) and (22c) below) so this test does not indicate their status. The intuition behind the separation of the two types of contrastive topics is that when a resumptive pronoun is used the noun/adjective is not property denoting but is the name of a property. That's why in true existential contexts (where the instantiation of a property is asserted), the dative-copy type of contrastive topic cannot be used (but the structure is not ungrammatical as such).

(21a) *Nyár van.*

summer is

'It's summer.'

(21b) *Nyárnak nyár van, de egész nap esik az eső.*

summer-DAT summer is, but whole day falls the rain

'As for summer, it's summer, but it's raining all the day long.'

(21c) *#Nyár, az van, de egész nap esik az eső.*

summer, that is, but whole day falls the rain

'As for summer, there is summer, but it's raining all the day long.'

(22a) *VAN¹⁵ nyár Finnországban is.* ('van olyan, hogy nyár')

is summer Finland-INNESS too ('there is such thing as summer')

'There is (such thing as) summer in Finland, too.'

(22b) *Vanni van nyár Finnországban is, csak nem sokat tart.*

BE-INF is summer Finland-INNESS too, just not long last.

¹⁴ cf. (i) *Boldog vagy? Az.*
happy BE-2SG? that.
'Are you happy? I am that.'

¹⁵ Caps indicate the locus of sentence stress.

'As for being ('existing'), there is ('exists') summer in Finland, too, but it doesn't last long.'

- (22c) *Nyár, az van Finnországban is, csak nem sokat tart.*
summer, that is Finland-INCESS too, just not long last
'As for summer, there is summer in Finland, too, but it doesn't last long.'
- (22d) #*Nyárnak nyár van Finnországban is.*
summer-DAT summer is Finland-INCESS too
'As for summer, it's summer in Finland, too.'

The same holds for nominal/adjectival predicates:

- (23a) *Kata VOLT már boldog életében, nem?*
Kate was already happy life-POSS.3SG-INCESS, not
'Kate has already been happy in her life, hasn't she?'
- (23b) #*Hát volni volt, de nem sokat*¹⁶
well was-INF was, but not long
'Well, as for being (happy) she has been (happy), but not for long.'
- (23c) *Boldog, az volt, valóban, de nem sokáig.*
happy, that was, indeed, but not long
'Happy, that she has been, indeed, but not for long.'
- (23d) #*Hát, boldognak boldog volt, de nem sokáig.*
well, happy-DAT happy was, but not for long
'Well, as for being happy, she has been happy, but not for long.'
- (24a) *Kata BOLDOG volt vele, nem?*
Kate happy was he.COMIT, not
'Kate has been happy with him, hasn't she?'
- (24b) *Boldognak boldog volt, de nem sokáig/ de nem felhőtlenül.*
happy-DAT happy was, but not long/ but not cloudlessly
'As for being happy, she has been happy, but not for long/ but not thoroughly.'
- (24c) ???/# *Boldog, az volt Kata vele, de...*
happy, that was Kate he.COMIT, but...
intended: 'Happy, she has been (that) with him, but...'

Thus if there is an NP/AP (that is always predicative to a certain degree), both ways of contrastive topicalization are possible in principle, it does not depend on the noun/adjective being a subject complement or part of a complex predicate.

So the contrastive topicalization tests are not conclusive either in determining the syntactic status of the NPs/APs in copular atmospheric constructions.

- **Example 4. – Agreement**

In certain cases, plural agreement is possible:

- (25) *Nagy melegek vannak mostanában.*

¹⁶ Though the verb BE (*van*) doesn't have an infinitive form in Hungarian, in contrastive topicalization structures there exists the *van-ni* (BE-INF) form, and by analogy there is also an infinitive form obtained by attaching the infinitive suffix (*-ni*) to the *vol-* root of the verb BE (*vol-ni*), that appears before the past tense suffix as well (*vol-t* 'was'). Though the *volni volt* construction is marginal for some speakers, this is the only way to express the content in the glosses if the predicate of the sentence is a past tense form of BE.

great hot-PL is-3PL nowadays
 ‘There was extremely hot lately.’

If we analysed copular atmospherical constructions on a par with weather verbs, we would have had to posit a quasi-argument subject that required plural agreement marking on the predicate. On the other hand, if we take the NP *melegek* (hot-PL) to be the subject, the agreement facts follow.

