ENVIRONMENTAL COPULA CONSTRUCTIONS IN HUNGARIAN*

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Abstract: In this paper I examine the behaviour of Hungarian copular environmental constructions, and I demonstrate that they cannot be treated on a par with weather verbs (as suggested in the literature). While the latter may have a quasi-argumental subject, treating the former along the same lines would also mean to analyse the NP/AP featuring in these constructions as a predicate nominal/adjective. A parallel analysis of sentences involving nominal predication, environmental copular constructions and sentences with undisputable NP-subjects shows that environmental constructions pattern with the latter. I discuss and weigh the subject properties and the predicate properties of the nominal part of the construction, surveying all the evidence that has emerged in the literature, and adding some further arguments. The dual behaviour of the nominal/adjectival part of atmospheric copular constructions is argued to come from their predicative content combined with their status as syntactic subjects. For what appears to be an AP + VAN 'be' type of environmental copular construction, an Adj → N conversion analysis is proposed, and an alternative analysis with the AP being the modifier of an abstract null noun is also mentioned.

Keywords: copular environmental construction, verbal copula, predicational sentence, syntactic subject, conversion

1. Introduction

The paper proposes an analysis of Hungarian environmental construc-
tions of the form NP + VAN 'be', and argues for the syntactic subject
status of the (semantically predicative) NPs featuring in them. It will
be shown that, contrary to previous analyses, these constructions can-
not be treated on a par with weather verbs: while the latter may have
a quasi-argumental subject (cf. Tóth 2001) or no subject (cf. Komlósy
1994), treating the former along the same lines would result in analysing
the NPs of environmental constructions as predicate nominals. This, how-
ever, cannot explain the contrast in the behaviour of the copula in present
tense in (1), a predicative sentence with a predicate nominal and (2), an
environmental construction.

(1)   Ez   gond.   (2)   Gond   van.
      this problem   problem is
      'This is a problem.'   'There is a problem.'

Instead, I argue for an analysis that treats NPs of environmental construc-
tions on a par with undisputable NP-subjects of unaccusative definiteness
effect (DE) verbs. It will be shown that only the "NP as subject" analysis
can account for the data, and that the dual behaviour of the nominal part
of environmental copular constructions in some tests finds an explana-
tion in their predicative content combined with their status as syntactic
subjects.

   The paper is organized as follows: section **2** presents general aspects
of weather verbs and environmental copular constructions, section **3** sum-
marizes the theoretically possible approaches, briefly listing some points
where they present divergent predictions. Using various tests, section
4 focuses on the empirical problems these constructions raise, and sets
the scene for a syntactic analysis. In section **5**, a syntactic approach is
outlined. Finally, section **6** draws the conclusions.

2. Weather verbs and environmental copular constructions. General presentation

Cross-linguistically, there exists a class of verbs that most commonly de-
note natural or atmospheric phenomena, conditions of the world or the
weather. In many languages an overt expletive may appear in sentences

with these verbs and function syntactically—more or less—as their subject.[1] These sentences are characterized as messages conveying a single unstructured kind of judgement with no topic to predicate of.

As a rule, Hungarian sentences with a weather verb have no overt subjects, not even expletive ones (cf. (3a–b)).[2]

(3) (a) Mostanában havazik (*a hó)   minden este.
          these.days   snows   (the snow) every   evening
          'It's snowing every evening these days.'

     (b) Télen   korán sötétedik (*a nap).
          winter-in early darkens   (the day)
          'It's growing dark early in winter.'

Besides these constructions with weather verbs there is a second, syntactically different type of weather expression exemplified in (4a–b).

(4) (a) Hideg van.   (b) Nyár   van.
          cold   is   summer is
          'It's cold.'   'It's summer.'

(3) and (4) are quite similar both semantically and pragmatically, but there is a considerable difference in their productivity: the first type (3a–b) is not productive; there are slightly more than a dozen of such verbs in the lexicon; the second type (4a–b), however, is a highly productive pattern which comprises not only descriptions of weather conditions, but

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[1] In other languages, nouns with a general meaning 'sky'/'world' are obligatorily or optionally used as the subject of some of these verbs, cf.

(i) ɨd-dúnya tɨ-shṯi   (ii) Inmar   zorä.
     the-world she-raining   god/sky thunder
     'It is raining.'   'It's thundering.'
     (Palestinian Arabic;   (Udmurt; from
     from Givón 1984, 90)   Székely 1904, 32)

[2] In fact, (3a) seems to contain a lexically incorporated subject: *hav-* is an allomorph of *hó* 'snow'. For a brief discussion of the derivation of weather verbs from an adjectival or nominal base see Komlósy (1994, 159–61).

As opposed to the examples in (3a–b), some verbs (e.g., *esik* 'fall', *szakad* 'split', *csepe(re)g* 'drop', etc.) may have a lexical subject, such as the DP *az eső* 'the rain', which semantically fits in the set of weather phenomena. It can be argued that there are two different lexical entries in these cases: a weather verb with no overt subject (*esik* 'it rains', *szakad* 'it pours'), and another one appearing with a lexical DP subject (*esik az eső/a hó* 'rain/snow is falling').

also state of affairs with a broader "ambient" or "environmental" interpretation. In what follows, I will call these **(copular) environmental constructions**.

If we define predication as a property ascribed to an entity (to a "predication base"), environmental copular construction can be said to lack a predication base. The state of affairs is simply posited, and the "entity" involved in such a state of affairs is inside the event and may not be conceived of as an entity. The nonverbal part of the construction is not entity denoting, and if so the verb VAN 'be' cannot make an existential predication of an entity, either. Therefore all these utterances can be considered thetic,[3] more precisely event-central thetic sentences (that state the existence of an event). If these constructions are predications, they do not predicate about their subject but about some kind of a "spatio-temporal argument" in the sense of Kratzer (1995).[4]

Moreover, these sentences can actually be formulated as predication structures with a locative topic, for instance (cf. (5a)). When compared with the predicative sentence in (5b) the difference seems to be that between a stage-level predication (5a) and an individual-level predication (5b). This is in accordance with thetic sentences (and also existentials, e.g., English *there*-sentences) being invariably stage-level (cf. Milsark 1977).

(5) (a) Ebben   a   szobában   nagyon hideg van.
          this-iness the room-iness very   cold is
          'It's very cold in this room.'

     (b) Ez   a   szoba nagyon hideg.
          this the room very   cold
          'This room is very cold.'

Though it holds true of other languages as well that these environmental constructions do not seem to be limited to weather descriptions,

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[3] For a survey of the literature on the two different judgement forms (the thetic–categorical distinction), see Sasse (1987).

[4] This goes by a variety of labels in semantics and pragmatics: 'explicature', 'unarticulated constituents', 'impliciture', etc. If we stick to the Kratzerian 'spatio-temporal argument', it is worth mentioning that Kratzer (1995) assumes such an argument only for stage-level predicates, as is really the case with environmental copular constructions, cf. (5a) vs. (5b). However, this parallel in (5a–b) cannot be systematically shown with all the rest of the APs/NPs that can appear in both structures.

the grammatical English and Hebrew examples in (6a), (7a) are not directly translatable into Hungarian: while the environmental pattern is not available (cf. (6b), (7b)), the parallel predicative copular sentences are generally fine (cf. (6c), (7c)).

