

LANGUAGE FAIR 2020
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The Hungarian Fronting Construction in Interrogative Sentences

Introduction

The Hungarian fronting construction

In the Hungarian fronting construction a constituent from the embedded clause appears on the left edge of the main clause. This construction mostly occurs with 'bridge-verbs' (e.g. *mond* 'say', *hisz* 'believe', *ígér* 'promise', *gondol* 'think'). Example (1) and (2) are from Szűcs (2013: 258).

(1) Azt mondtad, hogy János jön.
DEM.ACC say.2SG.PAST that John come.3SG
'You said that John will come.'



(2) Jánost mondtad, hogy jön.
John.ACC say.2SG.PAST that come.3SG
'You said that John will come.'

Introduction

This construction has been widely researched in recent decades. See, for example:

- Kenesei (1994)
- Gervain (2002)
- Szűcs (2013, 2018)

Introduction

- The necessity of the complementizer in interrogative sentences illustrating this construction has not been examined with empirical methods yet.
- It is suggested that in most cases the complementizer cannot be left out from this construction, though there are a few contexts in which it might be possible not to use it.

Introduction

- In this survey I examined interrogative sentences illustrating this construction, in which the constituent that appears on the left edge of the main clause is always the subject of the embedded clause. This constituent can be assigned nominative case or accusative case, as shown in (3) and (4), respectively.

(3) Mi gondolod, hogy szalad?
what.NOM think.2SG that run.3SG
'What do you think that (it) is running?'

(4) Mit gondolsz, hogy szalad?
what.ACC think.2SG that run.3SG
'What do you think that (it) is running?'

Introduction

Research questions:

- Do native speakers prefer sentences with nominative case-marked or accusative case-marked fronted constituents?
- Does the omission of the complementizer *hogy* 'that' lead to ungrammaticality?

(5) Mit gondolsz, hogy fénylik?
what.ACC think.2SG that shine.2SG
'What do you think that (it) is shining?'

(6) Mi gondolod, fénylik?
what.NOM think.2SG shine.2SG
'What do you think (that it) is shining?'

The Survey

- In the survey I used four structures to examine these questions.
- Data were collected with a Google Form. The participants had to decide how natural a structure sounds to them on a 1 to 7 scale.
- There were 40 target sentences (10 illustrating each structure) and 40 fillers.

The four structures that I used (these examples are meant to express the same meaning: 'What do you think is running?'):