• **Example 5. – Predicative nominal/adjective**

Lexical items such as *hideg* (‘cold’) can function as predicates on their own, predicating a property about their syntactic subject (DP). Copula support is not needed, unless grammatical information is to be carried.

(26) *A leves hideg (*van).*
 the soup cold (*is).
 ‘The soup is cold.’

In spite of these properties of *hideg*, VAN is mandatory in copular atmospherical constructions. This cannot be accounted for if we analyse the APs/NPs of these constructions as part of a complex predicate, AP/NP+BE (with a quasi-argumental subject), but it receives a natural explanation if we consider *hideg* to be the syntactic subject.

One argument against treating the AP/NP of copular atmospherical constructions on a par with predicative APs/NPs is, that the former can be anaphorically referred to:

(27a) *Elég meleg_i van ahhoz, hogy pro_i erdőtüzeket okozzon.*
 enough hot is that.ALLAT COMP pro forestfires-ACC cause-SUBJ-3SG
 ‘It’s hot enough to cause forest fires.’

(27b) *A leves_i elég meleg ahhoz, hogy pro_i égési sérüléseket okozzon.*
 the soup enough hot that.ALLAT COMP pro burn injury-ACC
 cause-SUBJ-3SG
 ‘The soup is hot enough to cause burns.’

Raising contexts also show that despite surface similarity,¹⁷ the predicative AP and that featuring in atmospherical copular constructions behave differently:

(28a) % *Hideg látszott lenni.* ← *Hideg volt.* (cf. (i), fn. 17)
 cold-NOM seemed BE-INF cold was
 ‘It seemed to be cold.’

(28b) *Hidegnek látszott.* ← *pro hideg volt.* (cf. (ii), fn. 17)
 cold-DAT seemed pro cold was
 ‘That seemed to be cold.’

As (28a) shows, the AP in atmospherical copular construction is raised as a subject:

(29) *Jégeső esett.* → *Jégeső látszott esni.*

¹⁷ The same thing holds for English:
 (i) *Hideg volt.* ‘It was cold.’ – quasi-argument *it*
 (ii) *pro hideg volt.* ‘It was cold.’ – referential *it*

hail-NOM fell
'There was a hailstorm'

hail-NOM seemed fall-INF
'There seemed to be a hailstorm.'

However, the problem with the subject analysis is that we have to either assume that these adjectives have undergone an Adj→N conversion (that is not very probable), or consider them elliptical structures/ idioms.¹⁸

On the basis of the above it can be concluded that the double behaviour of the nominal/adjectival part of atmospherical copular constructions comes from its predicative content combined with its status as a syntactical subject. As non-specific, non-referential subjects, these nouns have to fill either the VM (Spec,PredP/ Spec,AspP; the locus of „substantiation”, see below) or the focus position of the sentence (Spec,FP), as VAN ('be') in all these sentences is stress-avoiding. Such grammatical subjects are not suitable for the topic role, but these sentences can actually be formulated as predication structures with a locative topic, for instance.

- (30) *Ebben a szobában nagyon hideg van.*¹⁹
 this-INCESS the room-INCESS very cold is
 'It's very cold in this room.'

On the other hand, there are NPs that in many respects behave quite similarly to the NPs of atmospherical copular constructions, except that a lexical verb other than BE appears with them. Still, there is no disagreement in the literature in considering them grammatical subjects:

- (31) *Úszás közben Víz ment a szemébe.*
 swimming during water went the eye-POSS.3SG-ILLAT
 '(While swimming) Water entered in his eyes.'

- (32a) *Víz menvén/*ve a szemébe teljesen pánikba esett.*
 water go-VÁN/*VA the eye-POSS.3SG-INCESS completely panic.ILLAT fell
 'As water went in his eyes, he has completely panicked.'

