In defense of a COMP-less approach to Hungarian finite clauses

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Abstract

In this paper, I defend Szűcs's (2018) approach to Hungarian finite complement clauses. I argue that the grammatical function COMP is not necessary, and the criticism voiced by Laczkó (2021) can be satisfactorily addressed by considering general principles regarding coordination and the argument-structure of certain verbal and nominal predicates. Laczkó (2021) presents some evidence that seem to support COMP, but I rather propose treating them as (thematic) ADJUNCTs and in the case of simple event nouns, as instances of POSS. Supporting data chiefly cited from Hungarian but theoretical and cross-linguistic considerations are also added. I also discuss some related issues, such as some unresolved issues with regards to adverbials, and the nature of demonstrative pronouns involved in clausal complements. I conclude with some meta-theoretical remarks advocating a generally restrictive view of LFG's inventory of grammatical functions.

1   Introduction

In their seminal paper, Dalrymple & Lødrup (2000) argue that finite complement clauses, in addition to being analyzed as having the traditional COMP grammatical function, may alternatively be treated as objects in "mixed-languages". In this view, the *that*-clause in (1a), subcategorized by the verb *hope,* functions as a COMP, while the one in (1b), subcategorized by *believe*, is an OBJ.[†]

(1) a. *I hope [that the Earth is round].* (subordinate clause is COMP)

    b. *I believe [that the Earth is round].* (subordinate clause is OBJ)

The fact that the complement clause in (1a) cannot be replaced with a nominal or pronominal element while the one in (2b) can, provides empirical support for this position, as such elements are uncontroversially OBJs. The *that*-clause of *believe* can also be coordinated with such an element, suggesting that they are functionally parallel, as attested by examples (3) and (4).

(2) a. *I hope {the claim / it / that}.*   b. *I believe {the claim / it / that}.*

(3) *I believe the claim and that accepting it would benefit everyone.*

(4) *Pat remembered [the appointment] and [that it was important to be on time].*
    (Sag et al. 1985:165)

At the same time, there has been a "reductionist"/ "restrictive" line of research as well, starting with Alsina et al. (1996). Researchers in this paradigm argue that the COMP function should not be supplemented but *be replaced* by other grammatical functions. In other words, all clauses should be seen as instances OBJs, OBL$_\theta$s or OBJ$_\theta$s. For example, Alsina et al. (2005) argue that complement clauses in Catalan can instantiate the OBL$_\theta$ function: the canonical PP-based realization in (5a) alternates with the CP in (5b), demonstrating the same point for OBL$_\theta$ that (1b) and (2b) proves for OBJ. Note the

PP alternative for (1a) and (2a) as well, in (6). Alsina et al. (2005) support this view with arguments based on data related to subcategorization alternatives, cliticization, and passivization, and they offer an account where LFG is complemented by Optimality Theory-based considerations.

(5) a. *M'heu   de convèncer de les   seves   possibilitats.*
        me have.2PL   to convince   of the   3SG.POSS   possibilities
        'You have to convince me of his possibilities.'
    b. *M'heu   de convèncer que torni   a   casa.*
        me have.2PL to *convince*   that   return.1SG   to   home
        'You have to convince me to return home.'

(6) *I hope for it.*

The "COMP-debate" is still ongoing in LFG. Forst (2006), Patejuk & Przepiórkowski (2014, 2016), and Szűcs (2018) argue that facts from German, Polish and Hungarian (respectively) support the restrictive perspective, while Belyaev et al. (2017) and Laczkó (2021) argue, based on Moksha Mordvin and Hungarian (respectively), that for certain complements, an OBJ/OBL$_\theta$/OBJ$_\theta$-based analysis is inadequate – therefore, COMP must be retained in LFG's inventory of grammatical functions.[1]

As seen from the papers mentioned in the previous paragraph, Hungarian features prominently in this discussion. This paper aims to contribute to the dialogue from a restrictive perspective. In particular, I argue that the position on finite complement clauses advocated by Szűcs (2018) can be defended against the criticism raised by Laczkó (2021). In other words, the analysis of Hungarian *that*-clauses does not require the COMP grammatical function.

