Nominal-Internal Predication in Hungarian

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0. Introduction

Discussions of predication in the generative literature have virtually exclusively focused on the sentence as the constituent containing the predication. There is no principled reason, however, to expect predication to be confined to sentential containers. Especially in the light of work by Szabolcsi (1994), Abney (1987) and others on the parallelism between sentential and nominal constructions, one may reasonably expect that predication within nominal phrases should be attested as well. That this expectation bears fruit is shown by the nominal and adjectival predication constructions illustrated in (1) (for English, Dutch and French, respectively) and (2) (with data from French, Portuguese and Spanish):

(1) a that idiot of a doctor ('N of a N’ construction)
   b die idioot van een dokter
   c cet idiot de Jean
   that idiot of Jean

(2) a un drôle de type ('A of a N’ construction)
   a funny of chap
   b a stupida da Flora
   the stupid of-the Flora
   'that stupid Flora’
   c la tonta de Juana
   the silly of Juana
   ‘that silly Juana’

In constructions of this type, the initial noun phrase or adjective predicates a property of the noun phrase following of, van or de. Property ascription being a hallmark of predication, this observation leads to the conclusion that predication is involved in the examples in (1)/(2), such that the initial noun or adjective functions as the head of the predicate of the second noun phrase, which is a subject (cf. e.g. Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik 1985:1284). Representing predication in terms of a small clause, we are led to the analysis in (3), with a small clause projected internal to a constituent headed by the functional category D:
Constructions of the type in (1) and (2) raise a variety of questions with regard to their distribution and theoretical analysis (see the works mentioned in fn. 2 for relevant discussion). Our purpose in this paper is to confront the research programme on nominal–internal predication and its properties with a set of facts from an entirely unrelated language family — Hungarian (Finno-Ugric):³

We will present a detailed discussion of Hungarian examples of the type in (4) and (5), arguing that they involve nominal–internal NP and AP small clauses and leftward predicate movement in a way that closely parallels the Germanic and Romance examples in (1) and (2), and highlighting the interesting implications that they have for the analysis of nominal–internal predication constructions.

1. The ‘spurious’ indefinite article

1.1. Dutch. One of the striking properties of the Germanic ‘N of a N’ construction is the occurrence, to the left of the second noun phrase, of an indefinite article which can be shown not to belong to either of the noun phrases present in the construction. Space prevents us from illustrating this in exhaustive detail (see Bennis, Corver and Den Dikken, to appear). We confine ourselves here to a brief discussion of the examples in (6) and (7). Though the element een walks and talks like an indefinite article, it clearly does not form a constituent with the plural or mass noun that follows it, nor does it belong to the plural or mass noun that linearly precedes it (cf. (8)). The element een to the right of van thus belongs to neither noun. We will therefore call it a ‘spurious’ indefinite article.

³ The nouns csoda ‘wonder, miracle’ and kutya ‘dog’ are the most frequent predicate heads in (4); less frequently, fene ‘hell’ is used as well. The adjectival construction in (5) typically features strongly evaluative adjectives; to the extent that it is found with adjectives like jó ‘good’ or szép ‘pretty, beautiful’, it typically expresses irony, enhancing the overall evaluative semantics of the construction which parallels that of its Indo-European counterpart.
1.2. Hungarian. The Hungarian ‘N/A a N’ construction also features an element sandwiched between predicate and subject which looks just like a run-of-the-mill indefinite article (cf. egy nap ‘a day’). Nonetheless, we call the indefinite article found in (4) and (5) a ‘spurious’ article because, in Hungarian just as in Dutch, this element does not seem to belong to either the predicate or the subject of the nominal–internal small clause, nor in fact to the construction as a whole. That egy is not a constituent of the predicate is shown by (9), where the predicate is a non-count noun (fene ‘hell’) or an adjective (véres ‘bloody’); that egy does not team up with the subject (i.e. the noun that linearly follows it) either is evident from the plural and mass noun subject cases in (10). For completeness’ sake, (11) demonstrates that, outside ‘N/A a N’ constructions, egy indeed does not combine with the elements in question. The case of (12) is especially striking. Here it is crystal-clear that egy cannot belong to either of the two members of the small clause — not to the subject because the subject is a plural noun phrase, and not to the AP predicate either.