- (32b) *Nem kell víznek menni(e) a szemébe ahhoz,*
 not must water-DAT go-INF-3SG the eye-POSS.3SG-ILLAT that.ALLAT

¹⁸ As Komlósy 1994 notes, considering atmospherical copular constructions to be elliptical (cf. *Meleg idő van.* – hot weather is 'It's hot.') is problematic, because in cases of ellipsis the adjective is usually nominalised (case morphology is attached to it, and will become modifiable like a noun). In contrast – at least in one of their uses –, these items normally preserve adjective morphology (for instance they remain gradable: *Ma hidegebb van, mint a tegnapi.* 'It's colder today than it was yesterday.'). can be modified by adverbs (as opposed to nouns modifiable by adjectives), *Nagyon sötét van* ('It's very dark.') ↔ *Nagy sötétség van.* ('There is great darkness.'). Some lexical items show a mixed behaviour: *Nagyon meleg van* (very hot is 'It's very hot.'). *Manapság nagy meleg-ek vannak* (nowadays great hot-PL are 'It has been extremely hot lately.'). See also fn. 3.

¹⁹ Cf. with the predicative adjective:

- (i) *Ez a szoba nagyon hideg.*
 this the room very cold
 'This room is very cold.'

On the semantic level, the difference between (30) and (i) is that of a stage-level predication (30) and an individual-level predication (i); this is in accordance withthetic sentences (and also existentials e.g. the English *there*-sentences) being invariably stage-level (cf. Milsark 1977). However, this parallel in (30) and (i) cannot be systematically shown over with all the rest of the APs/NPs that can appear in both structures. (Among (i)-type predicative constructions we can also find apparently 'subjectless' sentences, that were not previously studied to my knowledge, cf. *Szép nálad.* – nice you.ADESS 'It's nice in here/ at your place. '; *Jó itt.* – good here 'It's pleasant in here. '; etc.)

hogy *megijedjen.*
COMP panic-SUBJ-3SG

'There is no need for water to enter in his eyes for him to panic.'

(32c) (Hát nem csak víz ment a szemébe?)

now not just water went the eye-POSS.3SG-ILLAT

Víznek *víz* *ment a szemébe,* *de klóros* *víz.*

water-DAT water went the eye-POSS.3SG-ILLAT, but chlorinated water

'(Now, wasn't it just water that went into his eyes?) As for water, it was (just) water, but chlorinated water.'

(32d) (Nem lehet, hogy víz ment a szemébe?)

not possible COMP water went the eye-POSS.3SG-ILLAT

De, víz, *az ment a szemébe,* *de nem attól* *ijedt meg.*

yes, water, that went the eye-POSS.3SG-ILLAT but not that.ABL frightened VM

'(Isn't it possible, that it was water that entered in his eyes?) As for water, it certainly entered in his eyes, but this wasn't the reason for him getting frightened.'

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- **Pragmatic approach**

If we define predication pragmatically as a property ascribed to an entity (to a 'predication base'), all these sentences containing an atmospherical copular construction can be said to lack a predication base. The states of affair is simply posited, and the 'entity' involved in such a states of affairs is inside the event and may not be conceived of as an entity at all. Thus all these utterances can be considered event-central thetic sentences.²⁰ These nouns are not entity denoting, are not contained in a DP, and if so the verb VAN can neither be an existential lexical item, just an empty grammatical formative, important for carrying inflexional information, and responsible for asserting that the property denoted by the NP/AP holds at a given point in time and space. In pragmatical terms if these constructions are predications they do not predicate about their subject, but about some kind of a 'spatio-temporal argument'.²¹ This, however, is not a syntactic issue.

- **Syntactic approach**

I will propose the following treatment of these copular atmospherical constructions: VAN is considered to be a semantically empty verb, which has no argument taking ability (no theta-role to assign), but can have a syntactic subject,²² that functions as its VM and semantically forms a kind of complex predicate with the copula. In aspectually unmarked sentences, VMs appear in front of the finite verb (as items used nonreferentially usually do), and form a

²⁰ Sasse (1987: 535, 548) lists some strategies that languages may adopt for distinguishing thetic and categorical judgements, more precisely for getting a thetic judgement by preventing a grammatical subject from becoming a predication base. One of this strategies is related to word order (a great variety of basically SV languages all over the world use VS for thetic statements), another would be (different degrees of) incorporation – both of which are at work in Hungarian.

²¹ This goes by a variety of labels: 'explicature', 'unarticulated constituents', 'implicature', etc. If we stick to the Kratzerian 'spatio-temporal argument', it is worth mentioning, that Kratzer (1995) assumes such an argument only for stage-level predicates, as is really the case with atmospherical copular constructions, cf. (30) and fn. 19.