Before delving into the main points of the paper, I offer two preliminary comments. First, I acknowledge that my conclusions do not mean that the COMP grammatical function is universally to be discarded, but the arguments I present may be applicable to other data that pose challenges for the reductionist view, thus contributing meaningfully to the discussion. Additionally, while the primary focus will be on Hungarian, we will keep the cross-linguistic picture in mind, both from theoretical and empirical perspectives. While I would prefer LFG to be a theory without the COMP function (I will also make some meta-theoretical points on this in my conclusion), I recognize that the debate is still going to be open after this paper. In fact, in section 5, I will even make some concessions about certain complement clauses (not the ones presented in Laczkó 2021), the proper analysis of which remain not very straightforward under a COMP-less approach.

Second, while the COMP-debate may (and should) be extended to the open function XCOMP, I am going to stay within the realm of finite complementation. Szűcs (2018) presents some points about the elimination of XCOMP in Hungarian, see also Falk (2005) for a broader view from the perspective of Lexical Mapping Theory. This part of the debate also involves theorizing about the nature of open functions and the mechanism of functional and anaphoric control, which would fall outside the scope of the present article.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In section 2, I outline the basic picture regarding Hungarian finite complement clauses. First, we approach this from the

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[1] Bodomo & Lee (2001) may also be mentioned, who argue that the analysis of Cantonese necessitates COMP too. However, they only consider OBJ as an alternative to COMP.

COMP-less proposal of Szűcs (2018), followed by a presentation of Laczkó's (2021) criticism. In sections 3 and 4, I defend the COMP-less approach by showing that the points made by Laczkó (2021) can be refuted. Section 3 focuses on complements of verbs and section 4 addresses complements of nouns (e.g. *the fact that…*). The nominal domain is generally not explored by the literature on COMP[2], so the perspectives presented there are novel for the discussion. In both section 3 and 4 I will show that the seemingly problematic data can be handled with reference to general principles, ADJUNCTs and the POSS function (the latter in the case of nouns). Section 5 discusses some additional perspectives related to the topic of this paper. One such issue is the question of clauses associated with adverbial elements. This part is motivated by the Moksha Mordvin data presented by Belyaev et al. (2017), which also has parallels in Hungarian. I will remain undecided about the proper analysis there. A recurring theme throughout the paper will be the presence of demonstrative pronouns in various clausal constructions, which I will also discuss. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2   Finite complement clauses in Hungarian

2.1   Szűcs (2018)

According to Szűcs (2018: 328), Hungarian complement clauses may function as a SUBJ (7), OBJ (8) or OBL$_\theta$ (9) argument of the relevant predicates. These grammatical functions may be realized either by a lexical noun (7b, 8b, 9b), a demonstrative pronoun plus finite clause complex (7c, 8c, 9c), or a finite clause by itself (7d, 8d, 9d). An infinitival clause is also an option, as in (7e), (8e) and (9e), but as I noted in the introduction, these are not considered further here. The relevant parts of the examples in (7)-(9) are set in boldface.[3]

(7) a. *derogál* '<(**SUBJ**)(OBL$_\theta$)> feels derogatory to somebody'

     b. ***A   vereség   derogál   Kati-nak.***
         the   defeat   feels.derogatory   Kate-DAT
         'The defeat feels derogatory to Kate.'

     c. ***Az   derogál   Kati-nak,   hogy   vereség-et   szenvedett.***
         that   feels.derogatory   Kate-DAT   that(c)   defeat-ACC   suffered.
         'It feels derogatory to Kate that she was defeated.'

     d. *Derogál   Kati-nak,   **hogy   vereség-et   szenvedett***.
         feels.derogatory   Kate.DAT   that(c)   defeat-ACC   suffered.
         'That she was defeated felt derogatory to Kate.'

     e. *Derogál   Kati-nak   **vereség-et   szenved-ni***.
         feels.derogatory   Kate-DAT   defeat-ACC   suffer-INF
         'To be defeated feels derogatory to Kate.'

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[2] Note however that Lødrup (2012) argues (with some reluctance) that some NPs can be COMPs. This is different from the present issue, which is about the functional status of CP-complements of nouns, not the possible part-of-speech categories of COMPs.
[3] The gloss "that(c)" stands for "complementizer *that*". This is to avoid confusion with the demonstrative in such sentences (or the grammatical function COMP). Nominative case and present tense have no morphological exponent and are therefore not indicated in the gloss.