(9)  {fene/véres} egy nap
(10) csoda egy {napok/idő}
    hell/bloody a day  wonder a days/weather

(11) *egy {fene/véres/napok/idő}
(12) véres egy napok
    a  hell/bloody/days/weather  bloody a days

The interim conclusion for egy is thus the same that we drew for the ‘spurious’ indefinite article in the Dutch ‘N of a N’ construction discussed above: it does not belong to the predicate or the subject of the nominal–internal small clause. Nor, in fact, can it belong to the construction as a whole. For Dutch this is clear from the occurrence of the demonstratives in (6) and (7); for Hungarian, in which adding an outer demonstrative to the ‘N/A a N’ construction is impossible (for reasons discussed in section 2, below), the argument is a little more involved but it has the same outcome.

An analysis of ‘spurious’ egy as an ‘outer determiner’, which would look something like (13) (where the convenient D–label should not be read as a proposal about the status and position of indefinite articles in Hungarian or even in general), would yield what appears to be a straight and simple account of the ‘N/A a N’ construction.

(13)  [dp predicate, [dp egy [sc subject t_i]]]  (to be rejected)

4 In exclamative constructions, the indefinite determiner of Dutch can be combined with nouns which it normally cannot form a constituent with; thus (8) is fine on an exclamative construal. This does not affect the point made, however: ‘N of a N’ constructions are not (necessarily) exclamative.
To show that it cannot be upheld, however, we have to present some facts concerning the external syntactic distribution of Hungarian noun phrase types.

The most natural position for a Hungarian bare NP is the FOCUS slot (to the immediate left of the finite verb). A bare NP object cannot stay in the regular postverbal object position (to the left of the slash) in sentences of the type in (14c), while object nominals with a definite or indefinite determiner are fine in this position (as well as in the FOCUS slot):

(14) a látta a furcsa autót / [Foc a furcsa autót] látta
I-saw the strange car / the strange car I-saw
b látta egy furcsa autót / [Foc egy furcsa autót] látta
I-saw a strange car / a strange car I-saw
c *látta a furcsa autót / [Foc furcsa autót] látta
I-saw a strange car / strange car I-saw

Placing a bare NP object in the neutral postverbal position is possible only if some other constituent of the sentence is focused (cf. (15a,b)), as É. Kiss (1994) has noted. Notice furthermore that bare NPs can occur in left-dislocated positions in contrastive sentences of the type in (15c).

(15) a [Foc Péter] látott furcsa autót, nem János
‘it was Péter who saw [a] strange car, not János’
b [Foc hol] láttál furcsa autót?
‘where did you see [a] strange car?’
c furcsa autót − [Foc egy] sem akadt!
strange car − one not occurred
‘as far as strange cars are concerned, there was none!’

With the findings in (14) and (15) in mind, let us proceed to an investigation of the behaviour of the ‘N/A a N’ construction in this context. The examples in (16) and (17) form minimal pairs with the ones in (14) and (15). The facts show that the ‘A/N a N’ construction is subject to the same ‘FOCUS constraint’ which also restricts the distribution of bare noun phrases in Hungarian.5 There is incontrovertible evidence, then, for the claim that the ‘N/A a N’ phrase behaves precisely like the articleless noun phrase furcsa autót ‘strange car’ in our earlier example in (14c). And crucially, it does not behave like noun phrases with the indefinite article egy, as shown most poignantly by the contrast between (14b) and (16).

5 We need not go into the explanation of this constraint (cf. É. Kiss 1994 for some discussion). The facts in (14)–(17) were checked with several native speakers, who agree on most of the examples presented in the main text. Subtle variations in the judgements do arise occasionally, but these typically do not evince differences between ‘A/N a N’ constructions and bare noun phrases; rather, they concern the precise licensing conditions on articleless nominals in Hungarian, a topic on which more research is needed but which is tangential to our specific concerns in this context.
(16) *láttam furcsa/csoda egy autót / [Foc furcsa/csoda egy autót] láttam
(17) a [Foc Péter] láttott furcsa/csoda egy kocsi, nem János
    b [Foc hol] láttál furcsa/csoda egy autót?
    c furcsa/csoda egy autó — [Foc egy] sem akadt!

This eliminates an approach to the egy of ‘N/A a N’ constructions along the
lines of (13) or some variant thereof — all the evidence there is shows
unequivocally that egy here is not the outer determiner of the entire ‘N/A a N’
constituent. When we add this conclusion up to the one we had drawn on the
basis of (9)—(12), the outcome is that egy really does not behave as a determiner,
since it does not combine with any of its three potential hosts: not with the
predicate of the small clause, not with the subject and not with the entire phrase.