(6) (a) It's so green in Scotland.   (Hazout 2004, 400; (19b))

    (b) *Olyan zöld   van Skóciában.
         so   green is   Scotland-iness

    (c) Olyan zöld   Skócia.
         so   green Scotland
         'Scotland is so green.'

(7) (a) akuv can.   (*ibid.*, (20b))
         sad   here
         'It is sad here.'

    (b) *Szomorú van itt.
         sad   is   here

    (c) ?Szomorú itt.[5]
         sad   here
         'It is sad here.'

The data from the Hungarian National Corpus show that there are some semantically well defined classes of nouns that can appear in Hungarian copular environmental constructions. We mainly find nouns denoting "socio-economical or political states of affairs" (*verseny* 'competition', *sajtószabadság* 'freedom of press', *veszély* 'danger', *szavazás* 'voting', *diszkrimináció* 'discrimination', *demokrácia* 'democracy', etc. + VAN 'be'), event denoting nominals (*meccs* 'match', *háború* 'war', *buli* 'party', *bál* 'ball', *élet* 'life', *karnevál* 'carnival', *mise* 'mass', *vita* 'debate', *földrengés* 'earthquake', etc. + VAN 'be'), expressions concerning

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[5] Though this particular example is slightly marginal, sentences like (i)–(iii) with adjectival predicates and no overt subject are fully acceptable, and not yet studied to my knowledge.

(i) Jó   itt.   (ii) Szép nálad.
    good here   nice adess-2sg
    'I like it here.'   'It's nice at your place.'

(iii) Régen   jobb volt.
    in-former-times better was
    'In former times, it was better'

the weather or other circumstances (*tél* 'winter', *köd* 'fog', *vihar* 'storm', *sár* 'mud', *fagy* 'frost', *csend* 'silence', *zaj* 'noise', *sötét(ség)* 'dark(ness)', *jég* 'ice', *hó* 'snow', *szag* 'smell', *bűz* 'stench', *baj* 'problem', *rend* 'order', etc. + VAN 'be'), or time-related expressions (*február* 'February', *este,* 'evening', *5 óra* '5 o'clock', *fél három* 'half past two', *április elseje* 'the first of April', *hétvége* 'weekend', *ebédszünet* 'lunch break', *péntek* 'Friday', (*szép) idő* '(nice) weather', *karácsony* 'Christmas', etc. + VAN 'be'). A number of such expressions belong to the informal registers (slang), where it seems to be a productive schema, in the sense that new expressions can be created on the basis of the above syntactic and semantic pattern. Some of these expressions have become lexicalized (idiomatized?), and spread in the whole language community, others remained between the boundaries of one or another register of language use.

Beside the above-mentioned productive NP + BE pattern, we can also find some copular environmental constructions that seem to have the structure AP + BE and AdvP + BE. The AP + BE pattern is not productive, and there is a very small set of adjectives in standard Hungarian[6] that can appear in an environmental construction; *hideg* 'cold', *meleg* 'warm/hot', *hűvös* 'chilly', *sötét* 'dark', *világos* 'light', *késő* 'late', *büdös* 'stinky' can be listed. Some of these adjectives can figure as derivation bases for nouns (*sötétség* 'darkness', *világosság* 'light', *büdösség* 'stench'), and the corresponding noun can also appear in a copular environmental construction with no difference in meaning between the AP + BE and the parallel NP + BE pattern (cf. (8a–b)).

(8) (a) Olyan büdös(ség)   van itt, nem érzed?
          such   stinky/stench is   here not feel-2sg
          'It's such a stench here, don't you smell it?'

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[6] Some dialects use a richer variety of such structures, especially with denominal adjectives. For instance, in the dialect spoken in the Bihar region, North-Western Romania, we find examples like those in (i)–(ii). In standard Hungarian these adjectives can only be used in predicative sentences (cf. (iii)–(iv)):

(i) Felleges van.   (ii) Síkos   van.
     cloudy is   slippery is
     'It's cloudy.'   'It's slippery.'

(iii) Felleges az ég.   (iv) Síkos/csúszós az út.
      cloudy   the sky   slippery   the road
      'The sky is cloudy.'   'The road is slippery.'

(b) Nem merek   bemenni, mert   sötét(ség) van.
     not   dare-1sg in-go-inf because dark(ness) is
     'I'm afraid to enter, as it is dark (inside).'

It is an intriguing question whether these adjectives preserve their syntactic category in environmental copular constructions or an Adj→N conversion should be assumed. A third option would be to take them as modifiers of an empty (generic) N head. I will come back to this issue in section **4**.

The AdvP + BE pattern has even fewer adverbial candidates. To my knowledge, there is only one such adverb, namely *korán* 'early', which is parallel with both the adjectival and the adverbial use of the *késő–későn* 'late' pair.

(9) (a) Késő$_{Adj}$ van.   (b) Az előadás/*pro*   későn$_{Adv}$ van.
          late   is   the performance/*pro* late   is
          'It's late.'   'The performance/it is late on.'

(10) (a) Korán van.   (b) A   gyűlés/*pro*   korán van.
          early   is   the meeting/*pro* early is
          'It's early.'   'The meeting/it starts early.'

Késő(n) and *korán* are both time-related expressions. These time-related expressions are idiosyncratic in a variety of languages (including English, see fn. 11 below). As exemplified above, in Hungarian there is a significant class of time-related NPs that can all show up in a copular environmental construction. It is only *késő* 'late' and *korán* 'early' that belong to this semantic class without sharing the syntactic category of the main bulk of time-related expressions. As the examples in (9a) and (10a) most probably came into being as a result of analogical extension of the pattern under examination, I will take them for idioms, and I will set them aside.

In what concerns the copula in environmental constructions, it seems to behave like a "stress-avoiding" verb. What Komlósy (1989) calls stress-avoiding is a class of phonologically defective verbs that require a designated argument/verbal modifier to precede them in neutral sentences. Presumably this is a PF-condition: the copula cannot bear phrasal stress, which falls on the left edge in Hungarian. Therefore the preverbal "verbal modifier" slot needs to be filled. In the terms of standard Hungarian syntax a verbal modifier (VM) is a non-referring/predicative expression (verbal particle, adjective, postposition, bare noun etc.) that precedes

the verb in neutral sentences forming a phonological word with it. It is usually thought to have aspectual relevance, or to modify the meaning of the verb (the VM + V complex often being idiomatic). Semantically a VM + V unit is considered to be some kind of a "complex predicate", the locus of complex predicate formation being the AspP or PredP. VMs thus have a fixed syntactic position: Spec,AspP or Spec,PredP. É. Kiss (2002) defines VMs as phrases consisting of a mere head, and assumes that they occupy the specifier of an AspP projection (the verb being raised into the empty Asp head). Csirmaz (2004) makes a distinction between light and heavy verbal modifiers. Light VMs consist of a mere head; heavy VMs are of a phrasal status. Csirmaz assumes that phrasal VMs have to move to Spec,PredP, and light VMs can incorporate into the verbal head, or move to Spec,PredP themselves. Recent literature on Hungarian syntax (e.g., É. Kiss 2007), adopting Csirmaz's PredP projection, tends to place VMs into Spec,PredP—although there is a considerable debate on whether the VM position is distinct from the preverbal focus position. In what follows, I will adopt the PredP approach, and I will assume that, being stress-avoiding, the copula of the environmental construction needs a designated element to fill the specifier of the PredP projection dominating the VP, and consequently the verb is raised into the Pred head. Thus in sentences containing a copular environmental construction the unmarked word order is NP + VAN, where the copula is a stress-avoiding verb and the constituent on the left edge (the NP in Spec,PredP) receives the main sentence stress.

