

Analogy in inflection and morphosyntax

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We discuss analogical extension in complex syntactic structures involving inflection and other morphosyntactic properties in Hungarian and German.

Long-distance object agreement in Hungarian In Hungarian, (mostly) definite direct objects trigger object agreement (Bartos 1999, É. Kiss 2002, Bárány 2017). In addition, Hungarian shows **long-distance agreement (LDA)**, as in (1a), where the transitive matrix verb agrees with the infinitive's object, which is not selected by the matrix verb. Were the infinitive's object an indefinite object such as *egy verset* 'a poem', the matrix verb would not show object agreement.

- (1) Anna meg-próbált-a [_{INF} megtanul-ni a vers-et].
Anna try-PST-3SG.SBJ>3.OBJ learn-INF the poem-ACC
'Anna tried to learn the poem by heart.' (Kenesei et al. 1998: 33)

It has long been known that certain **intransitive** verbs (lacking acc objects) also participate in long-distance object agreement (cf. É. Kiss 1987, Kálmán C. et al. 1989, den Dikken 1999, Szécsényi & Szécsényi 2020). While this often treated as exceptional, Bárány (2020) argues that some speakers **analogically extend** and to some degree regularise LDA to **intransitive matrix verbs**, as in (2).

- (2) %Igyekez-itek [_{INF} ez-t a rémálm-ot elfelejte-ni].
strive-2PL.SBJ>3.OBJ this-ACC the nightmare-ACC forget-INF
'You strive to forget this nightmare.' (Bárány 2020: 55)

This analogical process creates paradigmatically novel forms, namely intransitive verbs with transitive agreement inflection. However, the proposed analogy crucially relies on syntactic structure, namely the configuration shown in (3). For most speakers, only transitive finite verbs can (and must) show LDA, although the superordinate verb does not select the embedded object. Extending this pattern to intransitive verbs thus involves reference to the whole structure in (3).

- (3) Schematic structure of LDA
[... finite verb+AGR ... [INF infinitive OBJ-ACC]]

German long-distance dependencies A second empirical domain concerns **long-distance dependencies (LDDs)** in German. Based on the observation that some (e.g. Southern) German speakers allow certain long-distance wh- and topicalisation-dependencies (as in (4)), we hypothesise that these speakers rate other LDDs, in particular weak islands, as more acceptable than other speakers who generally do not accept them. Higher acceptability of dependencies across islands could be due to surface or structural similarity to LDDs which are not island violations, such as (4).

- (4) %[FILLER Welchen Priester] glaubt er, dass der Bischof GAP
which.ACC priest believe.3SGhe that the bishop
ermahnt hat?
reprimand.PTCP AUX.3SG
'Which priest does he think that the bishop reprimanded?'

We tested this hypothesis by collecting acceptability judgements of LDDs that are superficially similar but structurally different (psych verbs) as well as structures that are both superficially and structurally similar (factive islands) to LDDs such as (5). Results from this

pilot study suggest that, indeed, speakers who accept (4) rate other LDDs (weak islands) as more acceptable (a strong effect, Cohen's $d = 1.08$, corresponding to an average difference of 1.5 points on a 7 point Likert scale; see Figure 1) than speakers who do not accept (4). The more permissive speakers rate LDDs with weak islands as worse than (4) but as more acceptable than less permissive speakers rate either type of structure.

Analogy in morphosyntax Both of these phenomena raise the possibility that complex syntactic structures serve as the basis for analogical extension. Moreover, this extension may not just involve superficial similarities. Hungarian LDA with (in)transitive superordinate verbs appears in virtually all possible linear orders, suggesting that **structurally**, not just superficially similar structures are involved in licensing the acceptability of LDA. The acceptability of these novel structures is, on the one hand, supported by analogical, similar structures, but limited by other factors such as the oddity of intransitive verb forms showing object agreement, as in (2), and the well-known difficulties of structures involving islands. We suspect that these opposing pressures limit the productivity and spread of the phenomena in question.

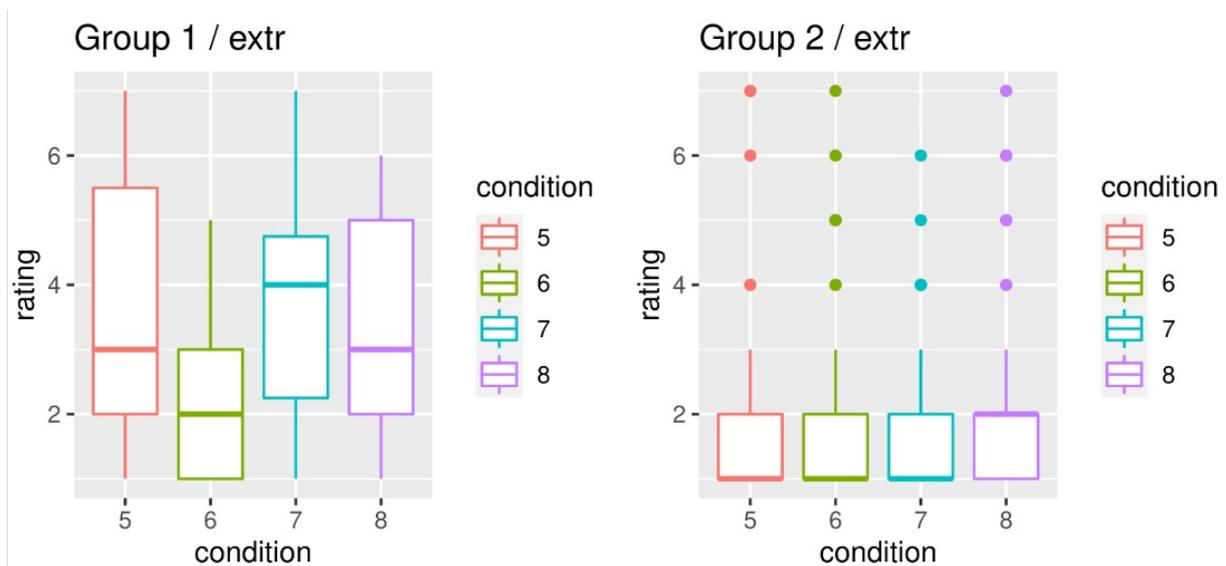


Figure 1: Acceptability ratings (1–7, y-axis) by permissive speakers (Group 1, left) vs. less permissive speakers (Group 2, right) on experimental conditions involving extraction (5–8, x-axis).

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