2. The structure of the Hungarian ‘N/A a N’ construction

Not only is it the case that the egy sandwiched between predicate and subject in
Hungarian nominal—internal predication constructions does not belong to the
construction as a whole, it is in fact impossible to combine the ‘N/A a N’
construction with any outer determiner. That is, the variants of (18) with an
indefinite article, definite determiner or demonstrative are all ungrammatical:

(18) {*egy/*a/*ez a} csoda egy kocsi
    a/the/this-the/that-the wonder a car

English ‘N of a N’ constructions with a definite determiner such as ‘the wonder
of a car’ are generally rather infelicitous, too, but they can be properly context-
ualised such that an acceptable result ensues, as Aarts (1994:8) observes: I went to
see my bank manager, but the sly fox of a man had just left. And ‘N of a N’
constructions with an outer indefinite article or a (distal) demonstrative are
absolutely impeccable in English, as in the other Indo-European languages we are
familiar with. In Hungarian, however, ‘N a N’ constructions are necessarily
‘bare’: nothing can precede the inverted predicate nominal within the confines of
the maximal nominal phrase. The same holds for the ‘A a N’ construction as well,
which space limitations prevent us from illustrating here.

This observation gives us an important cue as to the top structure of Hungarian
‘N/A a N’ constructions. We interpret the ban on outer determiners of any kind as
in (19). The cause of this structural limitation is quite obscure to us at this time.
But the facts seem to lead us unequivocally to this conclusion, which is fully
consonant with our earlier observation that the ‘N/A a N’ construction patterns
with articleless noun phrases in its external syntactic distribution. The conclusion
in (19) also substantially narrows down our analytical options with regard to the
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the Hungarian 'N/A a N' construction must be smaller than DP

What we must minimally assume to be present in the structure of the 'N/A a N' construction is a small clause containing the nominal or adjectival predicate and its subject. This much is dictated by what we said before about the predication relationship that exists between the two constituents of the construction. In addition to the small clause we need space to reorder the subject and predicate of the small clause, such that the predicate ends up to the left of its subject. And we need to find a home for the 'spurious' indefinite article. All this must be accomplished within the confines of a functional structure that does not reach the DP level. As we will see, Den Dikken's (1995) analysis of the core of the 'N of a N' construction, reproduced here as (20), fits these demands like a glove.

(20) $\left[ \text{FP Pred} \left[ X_p X_t^+ F \left[ X_p = \text{SC} \right] \text{NP} \left[ X_t^i t_j^i \right] \right] \right]$}

Den Dikken (1995) argues that the predicate of XP, the nominal–internal small clause, ends up to the left of its subject by way of Predicate Inversion, an A–movement operation which skips an intermediate A–position, that of the subject. Given the locality theory of Chomsky (1993) in terms of equidistance, such apparently non-local movement is contingent on a domain-extending head-movement operation that creates a minimal domain that contains both the position skipped and the position landed in. For the particular case of subject-skipping Predicate Inversion, Den Dikken (1995) argues that the requisite domain-extending head-movement operation is executed by the functional head of the small clause ('X' in (20)) to a higher functional head (labelled 'F') in whose specifier position the fronted predicate lands. Whenever there is Predicate Inversion, then, the locality theory of Chomsky (1993) effectively forces the presence of two functional heads — one which can execute the requisite domain-extending head-movement operation, and a higher one which can serve as the landing-site of this movement.

These two functional heads, and the specifier position that 'F' brings forth, are precisely what we need to harbour the vital ingredients of the English-type 'N of a N' construction — the raised predicate, the element 'of' and the 'spurious' indefinite article to the left of the SC subject. (21), overleaf, is a summary of the derivation of the English-type 'N of a N' construction. While in English the FP in (20) can be included in a larger DP which can harbour indefinite articles, demonstratives and, to a limited extent, definite determiners, such is impossible in the Hungarian 'N/A a N' construction, as we have seen. We minimally need the FP in (20) in the analysis of the construction; and in the case of Hungarian this is apparently all we can get — all the evidence suggests that no additional functional structure on top of FP is present in the Hungarian 'N/A a N' construction. So the crucial ingredients of the derivation of something like (5) csoda egy nyelv 'wonder a language' can now be summed up as in (22), maximally parallel to English (21).
The English-type ‘N of a N’ construction in a nutshell

1. SpecFP is the landing-site of the inverted predicate
2. F is realised as ‘of’, the nominal counterpart of the copula
3. X is realised as the ‘spurious’ indefinite article, and adjoins to F

The Hungarian ‘N/A a N’ construction in a nutshell

1. SpecFP is the landing-site of the inverted predicate
2. F is not overtly realised (see section 4.3)
3. X is realised as the ‘spurious’ indefinite article, and adjoins to F

Raising of X to F must be overtly signalled by the phonetic spell-out of the raised small clause head as the ‘spurious’ indefinite article. We assume (following Bennis, Corver and Den Dikken, to appear) that this is necessary in order to make visible the domain-extending head-movement operation on which Predicate Inversion is contingent:

X→F movement is obligatorily made visible via the overt realisation of ‘spurious’ egy

This said, we can use the distribution of the ‘spurious’ indefinite article as a diagnostic for the application of nominal–internal Predicate Inversion.