However, the stress-avoiding property of the copula seems to hold only in relation to phrasal stress. Focal stress on the copula does not rule out the construction, and there are cases where VAN + NP seems to be the unmarked word order. In such cases the copula acquires a kind of existential meaning:[7]

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[7] This 'kind of' expression is motivated on the following ground: if (11b) had an existential meaning, this would be identical with (i) below:

(i)   Isten létezik.
      God exist-3sg
      'God exists.'

On the other hand, it would be an exception to have a DP *(God)* in (11) with VAN, which is known to be a definiteness effect verb. The Hungarian data is in fact parallel with the Modern Greek examples noted in Sasse (1987, 556, and fn. 26): with a non-referential NP (ii) the sentence may be paraphrased as 'there is something which has the properties normally associated with the word *god*'

(11) (a) Van remény.   (b) Van Isten.
         is   hope   is   God
         'There is hope.'   'There is a God.'

It seems likely that the verb-focus construction in (11a,b) is derivable from the same underlying structure as the copular environmental construction. Interestingly, the environmental copula construction with an NP + VAN neutral order also has a non-neutral VAN + NP variant with a focussed copula and an existential (or *verum focus*) interpretation (cf. (12a) with (12b)).

(12) (a) Gyűlés   van (bent).   (b) Van gyűlés   (ma).
         meeting is   inside   is   meeting today
         'There is a meeting in there.'   'There IS a meeting today.'

I will have nothing to say about these verb-focus constructions in what follows. Instead, I will only concentrate on neutral sentences that contain a copular environmental construction, and in the next section I will summarize the theoretically possible approaches to them, briefly listing some points where they present divergent predictions.

3. Approaches

In principle, there are at least three possible analyses of the construction in question. As for the NPs/APs featuring in an environmental construction, they can be taken for predicates having either a quasi-argumental subject/an expletive *pro* subject, or no subject. Another possibility is to analyse the NPs (APs) in question as subjects.

Accordingly, there are three main approaches to environmental constructions in the literature: (a) Komlósy (1994) and partly Viszket (2002; 2003) consider them subjectless; (b) Tóth (2001) assumes that they have a quasi-argumental subject; while (c) traditional descriptive grammars

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while with a referential DP (iii) the sentence means 'the individual entity known to us by the name of *God* really exists'.

(ii) Ipárxi   θeós.   (iii) O   θeós ipárxi.
      exist-3sg god   def.art god exist-3sg
      'There is a God.'   'God exists.'

Thus (11b) parallels (ii), while (i) is similar to (iii).

and partly Viszket (2002; 2003) claim that the nominal/adjectival part of the construction is the syntactic subject.

In what follows, I will argue for (c), that is, the NP of environmental constructions being a syntactic subject. For this analysis to go through, I will have to assimilate the examples with an AP + VAN structure to those with an NP + VAN pattern. This problem will be taken up in section **4**. Before that, in this section, I present some problems that approaches (a) and (b) face, and I show that the majority of the tests invoked in the literature to support either (a) or (b) are not conclusive. After a detailed presentation of the properties of copular environmental constructions in section **4**, section **5** outlines an analysis that can account for the dual (both predicative and subject-like) behaviour of the nominal/adjectival part of environmental constructions.

3.1. Problems for Komlósy (1994)—the subjectlessness hypothesis

Similarly to weather verbs, copular weather constructions[8] are considered by Komlósy (1994) to be subjectless (that is, to contain predicate nominals rather than subjects), and to bear a default agreement marker "3sg" in all contexts where agreement is a grammatical requirement.

There are two major problems with this approach:

(i) Komlósy himself mentions the problem (cf. Komlósy 1994, 172–4) that there are also nonfinite weather verbs and weather expressions, and (a) they can occur with matrix control predicates such as *akar* 'want to' or *tud* 'be able to', and (b) they can have an infinitive form displaying subject agreement when complementing predicates such as *kell(ene)* 'should/would'. Both (a) and (b) are unexpected if they are subjectless.

(ii) Treating the nominal part of environmental constructions as a predicate nominal does not explain why VAN is compulsory in present tense in environmental constructions and prohibited in sentences with a nominal predicate (cf. (1)–(2)).

3.2. Problems for Tóth (2001)—the quasi-argument subject approach

Tóth (2001) proposes two tests to point out the presence of a covert quasi-argumental subject (having an atmospheric theta-role) with weather

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[8] Both Komlósy (1994) and Tóth (2001) only mention the AP + VAN type of copular weather constructions.

verbs and weather constructions; however, her tests are built on false premises or at least prove to be inconclusive with respect to environmental constructions.[9] She discusses two constructions where overt subjects cannot appear in Hungarian: impersonal resultative participles of "household verbs" and expressions containing weather verbs. The cornerstone of the argumentation is that there is a difference in grammaticality between weather verbs and copular weather expressions on the one hand (grammatical, cf. (13a–b)) and impersonal resultatives on the other (ungrammatical, cf. (13c)) when embedded under modals that take infinitives. The difference in grammaticality is claimed to be related to the inflection on the infinitive. First, 3sg agreement on the infinitival form of weather verbs is claimed to be mandatory in these constructions (Tóth 2001, 57); and second, Tóth assumes that the ungrammaticality of inflected infinitives with impersonal passives embedded under modals is due to a special property of agreement marking on infinitives, namely that 3sg agreement marking on the infinitive can never be the morphological spell-out of default agreement, it is always "real" agreement triggered by the checking of φ-features.

The above-mentioned contrast in grammaticality is taken to show that Komlósy's claim (that weather verbs and weather expressions are subjectless) cannot be maintained, as these are grammatical when occurring in inflected infinitival clauses. Tóth's argumentation can, however, be questioned on the basis of empirical data: not all impersonal resultative participles embedded under modals are ungrammatical with inflected infinitives (cf. Kádár 2006b); (13b) and (13d) are grammatical with non-inflected infinitives, too, as opposed to (13a) (and (13c), for that matter)). Moreover, the grammaticality of (13b) below is compatible both with a quasi-argument subject analysis and an analysis taking the NP to be the subject of VAN (cf. (13d), with *vihar* 'storm' as the subject of the sentence):

(13) (a)   Havazik.   → Március-ban már   nem kellene havaz-ni-a.
             snow-3sg   March-iness already not   should snow-inf-3sg
           'It's snowing.' 'In March it shouldn't still be snowing.'

                                                             (Tóth 2001, (14a), (16a))

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[9] For details, see Kádár (2006b, 4–8).

