

## Jos Tellings, Preverbal bare coordination and noun incorporation in Hungarian

In this talk I will examine the construction of preverbal bare coordination in Hungarian, exemplified in (1).

- (1) Péter könyvet és újságot olvas.  
Peter book.ACC and newspaper.ACC read.3p-sg.indef  
'Peter is reading books and newspapers.'

This construction seems closely related to Hungarian noun incorporation, where a (single) bare noun occupies the preverbal position, as in (2):

- (2) Mari újságot olvas.  
Mary newspaper.ACC read.3p-sg.indef  
'Mary is engaged in newspaper-reading.'

Noun incorporation in Hungarian has been well studied in the literature, yet the precise definition of what counts as noun incorporation remains to be controversial. I will look at this debate from the point of view of preverbal bare coordination constructions.

### 1 Data

Data are obtained from a Hungarian corpus as well as from native speaker informants. I will present data showing that the construction bears several similarities to noun incorporation. First, like incorporated nouns, conjuncts of several cases can be preverbally coordinated (not only accusative case as in (1)), as well as plural conjuncts. Second, syntactic tests show that they occupy the same preverbal position as incorporated nouns do. Third, the bare conjuncts refer cumulatively in the same way as incorporated bare nouns do. Finally, adjectival modification of the conjuncts makes the sentence truth-conditionally equivalent to its full-fledged (non-bare) counterpart.

These facts suggest that bare preverbal coordination should be counted as an instance of noun incorporation. However, before I can discuss this issue, I will first look at the debate on the definition of noun incorporation.

### 2 Noun incorporation: syntax or semantics?

Two main positions within the literature on Hungarian noun incorporation may be distinguished. One position maintains that noun incorporation can be defined by its syntactic form alone: every 'bare noun + verb' sequence counts as noun incorporation in their opinion (e.g. Farkas & de Swart 2003). An opposite position holds that it is only a semantically defined subset of these 'bare noun + verb' constructions that count as noun incorporation (e.g. Kiefer 1992). The semantic requirement roughly says that the verb phrase should express an 'institutionalized activity'. In particular, advocates of the latter view have it that there exist grammatical 'bare noun + verb' sequences that nevertheless do not count as noun incorporation.

Returning to our question whether preverbal coordination is to be subsumed under noun incorporation, it becomes clear that an analysis of both syntactic and semantic properties of preverbal bare coordination will be required. This will be the subject of the remainder of the talk.

### 3 The syntax of preverbal bare coordination

At what level does the coordination take place? I will consider three possibilities.

First, the conjunction may take place at the highest level, that of VP, which gives rise to an analysis of ellipsis.

- (3) [ConjP [VP könyvet  $e_i$ ] [ConjP és [VP újságot olvas $_i$ ]]]

Under this analysis the construction contains two ordinary noun incorporation constructions, which would have the advantage that we do not have to alter the syntactic definition of noun incorporation. I will show that this solution will meet the same problems that are traditionally connected with VP-ellipsis. A second argument against it will consider conjunction of verbal prefixes, which occupy the same syntactic position.

A second option is one in which coordination takes place within the preverbal (PredOp) position.

- (4) [VP [PredOP könyvet [ConjP és [PredOP újságot]]] olvas]

I will show that it can be dismissed on quite similar grounds as the ellipsis approach.

The third idea, and the one I will defend, has coordination taking place at the lowest level, that of  $N_0$ .

- (5) [VP [PredOP [ $N_0$  könyvet [ConjP és [ $N_0$  újságot]]] olvas]

This syntactic structure is free from the problems connected with an ellipsis solution. Furthermore, the syntactic definition of noun incorporation needs only minor adaptation.

### 4 Semantics: cumulative reference and institutionalized activities

Kiefer's semantic requirement for noun incorporation is that a VP should express an 'institutionalized activity'. Although there is no precise definition of 'institutionalized activity', it seems clear that something like 'book and newspaper reading' does not qualify as one. Maleczki (1992) presented a theory on the distribution of bare nouns in Hungarian (and hence the occurrence of noun incorporation). Her theory has it that bare nouns may become incorporated when a homomorphism exists between the structured domain of the (bare) noun and that of the event (verb). Kiefer (1992) maintains that such mappings only constraint the availability of an institutionalized activity reading, rather than grammaticality (which is Maleczki's original claim). Because we have seen that bare coordinations refer cumulatively, I will argue that these constructions are also structured (the semilattice structure follows mathematically in a straightforward way), and hence homomorphisms can exist between bare coordinations and verbs. This however seems to falsify Kiefer's claim: if bare coordinations are indeed structured, any preverbal occurrence would express an institutionalized activity, which clearly is not the case.

From this I will conclude that Kiefer's definition of NI in terms of complex activities is difficult to maintain, and that a syntactic definition of noun incorporation is more feasible.

#### References

FARKAS, D. & DE SWART, H. (2003), *The semantics of incorporation*. Stanford: CSLI.

KIEFER, F. (1992), *Noun incorporation in Hungarian*. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica*, vol. 40, pp. 149–177.

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