3. Micsoda exclamatives

With this in mind, let us now consider an interesting construction which at first sight looks a lot like the ‘N a N’ construction — the micsoda (egy) N! exclamative construction, whose two variants are illustrated in (24). This construction consists of (i) the element micsoda ‘what-wonder’, which is basically just a variant of bare mi ‘what’, (ii) a second noun, and optionally (iii) a token of egy.

In wh-questions, mi and micsoda freely alternate, without any difference in meaning (see (i)); micsoda in and of itself does not correspond to an English ‘aggressively non-D-linked’ wh-phrase like what the hell — Hungarian would render what the hell with mi a csodafene ‘what the wonder/hell’. For reasons that we do not understand at this time, in the micsoda exclamative construction it is only micsoda, not bare mi, that can be used (as shown in (ii)).

(i) {mit/micsodát} vettel? what-ACC/what-wonder-ACC you-bought ‘what did you buy?’
(ii) [{micsoda/*mi} (egy) kocsit] vettem! what-wonder/what a car-ACC I-bought ‘what a car I bought!’

A question which we will also set aside for the moment is how the complex element micsoda ‘what-wonder’ is composed. In the light of the foregoing discussion of csoda egy N constructions, where csoda was analysed as a nominal–internal predicate, it would be interesting to probe a syntac-
This optionality of *egy would at first blush seem to set (24) safely aside from the ‘N/A a N’ constructions discussed earlier. For in this latter construction, the two constituents of the construction must be separated by *egy (cf. (25)). But optionality aside, the *egy of the *micsoda exclamative is otherwise identical with the *egy of the ‘N/A a N’ construction. In particular, the two share their ‘spurious’ nature, as is shown for the *micsoda exclamative by the fact that in (26) it does not agree in number with the noun that follows it.

(25) csoda *(egy) kocsi  (26) micsoda *egy kocsik!
      wonder a  car                        what-wonder a cars

So the *micsoda exclamative construction has all the earmarks of the ‘N/A a N’ construction, except that it seems to fail our diagnostic for nominal-internal Predicate Inversion — the obligatoriness of ‘spurious’ *egy. We seem to have worked ourselves into a stalemate position here.

As a first step out, we should take notice of the difference in status between the phrase-initial nouns in the ‘N a N’ and *micsoda exclamative constructions. The noun *micsoda is a compound of *mi and csoda, the former being a bare quantifier similar to Dutch *wat (cf. (the references in) Bennis, Corver and Den Dikken, to appear), showing up as a *wh-phrase and as a subpart of the indefinites *valami ‘something’ and *semmi ‘nothing’. The bare quantifier *mi being an OPERATOR, *micsoda is predestined for a syntactic position different from the one in which the predicate in ‘N a N’ constructions lands — SpecFP, being an A-position, cannot serve as the final resting place of *micsoda; and since no operator positions are available below F, only SpecDP qualifies as a landing-site for the *micsoda operator. So an important initial conclusion to draw is (27):

(27) *micsoda exclamatives are full DPs; *micsoda raises to SpecDP

Now there are two ways in which *micsoda can make its way to SpecDP. It could either go straight at its goal via direct A’-movement, or it could undergo Predicate Inversion (to SpecFP) prior to movement to SpecDP. To account for the surface optionality of *egy in (24), we propose that both derivations — depicted in (28) and (29) — are available in the case of *micsoda exclamatives.