(b) Itt   nagyon meleg van. → Eb-ben   a   szobá-ban nem szabadna
     here very   hot   is   this-iness the room-iness not   should
     'It is very hot here.'   [ilyen meleg-nek len-ni-e].
                                    so   hot-dat   be-inf-3sg
                                   'It should not be so hot in this room.'
                                                       (*ibid.*, (14c), (16c))

(c) *Öt órára   muszáj [a   szobában kitakarítva lennie].
     five o'clock-subl must   the room-iness vm-clean-*vA* be-inf-3sg
     'By five o'clock cleaning must be done (in the room).'   (*ibid.*, 55 (11a))

(d) Nem kell   ahhoz   nagy viharnak tombolnia,
     not   must that-allat great storm-dat rave-inf-3sg

     hogy a   gyerek féljen.
     that the kid   fear-subj-3sg
     'There is no need for it to blow great guns for the kid to be frightened.'

Beyond these, agreement facts in environmental constructions also present
evidence against the quasi-argument analysis. These agreement facts will
be discussed below in connection with examples (25)–(30).

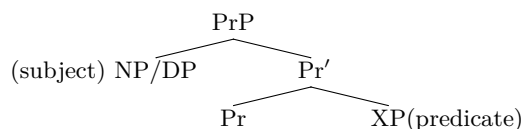### 3.3. Hazout (2004)—an expletive subject analysis

An "NP as predicate" analysis of the parallel English and Hebrew data
has been recently advanced by Hazout (2004), who claims that in ex-
istential constructions of the type *There are* [*too many problems*], the
postcopular NP is a predicate ("with respect to its thematic status as well
as its syntactic positioning and function" p. 395) in an embedded clausal
complement of *be* with an expletive *there* as its subject. (*There* is claimed
to consequently move to the higher Spec,IP position for Case-theoretic
reasons; that is, *there* is considered to be "subject to Case-theoretic re-
strictions just like any (argument) NP/DP" p. 422). This far, the proposal
is not new (cf. Williams 1994), though the details of the analysis differ
significantly in the two authors' work.

In Hazout (2004) a wider phenomenon involving the use of predi-
cates of various categories with expletive subjects (e.g., *It is cold*) is also
addressed and treated in the same fashion, the distribution of expletives
(*there* vs. *it*) being determined by lexically specified subcategorization

features: *there* may only occur as sister of Pr′[φ],[10] and in English only nouns are specified for φ-features. Therefore, only a nominal predicate can give rise to the upward propagation of φ-features to Pr′. It follows that *there* can only have an NP "associate", while expletive *it* (in Spec,PrP) is not compatible with an NP (in the complement of Pr^0).

It is an intriguing question if Hazout's account can be extended to Hungarian,[11] a *pro*-drop language that—as the above examples show—has no overt expletives in such constructions. At a first approximation Hungarian data seem to be more similar to Hazout's Hebrew examples, where a silent expletive *pro* is claimed to occur in both types of sentences (*There are problems/It is cold*). There are some major differences, though, between Hungarian and Hebrew. One is that Hebrew postcopular NPs show accusative case (when definite) and optionally agree with the verb *haya* 'be' in the non-present, while no core argument can show this pattern in Hebrew, a language with no object agreement and no accusative subjects (cf. Francez 2006, (3)).

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[10] Adopting proposals of Bowers (1993; 2002) Hazout claims that main clause predication and small clause predication are uniformly represented as in the structure below, which is headed by the functional head Pr (Hazout 2004, 404 (28)).

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                    PrP
                  /      \
 (subject) NP/DP        Pr′
                       /    \
                     Pr      XP(predicate)
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[11] It is another question if the analysis can be sustained to hold for English, taking into consideration such examples as *It's summer/4 o'clock*, where the expletive *it* appears with a postcopular NP contrary to expectations. These time-related expressions show an "unconventional" behaviour in Hungarian, too, in that the verb is optionally (cf. (i)–(ii)) or even preferentially (cf. (iii)) left unexpressed:

(i) %Ma   szombat (van)?   → Igen, és   akkor holnap   vasárnap (lesz).
    today Saturday is   yes and then   tomorrow Sunday   will.be
    'Is it Saturday today?'   'Yes, and it means that tomorrow will be Sunday.'

(ii) 5 óra   (van).
    5 o'clock is
    'It's 5 o'clock.'

(iii) Hány   óra   (van)? → Háromnegyed öt   (?van).
    how-many o'clock is   three-quarter five   is
    'What's the time?'   'It's a quarter to six.'

(14) hay**ta**   sam **et** ha-mil**a**   'boring'.
     be.pst.**f**.sg there **acc** the-word.**f**.sg boring'
     'There was the word 'boring' there.'

Second, in present tense existential sentences *yeš* (or the negative *eyn*) is used instead of the copular verb *haya*, which has no present tense form (cf. Hazout 2004). However, *yeš* is more restricted than *haya*: it can only occur with an NP.

(15) (a) yeš/eyn be'ayot
          yeš/eyn problems
          'There are/no problems.'   (Hazout 2004, 394 (i))

     (b) haya/*yeš kar
          was/*yeš*   cold
          'It was/*is cold.'   (*ibid.*, 415 (i), (ii))

Third, Hebrew does not exhibit a definiteness effect (cf. Francez 2006).

As opposed to these, Hungarian NPs in the NP + VAN constructions show no overt case marking (nominative case has no morphological marker), and obligatorily agree with the verb *van* 'be'. The same verb *van* 'be' (past *volt*) appears in both NP + VAN and in what seems to be AP + VAN patterns. Hungarian displays a definiteness effect similar to that in English (that is, it only tolerates definite nominals with VAN 'be' under a list reading).

The above differences between the two languages suggest that we should not seek an analysis for the Hungarian data along the lines of Hazout's proposal for Hebrew. Furthermore, the postulation of a silent expletive *pro* that is assumed to occupy the subject position of such Hebrew sentences (cf. Hazout 2004 and the references therein) as those illustrated in (14)–(15) is not uncontroversial from a theoretical point of view. Though on the basis of the universality of the EPP the existence of covert expletives can be argued for in the case of the above examples, the universal subject requirement has been rejected by some researchers. For instance, Tóth (2001, 69ff) convincingly shows that the universal subject requirement is very problematic for some Germanic languages, and that instead the optional status of the subject position ([Spec,IP]) is to be preferred.

Thus I will not explore Hazout's proposal; on the contrary, in the following section I will try to list properties of environmental constructions that can be best explained if we take the NPs of these constructions

to be the syntactic subjects of the verb VAN 'be'. Furthermore, I propose that what seems to be an AP + VAN pattern can also be subsumed under the NP + VAN construction.

4. Properties

Compared to English, Hungarian copular environmental constructions have some properties that make it less attractive to analyse their NP/AP as predicates. One of these is the presence of an overt copula in the construction. Lexical items such as *hideg* 'cold' or *gond* 'problem' can function as predicates on their own, predicating a property about their syntactic (DP) subject. Copula support is not needed, unless phonologically non-null inflection is to be carried.

(16) (a) A   leves hideg (*van).   (c) Ez gond   (*van).
         the soup cold   is   this problem   is
         'The soup is cold.'   'This is a problem.'

     (b) A   leves hideg volt.   (d) Ez gond   volt.
         the soup cold   was   this problem was
         'The soup was cold.'   'This was a problem.'

In spite of this property of adjectives such as *hideg* or nouns like *gond*, VAN is mandatory in copular environmental constructions:

(17) (a) Hideg *(van/volt).   (b) Gond   *(van/volt).
         cold   is/was   problem   is/was
         'It is/was cold.'   'There is/was a problem.'