I. accusative case + complementizer

(7) Mit gondolsz, hogy szalad?
 what.ACC think.2SG that run.3SG

II. accusative case without complementizer

(8) Mit gondolsz, szalad?
 what.ACC think.2SG run.3SG

III. nominative case + complementizer

(9) Mi gondolod, hogy szalad?
 what.NOM think.2SG that run.3SG

IV. nominative case without complementizer

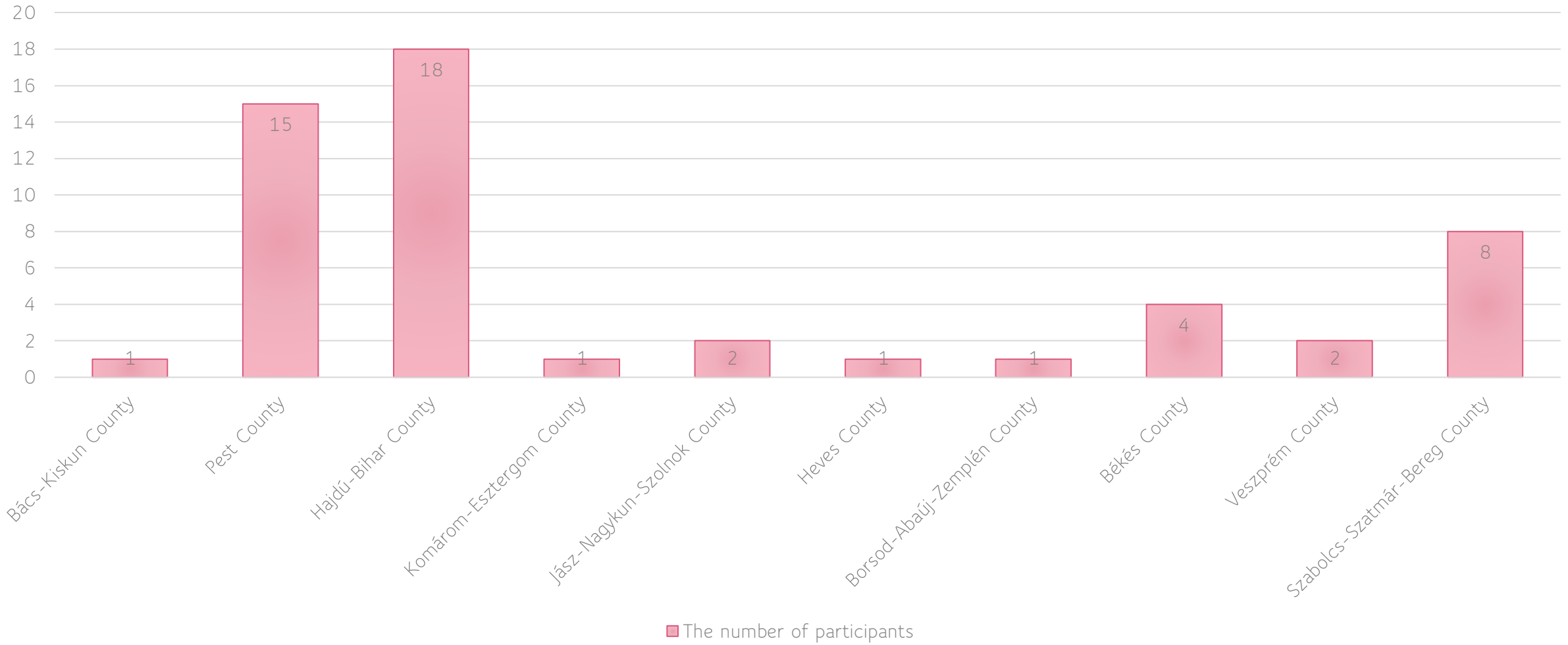
(10) Mi gondolod, szalad?
 what.NOM think.2SG run.3SG

The Survey

- 53 speakers filled out the form: 15 from Hajdú-Bihar County, 15 from Pest County.
- The remaining 23 speakers are from other counties as shown in the diagram in the next slide.

The number of the participants' answers for the question 'Where did You spend Your childhood? (0-7 years)':

The number of participants



The Results

The results:

- the **accusative case without complementizer** structure sounded the most natural to the native speakers

(11) Mit gondolsz, zörög?
 what.ACC think.2SG rattle.3SG
 'What do you think (that it) is rattling?'

The Results

- the second most natural structure was the **accusative case + complementizer**

(12) Mit gondolsz, hogy zörög?
 what.ACC think.2SG that rattle.3SG
 'What do you think that (it) is rattling?'

The Results

- the third most natural structure was the **nominative case + complementizer**

(13) Mi gondolod, hogy zörög?
what.NOM think.2SG that rattle.3SG
'What do you think that (it) is rattling?'