²² I define a syntactic subject as a nominative marked NP/DP that shows agreement in person and number with the verb or other inflexion bearing predicate.

phonological word with it. In this case, the non-referential subject occupies the Spec,AspP position, the finite verb moving to the Asp head.

A semantic argument for this could be that properties such as *cold* are inherently relational and cannot be construed in isolation, but must be attributed to some entity. If combined with VAN, however, we perceive it as **the assertion of an instantiation of the property** concerned. As regards the 'setting' relative to which this instantiation is asserted, this is provided through a pragmatical process of inference ('here and now').²³

Syntactically these constructions can be dealt with along the lines of Szabolcsi (1986). She states that an „empty” verb (like VAN) does not assign a (true) theta-role. This implies that the NP (or small clause) complement of an empty verb cannot be an argument. However, the fact that **It is*. type of sentences (where *it* is an expletive) do not exist suggests that these verbs need a kind of 'substantiation'.

Substantiation is defined as follows:

- (i) Every predicate of natural language must have some non-logical content. Therefore,
- (ii) If the meaning of a predicate contains at most logical constants and variables, it must enter into a „closest possible” syntactic relation with something whose meaning (also) contains some non-logical constant.

In view of this suggestion the VAN in atmospherical copular constructions needs a substantiator, and the bare noun/adjective can be taken to play precisely this role. This implies that the syntactic position of such nouns/adjectives follows from the „closest possible” syntactic relation requirement, rather than from some theta-role-assignment considerations.

Szabolcsi suggests that the „closest possible” syntactic relation we are dealing with is modification, and predicates that need a substantiator are 'adjunct predicates'. She also shows, that despite the fact that nouns in the nominative do not usually incorporate, not only VAN but all DE-verbs in want of non-logical content must enter into a „closest possible” syntactic relation with some substantiator and thus can incorporate (semantically) the nominative designated NP.

Szabolcsi also suggests that V-bar is the canonical locus of substantiation in Hungarian. She calls such nominal incorporating V-bars 'lexical integers', and defines them as units that can

²³ Atmospherical copular constructions can be associated with adjuncts (generally locative or temporal expressions), that have an 'anchoring' function (and can be linked to the spatio-temporal argument, and that provides a semantically underspecified domain restriction for the overall proposition):

- (i) *(Kanadában) (most) hideg/tél van.*
Canada-INESS now cold/winter is
'Now it's cold/winter in Canada.'

Only if no such adjuncts appear is the pragmatic process of inference at work.

However, when combined with VAN, NPs that cannot have an atmospherical interpretation seem to obligatorily ask for a locative:

- (ii) **[_{VM}Kés] van *(a kezében).*
knife is the hand-POSS.3SG-INESS
'There is a knife *(in his hand).'
- (iii) *[_{VM}Szomorúság] van *(a szívekben).*
sadness is the hearts-INESS
'There is grief in people's hearts.'

I'm inclined to think that there is no syntactic difference between type (i) and type (ii–iii); the difference seems to be related to the information structure of the sentence, as well as to the pragmatic notions of informativity and cooperation.

Not only locatives, but other 'anchoring' adverbials or DP+affix/postposition complexes can appear in such constructions:

- (iv) *Fegyver van *(nála).*
weapon is he.ADESS
'He has a weapon (on him).'
- (v) *Sajt van *(vacsorára).*
cheese is dinner-SUBL
'There is cheese for dinner.'

be theta-role assigners, but no theta-role assignment takes place, or even needs to take place, within them.

If a phrase acts as a theta-role assigner but no theta-role assignment takes place within it, it counts as a generalized lexical integer if and only if

- (i) it is explicitly listed in the lexicon, or
- (ii) it contains no (obligatory) arguments.