(8) a. *akar* '<(SUBJ)(**OBJ**)> want'

b. *Kati **étel-t**   akar.*
Kate food-ACC   wants.INDEF
'Kate wants food.'

c. *Kati **az-t**   akarja,   **hogy   együnk**.*
Kate that-ACC   wants.DEF   that(c)   eat.1PL.SBJV
'Kate wants (it) that we eat.'

d. *Kati   akarja,   **hogy   együnk**.*
Kate   wants.DEF   that(c)   eat.1PL.SBJV
'Kate wants that we eat.'

e. *Kati **en-ni**   akar.*
Kate eat-INF   wants.INDEF
'Kate wants to eat.'

(9) a. *fél* '<(SUBJ)(**OBL$_\theta$**)> fear'

b. *Kati   fél   **a   kutyák-tól**.*
Kate fears the   dogs-ABL
'Kate fears dogs.'

c. *Kati **at-tól**   fél,   **hogy   a   kutya   megharapja**.*
Kate that-ABL fears that(c)   the   dog   bites.DEF
'Kate fears that the dog may bite her.'

d. *Kati   fél,   **hogy   a   kutya   megharapja**.*
Kate   fears that(c)   the   dog   bites.DEF
'Kate fears that the dog may bite her

e. *Kati   fél   **kutyá-t   tarta-ni**.*
Kate   fears dog-ACC keep-INF
'Kate fears keeping a dog.'

Szűcs (2018) further supports this view with coordination-data paralleling earlier examples. One illustration is shown in (10).

(10) *Kati   fél   a   kutyák-tól   és   hogy   azok   megharapják.*
Kate   fears the   dogs-ABL   and   that(c)   those   bite.3PL
'Kate fears dogs and that they might bite her.'

2.2 Criticism by Laczkó (2021)

Laczkó (2021) challenges the picture outlined in Section 2.1 from three perspectives:

(11) Criticism by Laczkó (2021)
   i. Challenging the validity of the coordination-data of the sort presented in (10).
   ii. Arguing that a certain class of Hungarian verbs subcategorize exclusively for finite clauses – with no possible alternative realizations, he deems the COMP function as the appropriate analytical solution.
   iii. Involving the nominal domain in the discussion, which in his view necessitates the COMP.

2.2.1 The verbal domain

Regarding (11i), Laczkó (2021) claims that examples like (10) are problematic, as the two conjuncts are not completely independent due to the anaphoric relationship between the oblique-marked nominal in the first clause and the demonstrative subject of the second clause (*kutyák* 'dogs' – *azok* 'those'). In his view, the absence of such a dependency would result in significantly degraded grammaticality, as shown in (12a). Swapping the conjuncts would worsen the situation further, as seen in (12b).

(12) a. *??Kati fél a macskák-tól és hogy a kutyák megharapják.*
　　　　Kate fears the cats-ABL and that(c) the dogs bite.3PL.DEF
　　　　'Kate fears cats and that dogs may bite her.'

　　 b. *???Kati fél hogy {azok / a kutyák} megharapják és a*
　　　　Kate fears that(c) those the dogs bite.3PL.DEF and the
　　　　macskák-tól.
　　　　 cats-ABL
　　　　'Kate fears that {those / the dogs} may bite her and cats.'

For (11ii), Laczkó (2021) points out that there are certain verbs that do not exhibit the alternation shown in (7)-(9). In (12a) *jelez* 'signal' occurs transitively like *akar* 'want' in (8), indicated by the definite conjugation in these examples.[4] Notably, this verb can also appear intransitively, as in (13b), shown by the conjugation (13a) and (13b) according to Laczkó (2021) are semantically equivalent but functionally different, (13b) involving a COMP-clause. *Int* 'wave' in (14) exclusively occurs in the intransitive frame, motivating the same analysis for him.

(13) a. *Kati jelez-te (az-t), hogy induljunk.*
　　　　Kate signalled.3SG.DEF that-ACC that(c) leave.SBJV.1PL

　　 b. *Kati jelz-ett, hogy induljunk.*
　　　　Kate signalled.3SG.INDEF that(c) leave.SBJV.1PL
　　　　Both: 'Kate signalled that we should leave.'

