

The singularity of Hungarian reciprocals

1. This talk addresses one very prominent difference between reciprocal anaphors and plural reflexive anaphors in Hungarian: only the former may have antecedents that bear no syntactic plural feature. The differential behaviour of the Hungarian reciprocal *egymás* ‘each other’ (one_other) is noteworthy, because it provides very clear evidence that the semantic plurality of reciprocals need not be reflected in a plural morphosyntax. That this is so is not necessarily evident, given that the influential account of Heim et al. (1991), for example, requires reciprocals to take syntactically plural antecedents. This talk gives a thorough description of the pertinent data, and discusses the implications that they have on the treatment of reciprocal anaphora. It thus adds a novel perspective to a long line of research that has uncovered important differences between the grammar of reciprocal and reflexive anaphors (see Lebeaux 1983 and Everaert 2008, a.o.).

2. By default, morphological plural marking is available in Hungarian on the noun head if the noun phrase includes no other element that denotes a plural concept (see É. Kiss 2012 for an overview). In other words, quantified noun phrases are not plural-marked, and they do not trigger plural agreement with the verb. Whereas plural reflexives that are true anaphors (i.e., that function as bound variables) require antecedents that are plural-marked and trigger plural agreement with the verb, reciprocals are also licensed when the antecedent has no plural marking. This difference is manifest in at least three contexts. i) Two coordinate singulars either trigger SG or PL or plural agreement with the verb, and the reciprocal is grammatical in either case (1a). In the selfsame context, SG subject-verb agreement licenses only the SG form of the reflexive, whereas the PL form has to be used if verbal agreement is PL (1b). For this latter case, we assume with É. Kiss (2012) that PL verbal agreement is triggered by a silent plural pronominal associate of the coordinate noun phrase, and this pronoun acts as the antecedent of the reflexive. ii) Quantified noun phrases are not plural-marked, and they trigger SG agreement with the verb (2a), and iii) the same is true of DPs headed by collective nouns (2b). The reciprocal is acceptable in these contexts in Hungarian, but the reflexive can only be used here in its SG form.

- (1) a. Kati és Peti egymásra talált/találtak.
Kati and Peti each_other.onto found.3SG/found.3PL
‘Kati and Peti found each other.’
- b. Kati és Peti [magára talált/*találtak] / [magukra *talált/találtak]
Kati and Peti oneself.onto found.3SG/found.3PL themselves.onto
‘Kati and Peti recovered.’ (literally: *They found themselves*)
- (2) a. A két lány egymásra/magára/*magukra talált.
the two girl each_other.onto/oneself.onto/themselves.onto found.3SG
‘The two girls found each other/themselves.’
- b. A fiatal pár egymásra/magára/*magukra talált.
the young couple each_other.onto/oneself.onto/themselves.onto found.3SG
‘The young couple found each other/themselves.’

This data set provides obvious evidence that reciprocal does not feed on a plural syntactic context in Hungarian, contra Heim et. al (1991), who assume syntactic plurality to be a cross-linguistic property of reciprocal constructions.

3. The Hungarian reciprocal is also fully acceptable in contexts where variable judgements are reported for English reciprocals in the literature. Universally quantified noun phrases, for

example, can be perfect antecedents of reciprocals as long as they are d-linked, and native speakers find examples like (5) perfectly acceptable even if the relation described by the predicate cannot be reciprocated. In subordinate contexts, the immediate antecedent of the reciprocal may even be a singular variable, as happens in the case of the 3SG *pro*-dropped version of the subordinate subject in (6).

- (4) Itt mindenki utálja egymást.
 here everybody hate.3SG each_other.ACC
 ‘Here everybody hates each other.’
- (5) A két lány egymás után lépett be a szobába.
 the two girl each_other after entered.3SG into the room.into
 ‘The two girls entered the room after each other.’
- (6) Kati és Peti azt hiszi, hogy ^(?)szereti / szeretik egymást.
 Kati and Peti that.ACC believe.3SG hogy love.3SG love.3PL each_other.ACC
 ‘Kati and Peti believe that they love each other.’

4. The relevance of these data is as follows. (1) and (2) show that plural reflexive anaphors and reciprocals are fundamentally different: only the former show obligatory plural agreement with the antecedent (and with the verb, if the antecedent is the subject). I will argue that the Hungarian reciprocal *egymás* ‘each other’ is not reducible to an underlying *one-another* type of scattered reciprocal construction attested in, for example, the Romance languages (see LaTerza 2011), and that this is so even if the Hungarian reciprocal did develop from such a construction in historical terms. Thus its acceptability in singular contexts is not a result of the fact that its first component is *egy* ‘one’, rather than the universal quantifier present in *each other*. Rather, these data, taken especially together with (4-6) provide strong evidence from Hungarian for the view the reciprocal anaphoric construction does not involve a distinct distributive operator on the antecedent (as is proposed by Dotlačil 2012 or Haug & Dalrymple 2020, a.o., and contra Heim et al. 1991 or LaTerza 2011). Since the anaphor per se does not contribute a distributive operator to the syntax of the antecedent noun phrase, quantified noun phrases make perfect antecedents (4), and relations that are not reciprocated globally (5) or locally (6) may also be a good fit for the reciprocal if certain conditions are satisfied. A relational analysis of reciprocity, as in Dotlačil (2012) or Haug & Dalrymple (2020), makes no a priori claims with respect to the presence of morphosyntactic plurality in reciprocal constructions and thus anticipate, as it were, that reciprocals need not require plural antecedents in languages where plural marking is not an across the board phenomenon. Hungarian is one such language.

Selected references

- Dotlačil, Jakub. 2012. Reciprocals distribute over information states. *Journal of Semantics*. 1-55. • Everaert, Martin. 2008. Domain restrictions on reciprocal interpretation. In Ekkehard König & Volker Gast eds. *Reciprocals and reflexives. Theoretical and Typological Explorations*. Berlin: Mouton. • Haug, Dag Trygve Truslew & Mary Dalrymple. 2020. Reciprocity: Anaphora, scope, and quantification. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 13(10). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3765/sp.13.10> • Heim, Irene, Howard Lasnik, Robert May. 1991. Reciprocity and plurality. *Linguistic Inquiry* 22 (1). 63-101. • LaTerza, Chris. 2011. Thematic roles and the interpretation of one-another reciprocals. In Ingo Reich et al. eds. *Proceedings of Sinn & Bedeutung 15*. Saarbrücken: Universaar – Saarland University Press. 397-417. • Lebeaux, David. 1983. A distributional difference between reciprocals and reflexives. *Linguistic Inquiry* 14 (4). 723-728.