This cannot be accounted for if we analyse the APs/NPs of these constructions as nominal/adjectival predicates (with a quasi-argumental subject or no subject), but it receives a natural explanation if we consider *hideg/gond* to be the syntactic subject, and if—at the same time—we distinguish the copula BE of sentences like (16) from the verbal predicate BE of environmental constructions. I use the two terms as shorthand for BE inserted under T (i.e., copula BE) and BE inserted under a verbal node (i.e., verbal predicate BE). I do not take a stand on whether the same set of features are involved in the two cases.

As argued in Kádár (2006a), the predicate in (16) is a nominal/adjectival phrase, the copula being a functional element, the spell-out of T.[12] In cases where the inflectional features are phonologically empty, the copula has no phonological realization. Thus, in predicational sentences, the AP/NP predicate can be directly combined with zero inflection (cliticization), no mediation of a copula is needed. If the inflection is non-null, copular BE is inserted under T to bear inflexion.

In (17), however, there is a BE inserted under a verbal node, which has an argument taking ability, and its designated argument must be a non-specific NP subject.

Raising contexts reinforce the difference. They show that despite surface similarity, the predicative AP and that featuring in environmental copular constructions behave differently. That is, the AP in environmental copular construction is raised as a subject (cf. (18a), (19a)), not as a predicate (cf. (18b), (19b)):

(18) (a) Hideg volt.   → [?]Hideg   látszott lenni.[13]
          cold   was   cold-nom seemed be-inf
          'It was cold.' —quasi-argument *it*   'It seemed to be cold.'

     (b) *pro* Hideg volt.   → *pro* Hidegnek látszott.
          pro cold   was   *pro* cold-dat   seemed
          'It was cold.'—referential *it*   'That thing seemed to be cold.'

(19) (a) Úgy látszott, hogy jégeső   esik.   → Jégeső   látszott esni.
          so   seemed   that hail-nom falls   hail-nom seemed fall-inf
          'It seemed that there was a hailstorm.'   'There seemed to be a hailstorm.'

     (b) Úgy látszott, hogy Péter okos.   → Péter okosnak   látszott.
          so   seemed   that Peter smart   Peter smart-dat seemed
          'It seemed that Peter is smart.'   'Peter seemed to be smart.'

---

[12] Among others things, this is backed up by predicate fronting tests (cf. Ürögdi 2006) that show the different distribution of verbal and copular BE in the fronted phrase, namely, copular BE is not present in these fronted phrases—which leads to the conclusion that it must be inserted higher than the predicate phrase that is fronted.

[13] (18a) is slightly marginal, which fact might be due to semantic constraints: as *látszik* means both 'seems' and 'can be seen', the construction is more felicitous with visible states of affairs, and being cold is not directly visible.

Another argument against treating the AP/NP of copular environmental constructions on a par with predicative APs/NPs is that the former can be antecedent of *pro* (20a), unlike the latter (20b):

(20) (a) %Elég   meleg_i van ahhoz,   hogy *pro_i* erdőtüzeket   okozzon.
         enough hot   is   that.allat that *pro* forest.fire-pl-acc cause-subj-3sg
         'It's hot enough to cause forest fires.'

     (b) A   leves_i elég   meleg ahhoz,   hogy *pro_i* égési sérüléseket   okozzon.
         the soup enough hot   that.allat that *pro* burn injury-pl-acc cause-subj-3sg
         'The soup is hot enough to cause burns.'

In (20a) *meleg* 'hot' is part of an environmental construction, while in (20b) it is a predicate nominal. The *pro* subject of the subordinate clause can take the adjectival as its antecedent only in (20a), although the coreferential reading is not readily available for some speakers (as marked by the symbol %). However, the contrast between (20a) and (21) below is sharp. The unacceptability of (21) also suggests that the coreference relation is not due to some pragmatic process of inference, like in the case of "outbound anaphora" (cf. (22)):

(21)*Eléggé villámlik ahhoz,   hogy *pro* erdőtüzeket   okozzon.
     enough flashes   that.allat that *pro* forest.fire-pl-acc cause-subj-3sg
     'It's lightning hard enough to cause forest fires.'

(22) John bled so much it [= the blood emitted during his bleeding] soaked through
     his bandage and stained his shirt.   (McNally 1998, 384 (49a))

However, it cannot be excluded that coreference in (20a)—for those who accept it—works as shown in (23):

(23) Elég   meleg van ahhoz,   hogy ez   [= az, hogy meleg van]
     enough hot   is   that.allat that this   that that hot   is
     erdőtüzeket   okozzon.
     forest.fire-pl-acc cause-subj-3sg
     'It's hot enough (for it being hot) to cause forest fires.'

It seems though that for such an interpretation to be available, the overt demonstrative pronoun 'this/that' (which refers to a proposition) is mandatory, cf. (24).

(24) *pro* Elég   jól   dolgoznak ahhoz,   hogy *(ez) eredményeket hozzon.
      pro enough well work-3pl that.allat that   this result-pl-acc bring-subj-3sg
      'They work well enough for this to bring results.'

Therefore, the contrast shown by (20a) and (20b) proves to be relevant.

Agreement facts are again relevant. In sentences with a nominal/ adjectival predicate, subject–predicate agreement is reflected both on the predicate nominal/adjectival and on the copula (if there is one). Recall that in the case of present tense and a third person subject there is no copula, and the AP/NP behaves as a (primary) predicate on its own.

(25) (a) A   reggelek   hidegek.   (c) Ezek valós gondok.
          the morning-pl cold-pl   these real   problem-pl
          'The mornings are cold.'   'These are real problems.'

     (b) A   reggelek   hidegek voltak.   (d) Ezek valós gondok   lesznek.
          the morning-pl cold-pl be-past-3pl   these real   problem-pl will.be-3pl
          'The mornings were cold.'   'These will be real problems.'

Plural agreement obtains in environmental constructions, too, if the NP is plural:

(26) Gondok   vannak.
     problems be-3pl
     'There are problems.'

In certain cases, plural agreement is possible even with adjectives. In such cases these behave like nouns as is shown by their modifiability with adjectives:[14]

(27) (a) Nagy melegek vannak mostanában.
          great hot-pl   be-3pl nowadays
          'It has been extremely hot lately.'

     (b) *Nagyon melegek vannak mostanában.
          very   hot-pl   be-3pl nowadays

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[14] With the singular form of *meleg* both adjectival and adverbial modification is available, as in (i), see also (42a):

(i) Nagy / nagyon meleg van.
     great   very   hot   is

If we analysed copular environmental constructions on a par with weather verbs, we would have to posit a quasi-argument subject that requires plural agreement marking on the predicate. But basically the null hypothesis is that a quasi-argument (which is a placeholder for such concepts as weather, time, world etc.) has 3sg features. If, however, we take the NPs *gondok* 'problem-pl' or *melegek* 'hot-pl' to be the subject in (26)–(27), the agreement facts follow, cf. (28).

(28) Kísértetek járnak   (itt).
      ghost-pl   walk-3pl here
      'This place is haunted.'