(14) *Kati int-ett(*-e), hogy induljunk.*
　　　Kate wave-PAST.3SG.INDEF(*DEF)that(c) leave.SBJV.1PL
　　　'Kate waved (her hand) that we should leave.'

In section 3, I will argue that while the first issue raises a valid concern, the delicacy of coordination data does not undermine Szűcs's (2018) basic argument. Furthermore, the seemingly problematic intransitive examples in (13)-(14) require the ADJUNCT function in their analysis, not the COMP.

2.2.2 The nominal domain

As stated in (11iii), Laczkó (2021) extends the discussion to the nominal domain. He argues, referencing Dalrymple & Lødrup (2000), that since nouns are intransitive

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[4] Finite clauses (as opposed to infinitival ones) count as definite. Alternatively, the definite conjugation is triggered by a pro-dropped demonstrative (as argued by Laczkó 2022). We will briefly return to the issue of demonstratives in section 5.

categories, the *that*-clause associates of nouns like *jelzés* 'signal/sign', *gondolat* 'thought', or *kérdés* 'question' must be COMPs.

(15) *Kati   jelz-és-e,*   *hogy*   *induljunk*
  Kate   signal-DEV-POSS.3SG   that(c)   leave.SBJV.1PL
  'Kate's signal that we should leave'

(16) *a*   *gondolat,*   *hogy*   *indulunk*
  the   thought   that(c)   leave.1PL
  'the thought that we leave'

(17) *a*   *kérdés,*   *hogy*   *ki*   *induljon*
  the   question   that(c)   who   leave.SBJV.3SG
  'the question of who should leave'

For these, I will argue – following the well-established tradition in the literature – that CP-associates of such simple event nouns are not arguments but adjuncts. Nevertheless, there exists the group of nouns that does take CP arguments – these are certain relational nouns. Crucially, the CPs here are not COMPs either, but should be analyzed as having the POSS grammatical function.

3 Addressing the problematic issues in the verbal domain

Both Szűcs (2018) and Laczkó (2021) acknowledge that coordination is a complex issue and nuance is expected. However, the fact that some examples are degraded should not lead us to abandon the diagnostic as an argument or discard the hypothesis. This is akin to the well-known problem with constituency tests: sometimes they fail to yield the expected results for independent reasons, but this alone is not enough to deny their general value or to reject the idea that a given string of elements form a constituent – the failure to extract from a DP and stranding the definite article does not mean that *big dogs* is not an NP constituent in **big dogs, I like the*. My point is that once we accept that some coordinations with respect to the relevant data are acceptable, this acceptance may serve a valid basis for determining the grammatical-functional status of the data at hand. Of course, explaining the complicating factors is a necessary addition to the account. I do not claim to have all the answers here but I can point to some factors.

In fact, Dalrymple & Lødrup (2000) already acknowledged that arguments from coordination are vulnerable because of "a number of poorly-understood grammatical and extragrammatical factors influence the acceptability of coordination". Nevertheless, they "do not believe that the unacceptability of example (18) (ex. 8 in the original publication) constitutes clear evidence against our analysis". I concur with this view. They further illustrate the point with (19a) and (19b), which are syntactically very similar but differ in acceptability. (19c), with reversed conjuncts, is even more degraded.

(18) **He proposed [a 20% reduction for the elderly] and [that the office be moved to the suburbs].*

(19) a. *Pat is a Republican and proud of it.*   b. *??Pat is a Republican and stupid.*

 c. *???Pat is proud of it and a Republican.*

Note how (19a) involves an anaphoric dependency (*be a republican – it*), unlike (19b). This is reminiscent of what we saw with (12a). My earlier example in (3) (*I believe the claim and that accepting it would benefit everyone*) demonstrates the same phenomenon. Note also the conceptual link in Sag et al.'s (1985) example in (4) (*appointment – be on time*). Clearly, having some sort of a semantic/conceptual coherence between the conjuncts is a positive force, especially if c-structural coherence (i.e. categorial identity) is lacking. An anaphoric dependency is one way to provide this coherence. That the anaphoric dependency has a preference to be in a particular order as in (19a) versus (19c) is not at all surprising: it is simply infelicitous in discourse organization to introduce a pronoun when its reference is unknown to the conversational partner.[5]

Thus, unlike Laczkó (2021), I do not believe that the relevant examples in (12) (and accordingly, in (18) and (19)) are ungrammatical; they are simply infelicitous for pragmatic or processing reasons. However, this is an issue independent of their f-structural status. Such distinctions are particularly important in a framework like LFG, where the separation of analytical levels and the use of a parallel architecture is a key feature.