ynchronously complex approach to *micsoda. We will leave this for future investigation, however, and will adopt a provisional treatment of *micsoda as a simplex element, if only for ease of exposition and structural representation.
The crucial difference between the two derivations lies in the presence or absence of Predicate Inversion, hence — concomitantly, given (23) — in the distribution of the ‘spurious’ indefinite article. Since the structure in (28) incorporates the entire derivation of the ‘N of a N’ construction as a proper subpart, all that was said above about the ‘N of a N’ construction applies to this derivation of micsoda exclamatives as well. In particular, micsoda exclamatives of the (28) type obligatorily feature a token of the ‘spurious’ indefinite article — egy must be realised in order to make visible the domain-extending X-to-F movement process (needed for locality reasons). The alternative direct movement to SpecDP scenario in (29), on the other hand, yields the egy-less example in (24b). Here, there is nothing to force the occurrence of egy: there is no Predicate Inversion, and the highest head of a [−plural] count-noun phrase need not be overtly realised in Hungarian (unlike, for instance, in English or Dutch; cf. (egy) kocsi vs. *(a) car).7

So the operator status of the fronted predicate in the micsoda exclamative construction makes an extra layer of structure (DP) available, and with it one additional derivation (in terms of direct A’-fronting), co-existent with the Predicate Inversion derivation. This is what is responsible for the different distribution of ‘spurious’ egy in the ‘N/A a N’ and micsoda exclamative constructions.

4. Some final issues

4.1. Predicativity and agreement. It has been our claim throughout this paper that in ‘N/A a N’ constructions in Hungarian, as in the Indo-European languages, the linearly leftmost phrase is an inverted predicate of a small clause. The analyses based on this premise have brought forth some interesting results; but at this time we should stop for a moment and ask if the basic premise can be upheld at all.

7 It is this difference that captures the contrast between Dutch and Hungarian wh-exclamatives: in Dutch wat exclamative constructions (e.g. wat een auto(s)!) ‘what a car(s)’? een must be overtly realised, regardless of the number features of the noun following it; Bennis, Corver and Den Dikken (to appear) explain this as a requirement on overt spell-out of the [+EXCL] D–head in Dutch, a requirement which — as a subpart of a much wider generalisation — does not apply to Hungarian.

In (28) and (29) there is no raising of ‘spurious’ egy from F to D. In this regard, and also — even more strikingly — in the fact that it has two parallel derivations, the micsoda exclamative entirely mirrors the Dutch wat voor (een) interrogative construction, analysed in Bennis, Corver and Den Dikken (to appear) as in (i) and (ii):

(i) wat voor een jongen(s)?
what for a boy(s) (i.e. what (kind of) boy(s)?)
[DP wat, [IP t, [FP wat, [IP een, [XP jongen(s)] x ] f [pred t]]]]

(ii) wat voor jongen(s)?
what for boy(s) (i.e. what (kind of)/which boy(s))
[DP wat, [IP voor [XP jongen(s)] [x [Ø] ] f [pred t]]]
Strong support for the view that predication is involved in the ‘A a N’ construction comes from the behaviour of the Hungarian adjectives *kis* and *kicsi*, both meaning ‘small’, in the ‘A a N’ construction. Though semantically equivalent, there is a distributional distinction between these two adjectives in that, while *kicsi* can be used both in attributive and predicative positions, *kis* is restricted to attributive uses. This is shown in (30):

\[
\begin{align*}
(30) \ a \ & \text{egy } \{kicsi/kis\} \text{ kocsi} \\
& \text{a small car} \\
& \text{b egy kocsi } \{kicsi/*kis\} \\
& \text{a car [is] small}
\end{align*}
\]

This hands us a very useful tool in determining whether in the ‘A a N’ construction the adjective is predicative or attributive. On the predicative approach, *kis* should be barred from the ‘A a N’ construction, while on the hypothesis that the A in the ‘A a N’ construction is attributive, no such ban should be operative. The former prediction is borne out, as seen in (31). The fact that *kis* cannot be used as the pre-egy adjective in an ‘A a N’ construction is strong evidence for our claim that the ‘A a N’ construction involves nominal–internal predication.

\[
(31) \ \{\{kicsi/*kis\} \text{ egy kocsit] láttam} \\
\text{small a car I-saw}
\]

This said, however, the agreement facts of Hungarian at first glance seem to point in precisely the opposite direction. Hungarian makes a distinction between predicatively and attributively used adjectives with respect to agreement — attributive adjectives never agree in number with their modifiees, as (32a) shows, while predicative adjectives do agree in number with their subjects in, for instance, a copular sentence such as (32b). Number agreement is also obligatory in copular sentences with a nominal predicate, as (32c) shows.

\[
\begin{align*}
(32) \ a \ & \text{[NP } \text{AP véres-(*ek)} \text{ napok]} \\
& \text{bloody(*PL) days} \\
& \text{‘bloody days’} \\
& \text{b [DP a napok] [AP véres-*(ek)]} \\
& \text{the days} \\
& \text{bloody-*(PL)} \\
& \text{‘the days are bloody’} \\
& \text{c [DP a napok] [NP csodák/*csoda]} \\
& \text{the days wonders(PL)/*wonder} \\
& \text{‘the days are wonders’}
\end{align*}
\]