We have seen above (cf. (18), (19)) that in raising contexts the nominal/ adjectival part of environmental copular constructions and nominal/adjectival predicates surface differently. This difference in their behaviour extends to agreement facts: as opposed to the agreement pattern presented in (26) and (27), in the case of secondary predicates (i.e., predicates that are not directly dominated by Tense), agreement with the subject is optional (cf. (29a–e) with (30)).

(29) (a) A fiúkat okos(ak)nak   tartom.
           the boys   clever(-pl)-dat consider-1sg
           'I consider the boys clever.'

      (b) A tüntetők   agresszív(ek)nek tűnnek.
           the demonstrators agressive(-pl)-dat seem-3pl
           'The demonstrators seem to be agressive.'

      (c) A fiúk orvos(ˀok)nak   készülnek.
           the boys doctor(ˀ-pl)-dat prepare-3pl
           'The boys plan to become doctors.'

      (d) A tűzoltókat rendőrˀ(ök)nek   néztem.
           the fire-fighters policemenˀ(-pl)-dat saw-1sg
           'I took the fire-fighters for policemen.'

      (e) A boszorkányok szamárrá/szamarakká változtak.
           the witches   donkey(-pl)-transl   transformed-3pl
           'The witches turned into donkeys.'

(30) A cégnél   gond*(ok) látszottak   lenni.
      the firm-adess problem-pl seem-past-3pl be-inf
      'It seemed that there were problems at the firm.'

Finally, contrastive topicalization is a widely used test taken to be cru-
cial in telling predicates and arguments apart. However, the test does
not work in the way presupposed by Komlósy (1994) or Viszket (2002;
2003). They both claim that the APs/NPs of environmental copular ex-
pressions pattern with predicate nominals and adjectives rather than
with complement and adjunct phrases in that they can be topicalized
by left-dislocating a copy of a predicate nominal or adjective supplied
with dative case ending (cf. (32)). In fact, this kind of topicalization is
possible for all predicative items of the sentence,[15] irrespective of their
syntactic status. Thus, from the availability of (32), for instance, it does
not follow that *nyár* 'summer' cannot be considered a syntactic subject.
On a par with nominal/adjectival predicates (cf. (31)), unquestionable
subjects (cf. (34)) or even objects, adjectival modifiers, etc. can be top-
icalized in this manner (cf. (33a–b)) under the condition that they are
bare nouns/adjectives—see Ürögdi (2006).

(31) Boldognak boldog volt Kati, de nem sokáig.
      happy-dat happy was Kate but not long
      'As for being happy, Kate has been happy, but not for long.'

(32) [És mondd, ott nyár van?]
      Nyárnak   nyár   van, (de egész nap esik az eső).
      summer-dat summer is   but whole day falls the rain
      '[And tell me, is it summer there?] As for summer, it's summer, (but it's raining
      all the day long).'

(33) (a) Versnek   verset   írt,   (de nem volt benne egy rím   sem).
           poem-dat poem-acc wrote but not was it.iness one rhyme neither
           'As for being a poem, it was a poem that he wrote, but there was no rhyme
           in it.'

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[15] By 'predicative item' I mean (a) all secondary predicates—i.e., all elements that
start from a predicative position in the derivation; that are not directly dominated
by Tense; and that predicate of an argument of the main predicate (usually its
subject or object), and (b) all those bare nouns/adjectives that predicate about
the incorporated internal argument of the verb. For instance, the sentence *Péter
verset ír* 'Peter writes a poem' can be interpreted as: 'Peter writes something,
and what he writes is a poem'. Secondary predicates differ from these in that
they predicate of an independently construed argument of the verb.

(b) Szépnek   szép   lányt   vett el, (de szegény nem nagyon okos).
    beautiful-dat beautiful girl-acc took VM but poor   not   very   smart
    'As for beauty, he married a beautiful girl, but poor her, she is not very
    smart.'

(34) [Hát nem csak víz ment a szemébe?]

Víznek   víz   ment a   szemébe,   (de klóros   víz).
water-dat water went the eye-poss.3sg-illat but chlorinated water
'[Now, wasn't it just water that went into his eyes?] As for being water, it was
(just) water, (but chlorinated water).'

On the other hand, it is not an argument for the subject-like behaviour
of the NPs in environmental copular constructions that (as in (37)) they
can be contrastively topicalized just like arguments and adjuncts (cf. (35)
and (36), both with a topicalized subject (DP/NP)) accompanied by a
"resumptive pronoun". This kind of topicalization is fine with nominal/
adjectival predicates, too, and we certainly do not want to say that in
(38) *boldog* 'happy' is/behaves like a subject of the sentence: [16]

(35) Kati, az   beteg volt.
     Kate that sick   was
     'As for Kate, she was sick.'

(36) [Nem lehet, hogy víz ment a szemébe?]

Víz, az   ment a   szemébe,   (de nem attól   ijedt   meg).
water that went the eye-poss.3sg-illat but not that.abl frightened VM
'[Isn't it possible that it was water that went in his eyes?] As for water, it certainly
went in his eyes, (but this wasn't the reason for him getting frightened).'

(37) [Finnországban van nyár?]

Nyár,   az   van Finnországban is, (csak nem sokáig tart).
summer that is   Finland-iness too just not long   lasts
'[Is there any summer in Finland?] As for summer, there is summer in Finland,
too, (but it doesn't last long).'

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[16] The reason for the grammaticality of both (35) and (37)/(38) could be that the
az-type "resumptive pronoun" can have a predicative use (cf. (i)) as well as a
referential use.

(i) A: Boldog vagy?   — B: Az.
        happy be-2sg   that
        'Are you happy?'   'I am.'

(38) Boldog, az   volt Kati, valóban, (de   nem sokáig).
     happy   that was Kate indeed   but not   long
     'Happy, that Kate has been, indeed, (but not for long).'

Thus if there is a bare noun/adjective (which is always predicative to a certain degree), both ways of contrastive topicalization (with a "resumptive pronoun" and by copying) are possible in principle. If so, contrastive topicalization tests are not conclusive in determining the syntactic status of the NPs/APs in copular environmental constructions as both these and nominal/adjectival predicates allow both kinds of topicalization, albeit with different interpretations[17] (compare (32), (37) and (31), (38)).

So far we have seen that the NPs/APs in copular environmental constructions behave differently from nominal/adjectival predicates of predicative sentences with regard to (i) the presence/absence of an overt copula in present tense, (ii) raising, (iii) coreferentiality and (iv) agreement, but they pattern alike when it comes to contrastive topicalization. This similarity, however, extends to all types of predicative elements as defined in fn. 15. Accordingly, the bare nouns/adjectives of environmental copular constructions are expected to behave predicatively in this sense.

However, there is nothing in the properties of environmental copular constructions reviewed in this section (see also (13b, d)) that would argue against treating the NPs/APs of these constructions as syntactic subjects, except for the fact that adjectives generally do not function as subjects. So for the subject analysis to go through, we have to either assume that these adjectives have undergone an Adj → N conversion, or consider them elliptical structures with the adjective being the modifier of an empty (generic/abstract) N head.

Whichever assumption will prove to hold, it will also have to account for (39). In (39a) the subject slot of an intransitive verb is filled by *hideg* 'cold'/*büdös* 'stinky', while in (39b) the object slot of a transitive verb accommodates *hideg* 'cold', which also bears an accusative case marker.

