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Negative universal quantifiers in Hungarian☆

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Abstract

This paper examines the syntax of a class of Hungarian negative expressions (e.g. *senki* ('no one'), *semmi* ('nothing')), proposing an analysis in the minimalist framework (Chomsky, 1995). It is argued that these expressions are negative universal quantifiers, and that they bear both an optional [+q] and an inherent [+neg] feature. The optional [+q] feature accounts for the fact that they behave like universal quantifiers in that they are optionally distributive and that they can occur either in a preverbal or a postverbal position. On the other hand, the inherent [+neg] feature is argued to be a syntactic feature: preverbal negative quantifiers check the feature in a high NegP at Spellout, while postverbal negative quantifiers check it after Spellout in NegP.

Keywords: Negative universal quantifiers; Feature-checking

Introduction

In this paper I examine the syntax of a class of Hungarian negative expressions (e.g. *senki* (*no one*), *semmi* (*nothing*)), proposing an analysis in the minimalist theory (Chomsky, 1995). I will argue that these expressions are negative universal quantifiers: they have an optional [+q] and an inherent [+neg] feature. On the one hand, they behave

☆ In this paper I provided an analysis that has been modified at some points, but most of my new assumptions are based on a different theoretical background. The earlier versions of this analysis are found in Olsvay (1998, 2000a).

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like universal quantifiers: they have an optional [+q] feature, which means that they are optionally distributive, explaining the fact that they are optionally preverbal or postverbal. Negative universal quantifiers with a [+q] feature overtly move into a quantifier position, [SPEC, QP], so they will be preverbal. On the other hand, negative universal quantifiers are negative in a syntactic sense: they have an inherent [+neg] feature. From this, it follows that postverbal negative quantifiers move into NegP at LF.

The paper is organised as follows. In Section 1 I outline the structure of the Hungarian sentence. Section 2 draws a parallel between negative quantifiers and universal quantifiers. In Section 2.1 arguing against a monotone decreasing quantifier analysis, I conclude that negative quantifiers have an optional [+q] feature. In Section 2.2 the complementary distribution of preverbal positive and negative universal quantifiers are discussed. In Section 3 I will deal with some further properties of negative universal quantifiers. In Section 3.1 I argue that negative universal quantifiers have an inherent [+neg] feature, and in Section 3.2 I examine the syntactic behaviour of negative universal quantifiers in the case of FP-negation. Section 4 will summarise the paper.

1. Theoretical background

In this section we briefly sum up the minimalist analysis followed in this paper for Hungarian neutral, focused and negative sentences.[1]

First let us take neutral (focusless and non-negative) sentences, exemplified by (1). In the preverbal field we can distinguish the topic and the quantifier position: the former is occupied by topicalized constituents (*János* and *matekból*), while the latter by certain types of quantifiers, for example universal quantifiers (*minden félévben*) and *is* (*also*)-expressions.[2] Moreover, in neutral sentences the verbal modifier (*jelest*) immediately precedes the verb.

(1) János matekból minden félévben jelest kapott / * kapott jelest.
John maths-from every term-in A+-ACC got
'In every term John got an A+ in maths.'

Turning to focused sentences, in non-negative focused sentences the focus immediately precedes the verb. Unlike in neutral sentences, the verb is followed by the verbal modifier (2a); furthermore, the preverbal universal quantifier must precede the focus (2a, b). The focused XP obligatorily occupies the preverbal focus position, it cannot follow the verb (2a, c). Some expressions, for example wh-phrases and *csak* (*only*)-expressions must always be in a focus position. On the other hand, universal quantifiers cannot occupy a focus position, as we can observe from (1) and (2c). As for

[1] Following Chomsky (1995), I will distinguish N-features and V-features and I will assume Procrastinate.

[2] Szabolcsi (1997) and Beghelli and Stowell (1997) provide a logico-semantic classification of quantifiers, which can explain their syntactic behaviour. Their analyses include the possible surface positions in Hungarian.