This distinction between predicates and attributes constitutes a generally useful diagnostic for predication. When we now consider the properties of the Hungarian ‘N/A a N’ construction with this diagnostic at the back of our minds, the outcome would not seem to vindicate our analysis:

\[
\begin{align*}
(33) \ a \ & \text{csoda/*csodák egy napok b véres-(*ek) egy napok} \\
& \text{wonder/*wonders a days bloody-(*PL) a days}
\end{align*}
\]
The facts in (32)–(33) are harmless for the central claims of the paper, however. As a general rule of Hungarian grammar, number agreement is possible only between a nominal or adjectival predicate and a subject—DP. Number agreement with smaller-than-DP subjects is not attested, as (34b) shows; in Hungarian, genericity is almost always expressed by a DP, not by an NP (cf. É. Kiss 1994; thus, English *boys are clever* is rendered as *a fiúk okosak* ‘the boys clever’).

(34) a [DP a napok] [AP véresek]  
   b *[NP napok] [AP véresek]

The fact that we do not find agreement in (33) can now be related to the independent fact that the subject in a nominal–internal predication construction must be smaller than DP — not just in Hungarian (as (35) shows), but also in the Germanic languages (cf. *(a) a wonder of the day* and *(a) the day!):

(35) *(csoda/micsoda/véres) egy a nap(ok) wonder/what-wonder/bloody a the day(s)

4.2. Combinability. This general ban on full-DP subconstituents of ‘N/A (of) a N’ constructions now leads us to an interesting prediction. Since the ‘N/A a N’ construction is smaller than DP — not just in Hungarian (as (35) shows), but also in the Germanic languages (cf. *a wonder of (a) the day* and *(a) the day!):

(36) a micsoda (egy) véres egy napokat élünk!  
   what-wonder (a) bloody a days-ACC we-live  
   ‘what bloody days we are living!’
   b *(csoda/kutya/fene/véres) egy micsoda (egy) napokat élünk  
   wonder/dog/hell/bloody a what-wonder (a) days-ACC we-live

For the Germanic ‘N of a N’ and what exclamative constructions it is also true that they can be combined in the way exemplified in (36a), as shown in (37):

(37) what a hell of a day that was!

In view of the fact that full DPs cannot be subconstituents of nominal–internal predication constructions, this must indicate that ‘N of a N’ constructions in these languages, too, can be smaller than DP. And this in turn compromises an analysis of ‘N of a N’ constructions of the type propounded in Kayne (1994), where *of* is analysed as a D–filler. This naturally sets the stage for a discussion of *of*, which is the topic of the final subsection.
4.3. Copulas. All through this paper we have compared Hungarian constructions of the type csoda egy N with English ‘N of a N’ constructions like a hell of a problem. And this comparison has certainly paid its dividends. But so far we have ignored what is perhaps the most obvious difference between the two constructions — the absence in the Hungarian construction of anything corresponding to the of in the English example. In closing, we will briefly address this issue.

Kayne (1994) analyses of as a complementiser-like element. Den Dikken (1995), on the other hand, treats it as the nominal counterpart of the copula. On the latter approach we expect — ceteris paribus — that the distribution of of will mirror that of the clausal copula be. This yields an interesting perspective on the English/Hungarian contrast in ‘N (of) a N’ constructions. Unlike English, Hungarian does not employ a token of the copula lenni ‘be’ in simple present-tense nominal or adjectival predication constructions with a third-person subject — regardless of whether the predicate is inverted or in situ:

(38) a a fiúk {katonák/kedvesek} (*vannak)
    the boys soldiers/nice (*are)

b {katonák/kedvesek} (*vannak) a fiúk
    soldiers/nice (*are) the boys

The copula approach to of now correctly predicts that, since inside DP there is no Tense or person feature to force its presence, Hungarian cannot feature a counterpart of English of in its nominal–internal predication constructions.

This is a very interesting result which biases the analysis of of in the direction of the copula approach. Both in its similarities with Germanic (in the distribution of the ‘spurious’ indefinite article) and in its differences (in the domain of of), then, the facts of the Hungarian nominal–internal predication construction discussed in this paper thus lend striking support to a Predicate Inversion approach to the syntax of ‘N/A (of) a N’ constructions.

References