It is well-known in the pertinent literature that, beyond c- or f-structural considerations, various other factors influence the acceptability of coordinate structures. For instance, Schachter (1977) notes the degraded status of the following examples, suggesting that "semantic function" (in the broad sense) plays a role in regulating acceptability in coordination, even when the syntactic statuses of the conjuncts are identical. The aforementioned pragmatic or processing considerations may well fall into the same category.[6]

(20) a. **What are you doing and shut the door.*

 b. **John ate with his mother and with good appetite.*

 c. **John probably and unwillingly went to bed.*

Apart from the general considerations about coherence mentioned earlier, one could also consider the following with regards to the problematic examples in (12). The fact that the issue shows gradiency already suggests that we are dealing with acceptability in the broad sense, and not grammaticality in the narrow sense. Furthermore, it is not surprising that in coordinations, the clausal element tends to appear as the second conjunct, given well-known syntactic and stylistic constraints on clause positioning. For example, Stowell (1981) notes that *that*-clauses extrapose to the right, as in (21), where the adjunct intervenes between the main predicate and its clausal argument. Note the contrast with (22) – such sentences are routinely used to illustrate the argument-adjunct distinction and to show the closer syntactic and semantic connection of arguments to predicates (compared to adjuncts). Clauses show a behavior that is clearly distinct from nominal arguments.

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[5] Note: *I like John$_i$ and invited him$_i$* vs. *#I like him$_i$ and invited John$_i$*.
[6] Perhaps instead of the stars that Schacter (1977) rates these sentences with, one should rather use ?s or #s, but that is an issue orthogonal to the point made.

(21) *Mary said (quietly) that she wanted to drive (*quietly).* (Stowell 1981: 161)

(22) a. *Mary ate the cookie quietly.*   b. **Mary ate quietly the cookie.*

Even when the intervening element is not an adjunct but a pronoun that can be analyzed as argumental, the associated clause still needs to be right-peripheral. This happens in the following example, which Alsina & Yang (2019: 19) explains by invoking a linear precedence rule "a clausal phrase must follow a sister GF", to model the extraposition.

(23) a. *I resent it that you didn't call me.*   b. **I resent that you didn't call me it.*

This is certainly a factor that makes (12b) more marked than (12a), which are repeated here in (24) for convenience.

(24) a. *??Kati   fél   a   macskák-tól és   hogy a   kutyák   megharapják.*
        Kate   fears the cats-ABL   and   that(c) the   dogs   bite.3PL.DEF
       'Kate fears cats and that dogs may bite her.'

   b. *???Kati fél   hogy {azok /   a   kutyák} megharapják   és   a*
        Kate fears that(c) those   the   dogs   bite.3PL.DEF   and   the
        macskák-tól.
        cats-ABL
       'Kate fears that {those / the dogs} may bite her and cats.'

References to principles like "end-weight" are abundant in both theoretical and descriptive literature. Alsina and Yang (2019) note, and I concur, that "we are in line with Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1403) in considering that, 'the effect of extraposition is to place a heavy constituent at the end' ". Clauses are naturally heavy constituents and accordingly, it is natural for them to gravitate towards the second position in a coordinated structure.

   This leads to the expectation that increasing the weight of the nominal should, at least partially, mitigate the effect seen in (24b). This expectation is correct: in my judgement, adding a relative clause to the nominal does make (25) more acceptable.

(25) *?Kati fél   hogy megharapják   a kutyák   és [az   olyan macskák-tól*
     Kate fears that(c) bite.3PL.DEF the dogs   and the such cats-ABL
     is,   akik túlságosan vadnak   néznek   ki].
     also REL   too   wild   look.3PL out
     'Kate fears that dogs may bite her and also such cats that look too wild.'

My overall conclusion about coordination is that while Laczkó (2021) raises valid questions and the picture is admittedly more complex than what Szűcs (2018) presented, the general stance that the sentences in question (9c and 9d) contain an OBL_θ can still be maintained.