(39) (a) Olyan hideg/büdös jön   valahonnan,   nem érzed?
          so   cold/stinky   comes from.somewhere not   feel-2sg
          'Such cold/stench is coming from somewhere, don't you feel it?'

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[17] The intuition behind the separation of the two types of contrastive topics is that when a resumptive pronoun is used the noun/adjective is not property denoting but is the name of a property.

(b) Jövő hétre   hideget jósolnak.
    next week-subl cold-acc forecast-3pl
    'Cold weather is forecast for next week.'

As Komlósy (1994) notes, assuming an Adj→N conversion is problematic because—at least in one of their uses—these items normally preserve adjective morphology, they remain gradable (cf. (40)), and they can generally be modified by adverbs, as opposed to nouns modifiable by adjectives (cf. (41a–b)). Some lexical items, however, show a mixed behaviour in this respect (cf. (42a–c)).

(40) Ma   melegebb van, mint tegnap.
     today warm-er is   than yesterday
     'It's warmer today than it was yesterday.'

(41) (a) Nagyon sötét van.   (b) Nagy sötét*(ség) van.
          very   dark is   great dark*(ness) is
          'It's very dark.'   'There is great darkness.'

(42) (a) Nagyon meleg van.   (b) Manapság nagy meleg-ek vannak.
          very   warm is   nowadays great warm-pl are
          'It's very warm.'   'It has been very warm lately.'

     (c) ?Itt   nagyobb meleg van.
          here great-er warm is
          'It's warmer in here.'

Gradability (as in (40)) is not in itself a strong argument in favour of treating the affixed element as an adjective. If Adj→N conversion is possible in the case of environmental copular constructions (and not only in them), the conversion of positive adjectives and comparative adjectives has to be equally possible.[18]

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[18] It is customary in the current literature that comparative degree is taken to represent a functional category (Deg) in the extended projection of the adjective, and therefore comparative adjectives are assumed to have a structure including a DegP. In this context it is reasonable to think that a comparative adjective (which is then a phrasal functional projection) is ineligible for conversion. For Hungarian, however, we can follow the literature in considering the bound morpheme of the comparative to be a derivational morpheme (that does not change the category of the input lexical item); therefore, conversion of a comparative adjective should be possible.

Modifiability does not seem to be a strong argument against Adj → N conversion, either, for two reasons. First, the adverb in (41a) and (42a) can, in principle, modify either the verb phrase or the adjective; however, (43) suggests that it is more plausible to take it to be adjoined to the verb phrase (PredP, see below).

(43) Meleg van nagyon.
       warm is   very
       'It's very warm.'

Second, the bare adjective in (41b) and (42b) can, in principle, function either as an adjectival modifier or an adverbial one; however, its adjectival and adverbial uses can be told apart because the latter is not gradable. Thus *nagy* 'great' is an adverbial modifier in a number of expressions like *nagy beteg*$_{\text{Adj}}$ 'very sick', *nagy motyogva*$_{\text{AdvPart}}$ 'mumbling very much', *nagy nehezen*$_{\text{Adv}}$ 'with great difficulty', *nagy sokára*$_{\text{Adv}}$ 'much later', etc., all of these having a slightly idiomatic flavour. However, *nagy* is not gradable in these expressions: **nagyobb motyogva* 'with more mumbling'. In (42c), *nagy* is gradable, hence it is an adjectival modifier.[19]

Other adjective–adverb pairs show an even clearer picture: with *kellemetlen*$_{\text{Adj}}$ 'unpleasant' – *kellemetlenül*$_{\text{Adv}}$ 'unpleasantly', for instance, we get the (non-idiomatic) constructions in (44).

The contrast between (42a) and (44c) shows that adverbs of manner are less expected to modify an environmental PredP than adverbs of degree or frequency; (44c) is fine if one can construe *kellemetlenül* 'unpleasantly' as a degree adverbial.

(44) (a) *Kellemetlenül zaj   van.   (b) Kellemetlen zaj   van.
             unpleasantly noise is   unpleasant   noise is
                                                 'There is an unpleasant noise.'

       (c) %?Kellemetlenül hideg van.   (d) Kellemetlen hideg van.
             unpleasantly cold is   unpleasant   cold is
             'It's unpleasantly cold.'   'There is an unpleasant cold.'

---

[19] The adjectival status of *nagy* in (42b) can in principle be compatible with the alternative approach according to which *meleg* is an adjective modifying an (abstract) null noun (along the lines of Panagiotidis 2003). Both analyses have the same output in that environmental copular constructions of the type AP + VAN can thus be subsumed under the NP + VAN pattern, and therefore these constructions can be considered to have a veritable syntactic subject.

The adjectival modifier is gradable both in (44b) and in (44d), which means that it is not used in an adverbial function.

(45) Itt   még   kellemetlenebb zaj/hideg van, mint nálam.
      here even.more unpleasant-er   noise/cold is   than adess-1sg
      'Here the noise is even more unpleasant than it is at my place./Here it is more unpleasantly cold than it is at my place.'

As for adjectival predicates of predicative sentences, we see that they are gradable, too (cf. (46a) with (40)), but they only allow adverbial modification (cf. (46b) with (46c)):

(46) (a) A   levesed   hidegebb, mint a   frappém.
          the soup-2sg cold-er   than the frappé-1sg
          'Your soup is colder than my frappé.'

     (b) A   leves kellemetlenül hideg.
          the soup unpleasantly cold
          'The soup is unpleasantly cold.'

     (c) *A   leves kellemetlen(ebb)/nagy(obb) hideg.
          the soup unpleasant(-er)/great(-er)   cold

The above contrast shows that what seems to be an adjective in an AP + VAN type of environmental construction only partly resembles the behaviour of adjectival predicates of predicative sentences, and at least with respect to modifiability it patterns with the nouns of NP + VAN type of environmental copular constructions.

Finally, these apparent adjectives can be used with case markers that are known to select only for nouns (in non-elliptical contexts):

(47) (a) Világosban nem tudok   aludni.
          light-iness not able-1sg sleep-inf
          'I cannot sleep in daylight.'

     (b) Félek   a   sötéttől.
          fear-1sg the dark-abl
          'I'm afraid of darkness.'

     (c) Későre   jár.
          late-subl go.3sg
          'It's getting late.'

These examples find a natural explanation under the Adj → N conversion analysis (except maybe for the highly idiomatic (47c)).

As a conclusion to this section, we can say that the NPs in copular environmental constructions behave differently from nominal/adjectival predicates of predicative sentences with regard to (i) the presence/absence of an overt copula in present tense, (ii) raising, (iii) coreferentiality and (iv) agreement. At the same time there are NPs that in many respects behave quite similarly to the NPs of environmental copular constructions (cf. (13d), (19a), (20b), (28), (34), (36)), except that a lexical verb other than BE appears with them. Still, there is no disagreement in the literature in considering them grammatical subjects. Thus we can safely assert that the NP in environmental constructions behaves like a subject. Furthermore, the above data suggest that what seems to be an AP + BE type environmental copular construction can also be subsumed under the NP + BE type.

