

## On copula-drop in Hungarian

**Aims and claims:** This paper proposes that an observed interaction in specificational copular constructions in Hungarian between the presence of demonstrative *az* ‘that’ and that of the copula can be neatly explained by a general account of copula-drop in terms of the Stray Affix Filter. The account is shown to cover the obligatory presence of the copula in a host of other sentence types as well.

**The puzzle:** There is a contrast between Hungarian predicative (=PPCs) and specificational pseudoclefts (=SPCs) (see Higgins 1979, den Dikken 2006a for the distinction and differences between the two in English) with respect to the pronominal form *az* ‘that’. In PPCs, *az* is optional independently of the presence/absence of the copula, cf. (1) (for most speakers participating in our rating study). In SPCs, however, *az* is obligatory when the copula is absent, cf. (2). When the copula is overt, *az* is optional (for those speakers who allow *az* to drop in PPCs), cf. (3).

- (1) a. Aki a találkozón legelőször szólalt fel, (az) tájékozott volt.  
who the meeting.on first spoke up that informed was  
‘Who spoke up first at the meeting was informed.’  
b. Tudom, hogy amelyik színészt a legjobban kedveled, (az) amerikai.  
know.1SG that which actor.ACC the best.ADV like.2SG that American  
‘I know that the actor you liked best is American.’
- (2) a. Tudom, hogy amit elmeséltél, ?\*(az) A DJANGO.  
know.1SG that what.ACC told.2SG that the Django  
b. Tudom, hogy A DJANGO \*(az), amit elmeséltél.  
know.1SG that the Django that what.ACC told.2SG  
‘I know that what you told me about is Django.’
- (3) Amit elmeséltem, (az) A DJANGO volt.  
what.ACC told.1SG that the Django was ‘What I told you about was Django.’

**Analysis of copula-drop:** We approach copula-drop in terms of the notion that the copula is required only if the inflectional specifications could not be realized otherwise, i.e., the notion of ‘copula-support’ (parallel to *do*-support) developed by Dik (1980, 1983, 1997), Hengeveld (1990) and Ouhalla (1991). In Hungarian copular clauses with nominal and adjectival secondary predicates, the copula is null in 3rd Person Indicative Present Tense (=3IndPres), see (4). This specification of T corresponds to zero inflectional marking when Number is singular. When Number on T is plural, it is realized on nominal and adjectival secondary predicates. As these predicates can realize plural number inflections of T, no copula-support is triggered. In analyzing copula-drop in Hungarian in analogous terms, É. Kiss (2002: 72) exempts zero inflectional marking from triggering copula-support on account of being *phonologically* null. We suggest here that zero marking bleeds copula-support only if marking is null at the level of *morphology*. This is because although 3rd person singular marking is phonologically zero, it nevertheless requires copula-insertion in cases where the secondary predicate is a PP, cf. (5).

- (4) János okos/ tanár (\*van) (5) János a ház mögött \*(van)  
John smart/ teacher is John the house behind was  
‘John was smart/ a teacher’ ‘John was behind the house.’

We propose that number-features [Num] in T have a (possibly phonologically zero) affixal exponent at the morphemic level, independently of whether [Num] is Pl or Sg. (This is not in conflict with the perceived number neutrality of bare singular NPs in the pre-verbal ‘Verbal Modifier’ position (Farkas and de Swart 2003), since their number neutrality is

merely apparent, as recently shown by Dayal 2011). The affixal content Aff of T can be morphologically licensed iff it can be hosted by another element E that is morphologically able to carry Aff and syntactically shares with T the inflectional features that encode Aff. The nominal/adjectival secondary predicate (contained in a Small Clause complement) supplies this element E, as it syntactically shares T's [Num] feature (for concreteness, we assume feature-sharing resulting from Agree, see Frampton & Gutmann 2006, Pesetsky & Torrego 2007). PP predicates cannot license copula-drop because they either cannot express number morphologically (if headed by uninflected Ps), or they Agree in number with their complement DP (if headed by inflected Ps) (Marácz 1986).

Copula-support, then, is to be conceptualized in terms of (some update of) the Stray Affix Filter (Lasnik 1981): the affixal number morpheme Num in T needs an appropriate *morphological* stem to support it. On this conception, indicative mood and present tense differ from singular number in that they are not present on T morphologically, but are merely part of T's *syntactic* feature specification, hence they need no copula-support. Treating some inflectional information on T as being a morphological property of T (in accord with a non-lexicalist position), while other inflectional information as being merely syntactic features of T converges with Lasnik's (1995) hybrid theory of verbal inflection, based on independent evidence from inflectional (non)identity in ellipsis.

**Back to PCs:** Adopting an analysis of SPCs along the lines of Heggie (1988) and many others since, we take the *wh*-clause to be the predicate of a Small Clause complement at base structure. This *wh*-clause is a headed relative forming a DP when base-generated together with the pronominal *az* (as with *hogy*-clauses, see Kenesei 1994), which expresses Num of T. The demonstrative may be omitted if an overt copula needs to be present for independent reasons (e.g., if Tense=past, (3)). Otherwise *az* is not omissible, because in its absence Num of T would not be supported morphologically, in violation of the Stray Affix Filter. This explains the pattern observed in SPCs.

In PPCs, the *wh*-clause (in combination with *az*) is not the predicate, but the subject (see Higgins 1979). The predicate is the AdjP/NP, which can license Num of T. *Az* is linked to the subject, and its absence/presence is regulated by independent factors.

**Overt copulas elsewhere:** *Van* is also obligatorily present in existential sentences (6), possessive sentences (8), in atmospheric sentences (9), and other types to be discussed. We propose that the analysis of (5) extends to all these cases, as each of these types of constructions either contains a (silent) PP secondary predicate (for possessives, see Kayne 2005, den Dikken 2006b, for existentials see Kalluli 2008, Author in prep), or no secondary predicate at all (for atmospherics, see Kádár 2006). *Van* is therefore obligatory present in these constructions because Num in T would otherwise lack a morphological host.

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| <p>(6) Van [<sub>SC</sub> igazság [<sub>PP</sub> a földön]].<br/> is truth the earth.on<br/> 'There is truth (on earth).'</p> | <p>(8) Szaga van (ennek).<br/> smell.poss is this-dat<br/> 'This smells.'</p> |
| <p>(7) Egy légy van a levesben.<br/> a fly is the soup.in<br/> 'There is a fly in the soup.'</p>                              | <p>(9) Hideg van.<br/> cold is<br/> 'It's cold.'</p>                          |

**Extensions:** We spell out ramifications of the account concerning the nature and role of *az* in left dislocation (LD) more generally (cf. Lipták & Vicente 2007), and concerning an observed interaction in ordinary (non-*wh*) copular clauses between the obligatoriness of *az* and the position of the predicate. We conclude by pointing out possible extensions of the approach to other languages.