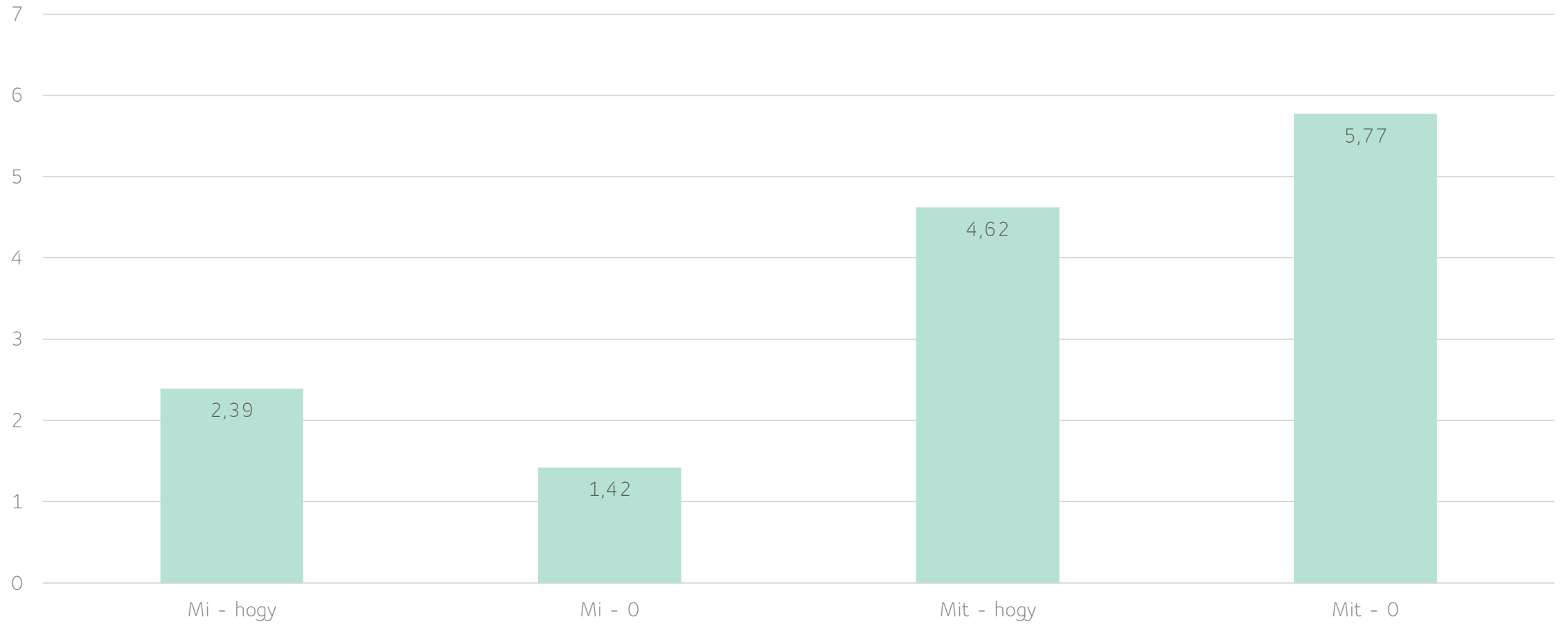
The Results

- the least natural was the **nominative case without complementizer**

(14) Mi gondolod, zörög?
 what.NOM think.2sg rattle.3sg
 'What do you think (that it) is rattling?'

The average of the points given by the native speakers to the structures on the 1 to 7 scale

■ The average of the points given by the native speakers



The Results

- The data suggest that the speakers from Pest County might consider the accusative case slightly more preferable to the nominatives than the speakers from Hajdú-Bihar County.
 - the average of the points given by the participants from Hajdú-Bihar County was 4,5 to the **accusative case + complementizer** structure and 2,54 to the **nominative case + complementizer** structure
 - the average of the points given by the participants from Pest County was 4,84 to the **accusative case + complementizer** structure and 1,82 to the **nominative case + complementizer** structure
- Another interesting finding is that a speaker from Bács-Kiskun County and another speaker from Heves County showed a clear preference for the structure in **nominative case** over the structure in **accusative** case.

Conclusions

- The reason why the **accusative case without complementizer** structure was considered the most natural is that this structure could have another parsing in Hungarian ('What do you think? Is it rattling or not?').
- This study needs to be revised so that the participants can both hear and read the sentences of the grammaticality judgement test. This will ensure that the intended reading will be taken into account during the evaluation procedure.

Conclusions

- In the future it would be interesting to examine if there is significant difference in the usage of the fronting construction with nominative and accusative marked fronted elements between speakers from Hajdú-Bihar and Pest County.
- It would be also interesting to examine if there are areas where the **nominative case + complementizer** structure is more preferred than the **accusative case + complementizer** structure, like the data of the speakers from Heves and Bács-Kiskun County suggested.

Attachments

➤ [ppt\speakersdata.xlsx](#)

➤ [ppt\summarizeddata.pdf](#)

SUPERVISORS

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References

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!
