

Comitative adjuncts: appositives and non-appositives

Expressions involving a comitative adverbial and a plural pronoun as its host DP (*we with John*) are ambiguous in Hungarian. In the exclusive reading the comitative is added to the reference of the pronoun, thus in total at least three persons are referred to. In the inclusive reading, on the other hand, the referent of the comitative is not added to the referent of the pronoun, but included in it. Under this reading *we with John*, for instance, refers to two persons: John and me.

- (1) *(Mi) Jánossal kísértáltunk a tóhoz.*
we-NOM John-COM preV-walk-PAST-1PL the lake-ALLAT
'We walked to the lake with John.' (exclusive reading)
'I walked to the lake with John.' (inclusive reading)

In this talk I argue that the two readings do not display a structural difference: the comitative is a DP-adjunct in both cases.

It has never been called into question that in the exclusive reading the comitative is an adjunct. There is no general consensus, however, on the adjunction site: both VP-adjunction (Skrabalova 2003, Vassilieva and Larson 2005) and DP-adjunction (Ionin and Matushanski 2002) have been argued for. I show that in this reading in Hungarian the comitative co-binds anaphors, and therefore the DP-adjunction analysis is superior.

As far as the inclusive reading is concerned, it is established that the pronoun and the comitative form a constituent, but it is subject to much discussion if the comitative is a complement (Vassilieva and Larson 2005), a conjunct (Vassilieva 2005) or an adjunct (Ionin and Matushanski 2002). Following Progovac (1997), I argue that the comitative is an appositive modifier of DP. In contrast her analysis, however, I claim that in the inclusive reading the comitative binds a variable internal to the pronoun. Under this analysis all syntactic properties of the inclusive reading fall into place.

Analysing the comitative as a DP-adjunct in both readings raises the question of why certain syntactic operations disambiguate between the two interpretations. For instance, only the exclusive reading is available when the comitative undergoes wh-movement (2) or a relative clause intervenes between the pronoun and the comitative (3). The same holds when the comitative is a bare noun (4) or instead of *with X*, the comitative takes the form *with the help of X* or *in the company of X* (5).

- (2) *Kik írták Jánossal a cikket?*
who-PL-NOM wrote-PAST-3PL John-COM the article-ACC
'Which persons wrote the article with John?'
* 'Which person wrote the article with John?'

- (3) *Mi, akik még sohasem voltunk külföldön, Jánossal Norvégiába utazunk.*
we-NOM who-PL yet never be-PAST-1PL abroad John-COM Norway-ILL travel-1PL
'We have never been abroad, and we are travelling to Norway with John.'
* 'John and I have never been abroad, and we are travelling to Norway.'

- (4) *Ti bármelyik kollegával jó csapatot alkottok.*
you(PL)-NOM any colleague-COM good team comprise-2PL
'You(PL) make a good team with any of the colleagues.'
* 'You(SG) make a good team with any of the colleagues.'

- (5) *a János társaságában süттöttünk egy kenyeret.*
John-NOM company-POSS.3SG-INESS bake-PAST-1PL a bread-ACC
'We /*I baked a loaf of bread in the company of John.'

b *János segítségével süttöünk egy kenyeret.*
 John-NOM help-POSS.3SG-COM bake-PAST-1PL a bread-ACC
 ‘We /*I baked a loaf of bread with (the help of) John.’

On the other hand, if the pronoun and the comitative are focalised together then the sentence can only receive the inclusive reading.

(6) [FOC *CSAK MI JÁNOSZAL*] *mentünk el Norvégiába.*
 only we-NOM John-COM go-PAST-1PL preV Norway-ILL
 ‘It is only I/*us with John that went to Norway.’

I argue that in the configurations mentioned above, entirely non-structural (interface) phenomena contribute to the unambiguous interpretation.

The interaction between syntax and the Phonetic Form interface explains the unavailability of the inclusive reading when a relative clause intervenes between the pronoun and the comitative: the Law of Growing Constituents (Behagel 1932, É. Kiss 2007) requires phonologically short subcomponents of a constituent to come closer to the head than heavy ones.

I show that in the rest of the unambiguous constructions the interaction between syntax and the Conceptual-Intentional interface rules out one of the potential readings. The comitative cannot be a bare noun in the inclusive reading because bare nouns are non-referential elements and so they are unable to bind the reference of the pronoun-internal variable.

The pronoun cannot undergo wh-extraction in the inclusive reading because in appositive structures in general wh-extraction of the host DP leads to ungrammaticality. Wh-elements are referentially open. Appositives are referentially fixed. I argue that this causes a clash of referentiality at the interpretation of the DP, thus the only possible reading is the exclusive one.

Comitatives of the form *with the help of X* or *in the company of X* trigger an exclusive reading because the denotation of these phrases is [-animate]. In the inclusive reading the denotation of the whole comitative phrase is by definition part of the denotation of *we*. *We*, however, refers to a set of which all members are [+human] or at least [-animate].

Finally, the focalised pronoun + comitative string triggers an inclusive reading because among postnominal modifiers in Hungarian, only appositives can be focussed together with the noun they modify. I derive this fact from the referential non-distinctness of the pronoun and the comitative.

The results of the talk implicate that the division of labour between syntax and the interfaces plays a far more important role in the interpretation of comitative adverbials than it has been assumed so far.

References

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