Though I do not follow Szabolcsi in regarding the VM+V sequence constituting a V-bar (instead I analyse them as an AspP), the data above suggest that we really need to make a distinction between 'lexical integers' (idiomatic VM+V) that have to be listed in the lexicon (AP+V and AdvP+V), and those that are productive (NP+V). The latter, but the not former can be regarded as the syntactic relation of a grammatical subject and a semantically 'empty' predicate.²⁴

As Szabolcsi notes indefinites are claimed not to be arguments. They may well be regarded as predicates in a semantic (but not syntactic/structural) sense, though, in particular, as variables ranging over the elements of the powerset of the set denoted by N. This would seem to explain their ability to function as referentially dependent or independent arguments as well as predicates. So we may say that an indefinite enters the syntactic structure as a predicate. The binding of its variable is done by other elements of the structure. In the special cases considered here (the indefinite is part of a 'complex predicate', semantically) it can be assumed that the existential binding is induced by the verb itself.

UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS

On the basis of the data above the unmarked word order for a bare noun plus copula is NP+VAN, where the copula is a stress-avoiding verb:

(33a) *Karácsony van.*
Christmas is
'It's Christmas.'

(33b) *Felnőtt van vele.*
adult is he.COMIT
'There is an adult with him.'

However, there are cases when the VAN+NP seems to be the neutral word order, with the primary accent falling on the copula; in such cases the copula acquires a kind of existential meaning.²⁵

²⁴ As we have seen, some AP+VAN items can be analysed as elliptical structures with an empty head noun (*Késő (este) van.* – late (evening) is 'It's late.'), others are truly idiomatic (*Sötét (*idő/helység stb.) van.* – dark (weather/place etc.) is 'It's dark (in here).'), and finally in some cases we find a double behaviour (AP/NP): *Nagy_{Adj} meleg_{NP} van.* – *Nagyon_{Adv} meleg_{Adj} van.* ('It's very hot.'). Cf. also fn. 3. and fn. 18.

²⁵ This 'kind of' expression is motivated on the following ground: if (34a) had an existential meaning, this would be identical with (i) below:

- (i) *Isten létezik.*
God exists.
'God exists.'

On the other hand it would be an exception to have a DP (God) in (34) with VAN that is known to be a definiteness effect verb.

The Hungarian data is parallel in fact with the Modern Greek examples noted in Sasse 1987: 556, and fn.26): with a non-referential NP (ii) the sentence may be paraphrased as 'there is something which has the properties normally associated with the word *god*' while with a referential DP (iii) the sentence means 'the individual entity known to us by the name of God really exists'.

- (ii) *Ipárxi theós.*
exists god
'There is a God'
- (iii) *O theós ipárxi.*
ART god exists
'God exists'

(34a) *Van remény.*
is hope
'There is hope.'

(34b) *Van Isten.*
is God
'There is a God.'

The question to be answered is: in the light of data above can it be sustained that the verb-focus construction is derivable from the weather-sentence structure with neutral word order (with the NP predicate in the preverbal position)?²⁶ That is: is it the same VAN in all the above constructions?

SUMMARY

In this paper I examined the behaviour of copular atmospherical constructions, and concluded that they cannot be treated on a par with weather verbs. While the latter may have a quasi-argumental subject, treating the former along the same lines would also mean to analyse the NP/AP featuring in these constructions as predicate nominals/adjectives. At a closer examination some of the tests circulated by the literature proved to be inconclusive for various reasons. Contrarily, a parallel analysis of predicative nominal sentences, atmospherical copular constructions and sentences with undisputable NP-subjects has shown that atmospherical constructions pattern with the latter. This leads us to the conclusion that the dual behaviour of the nominal/adjectival part of atmospherical copular constructions comes from predicative content combined with their status as syntactic subjects. Semantically VAN is taken to be an empty verb, its function being to assert the instantiation of the property denoted by the NP/AP. VAN has no argument taking ability (no theta-role to assign), but can have a syntactic subject that functions as its VM and semantically forms a kind of 'complex predicate' with the copula. In aspectually unmarked sentences the non-specific, non-referential subject has to fill the preverbal position (the locus of semantic „substantiation”) and to form a phonological word with the verb VAN that is stress-avoiding. The non-referential subject occupies the [Spec,AspP] position, the finite verb moving to the Asp head. Pragmatically if these constructions are predications they cannot be taken to predicate about their subjects, but about some kind of a 'spatio-temporal argument'. Finally, the AP+VAN and AdvP+VAN patterns can be taken to be more or less idiomatic.

The „unresolved problems” section touches upon the VAN+NP pattern, where the verb has an existential reading and bears focal stress.

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²⁶ See also examples (21), (22).

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