5. Proposed analysis

I propose the following treatment of these copular environmental constructions:

Verbal BE is a "definiteness effect" verb, which means that (except for cases of list reading that I am not considering here) its sole argument cannot be contextually linked (i.e., specific). The surface subject[20] is a theme which starts in the unaccusative subject position ([Spec,VP], cf. É. Kiss 2007), and—in a neutral sentence—it ends up in a preverbal position due to a restriction on non-specific bare nominal arguments (cf. Alberti 1997). Being a bare nominal it is a predicative argument, consequently it acts as a verbal modifier (VM), that is, it lands in the canonical position of predicative elements: the specifier of a functional projection dominating the VP. Following Koster (1994); Csirmaz (2004); É. Kiss (2007)[21] and others, I will label this projection as PredP.[22] With the subject moving

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[20] I define the syntactic subject as a nominative marked NP/DP that shows agreement in person and number with the verb or other inflexion bearing predicate.

[21] This projection is called AspP in some papers, e.g., in the articles of É. Kiss (2006).

[22] The PredP proposed here (and in the literature cited) is different from the PredP of Baker (2003) or the PrP of Bowers (1993).

to Spec,PredP, and the finite verb moving to the Pred head, the verb BE, which is stress-avoiding, is exempt from bearing phrasal stress (its stressing—as mentioned before—would lead to ungrammaticality).

In the literature on Hungarian clausal word order PredP is taken to be the locus of complex predicate formation. The constituent in Spec,PredP becomes the carrier of main stress, hence the information focus of the sentence. Thus, despite the existential content of verbal BE, the resulting interpretation is not that of an existential predication (of the type (11a–b)). Instead, environmental copular constructions are perceived as the assertion of an instantiation of a property[23] named by the predicative argument; that is, asserting that the property denoted by the NP holds at a given point in time and space.

The "setting" relative to which this instantiation is asserted is provided through a pragmatic process of inference ("here and now"). However, environmental copular constructions can also be associated with adjuncts (generally locative or temporal expressions, cf. (48)) that have an "anchoring" function (and can be linked to the Kratzerian spatio-temporal argument, which provides a semantically underspecified domain restriction for the overall proposition). Only if no such adjuncts appear is the pragmatic process of inference at work.

(48) (Kanadában) (most) hideg/tél   van.
      Canada-iness now   cold/winter is
      'Now it's cold/winter in Canada.'

As mentioned before, these environmental copular constructions usually give rise to event-central thetic sentences. Since their subject is non-specific, it cannot function as a "predication base". Instead, these thetic sentences can predicate about a specific point in time and place (that can be spelt out as an expletive in languages such as English, cf. É. Kiss 1996). Sasse (1987, 535, 548) lists some strategies that languages may adopt for distinguishing thetic and categorical judgements, more precisely for getting a thetic judgement by preventing a grammatical subject from

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[23] McNally analyses *There was snow* type of existential sentences as in (i), where *there was* is taken to be synonymous with the predicate *to be instantiated*, and this predicate is taken to hold of expressions interpreted as properties (nonparticulars). It is true that the snow property is instantiated iff some particular, one that is a quantity of snow, exists. For details, see McNally (1998).

(i) **is-instantiated** $(\wedge\lambda x[\textbf{snow}(x)])$ (*op.cit.*, 354 (3a))

becoming a predication base. One of these strategies is related to word order (a great variety of basically SV languages all over the world use VS for thetic statements); another would be (different degrees of) incorporation—both of which are at work in Hungarian environmental copular constructions and weather verbs, respectively.

One last thing to mention is that not all bare NP subjects of VAN 'be' give rise to an environmental copular construction. When combined with VAN 'be', NPs that cannot have an environmental interpretation seem to obligatorily ask for a locative (cf. (49a–b)), or other "anchoring" adverbial, a case-marked DP or PP (cf. (50a–b)).

(49) (a)   [_{VM} Kés] van *(a   kezében).
           knife is   the hand-poss.3sg-iness
     'There is a knife *(in his hand).'

     (b)   [_{VM} Szomorúság] van *(a   szívekben).
            sadness   is   the heart-pl-iness
     'There is grief *(in people's hearts).'

(50) (a)   [_{VM} Fegyver] van *(nála).
           weapon is   he.adess
     'He has a weapon (on him).'

     (b)   [_{VM} Sajt]   van *(vacsorára).
           cheese is   dinner-subl
     'There is cheese for dinner.'

I am inclined to think that there is no syntactic difference between type (48) and type (49a–b)–(50a–b), in that VAN 'be' here also has a single theme argument that becomes the surface subject and raises to the specifier of PredP hosting the verb in its head. The difference seems to be related to the information structure of the sentence, as well as to the pragmatic notions of informativity and cooperation (on obligatory adjuncts licensing definiteness effect constructions, see Peredy 2009).

On the basis of the above it can be concluded that the dual behaviour of the NPs of environmental copular constructions comes from their predicative content combined with their status as syntactic subjects. These NPs may well be regarded as predicates in a semantic (but not syntactic/structural) sense. Syntactically they start from an unaccusative subject position, and as a result of the ban on bare nouns in postverbal position, they form a "complex predicate" with the verb by moving into the specifier of a functional projection dominating the VP, called

PredP. Thus they also satisfy a PF-condition by forming a phonological word with the verb VAN that is "stress-avoiding", i.e., that cannot appear on the left edge of the PredP where the main stress falls in Hungarian. By occupying Spec,PredP, these NPs become the information focus of the sentence. These grammatical subjects are not suitable for the topic role, but the sentences containing an environmental copular construction can actually be formulated as predication structures with, for instance, a locative topic.

6. Summary

In this paper I examined the behaviour of copular environmental constructions, and concluded that they cannot be treated on a par with weather verbs. While the latter may have a quasi-argumental subject, treating the former along the same lines would also mean to analyse the NP/AP featuring in these constructions as a predicate nominal/adjective. A parallel analysis of predicative nominal sentences, environmental copular constructions and sentences with undisputable NP-subjects has shown that environmental constructions pattern with the latter. Still, for the subject analysis to go through, we had to show that what appeared to be an AP + VAN type of environmental copular construction can also be subsumed under the NP + VAN type. Along these lines an Adj → N conversion analysis was proposed, and an alternative analysis with the APs being modifiers of abstract null nouns was mentioned.

Tests circulated in the literature relevant for the present inquiry were submitted to a closer scrutiny. The results led us to the conclusion that the dual behaviour of the nominal part of environmental copular constructions comes from predicative content combined with their status as syntactic subjects. VAN was taken to be inserted under a verbal node, having a theme argument that surfaces as a subject and occupies the specifier of a PredP projection that dominates the VP, and hosts the finite verb in its head. PredP is taken to be the locus of semantic complex predicate formation. In a Hungarian neutral sentence the constituent in Spec,PredP receives the main sentence stress and becomes the information focus. Thus, what arises as an interpretation of these environmental copular constructions is not an existential predication (in spite of the existential content of the verb), but an assertion of the instantiation of the property denoted by the NP (along the lines of McNally 1998). If these

constructions are predications, they cannot be taken to predicate about their subjects but about some kind of a "spatio-temporal argument".

The dissimilar results of the tests proposed by Komlósy (1994) and Tóth (2001) show that the nominal featuring in environmental constructions has two faces: syntactically it is a subject, semantically though, it is a predicative element (a verbal modifier).

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