   Laczkó's (2021) other line of argumentation concerns clauses that do not alternate with nominal (proper noun as in 9b / pronoun as in 9c) constituents. The relevant examples are repeated here.

(26) a. *Kati   jelez-te   (az-t),   hogy   induljunk.*
      Kate   signalled.3SG.DEF that-ACC   that(c)   leave.SBJV.1PL

    b. *Kati   jelz-ett,   hogy   induljunk,*
      Kate   signalled.3SG.INDEF   that(c)   leave.SBJV.1PL
      Both: 'Kate signalled that we should leave.'

(27) *Kati   int-ett(*-e),   hogy   induljunk.*
    Kate   wave-PAST.3SG.INDEF(*DEF)that(c)   leave.SBJV.1PL
    'Kate waved (her hand) that we should leave.'

The underlying assumption behind Laczkó's (2021) reasoning is that the subordinate clause in (26) has the same argument-status as the one in (26a) and the one in (27) as well (as noted in section 2.2.1, *int* is intransitive, hence the impossibility of the definiteness-morpheme *e* in 27). However, there are reasons to believe that this assumption is false: (26b) contains an ADJUNCT-CP, as so does (27). They are in contrast with the CP in (26a), which functions as an OBJ argument, as attested by the definite conjugation.

First, the subordinate clauses in (26b) and (27a) are optional[7], both syntactically and semantically: a propositional dependent may be added but it is by no means an absolute necessity.

(28) *Kati   {jelzett/   intett},   (hogy   induljunk).*
    Kate   signalled.3SG.INDEF   waved.3SG.INDEF   that(c)   leave.SBJV.1PL
    'Kate signalled/waved (that we should leave.)'

Second, it is well-known that complementizer-drop in Hungarian (as well as in English) is only possible in case of argumental-clauses (see e.g. Kenesei 1992 and Synder 1992). This is demonstrated in (29), where we find the expected pattern: the complementizer after the definite verb can be dropped, while after the indefinite one in (29b), it may not. More precisely, the drop results in a pronounced intonational break before the subordinate clause, indicating its appositive status, elaborating on the communicative purpose of the signalling.

(29) a. *Az új tulajdonos   már   jelez-te,   a   házat*
      the new owner   already signalled.PAST.3SG.DEF   the   house.ACC
      átépíti.
      rebuild.3SG.DEF
      'The new owner has already signalled that he will rebuild the house.' (from the Hungarian National Corpus)

    b. **Az új tulajdonos   már   jelzett,   a   házat*
      the new owner   already signalled.PAST.3SG.INDEF the   house.ACC
      átépíti.
      rebuild.3SG.DEF
      'The new owner has already signalled, he will rebuild the house.'

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[7] Technically, the object in (26a) is also optional, but the conjugation would still entail its presence, thus *Kati jelezte* would simply be an instance of object pro-drop. I thank one of my reviewers for calling attention to this detail.

The same point can be corroborated by extraction. In (30), we can see that the unbounded wh-dependency is only possible if the verb is the transitive version of *signal*, which takes the clause as an OBJ, whereas for the other two, the CP is an ADJUNCT and therefore an island.

(30) *Hova$_i$*   *{jelezte /*   **jelz-ett /*   **int-ett}*   *Kati,*
where   signalled.3SG.DEF   signalled.3SG.INDEF   waved.3SG.INDEF   Kate
hogy   *induljunk*   *t$_i$?*
that(c)   leave.SBJV.1PL
'Where did Kate signal/wave that we should leave?'

At the center of Laczkó's (2021) argumentation is the claim that the transitive and intransitive versions of *signal* are semantically equivalent and thus should receive the same analysis in terms of their composition with the subordinate clause. As opposed to this, my claim is that the two instances are related but conceptually separate lexical items. While I so far have glossed both of them as 'signal', in actuality, *jelez*.TRANS is more precisely translated as 'indicate', while *jelez*.INTRANS would be something like 'give signals'. More concretely, *jelez*.TRANS is not specified with respect to agentivity/humanness, *jelez*.INTRANS is (positively). From this perspective, it is not surprising that the more neutral, transitive version is more frequent in the Hungarian National Corpus. Some typical examples are provided below, also illustrating the infelicity of the intransitive version with a nonhuman subject.

(31) a. *Alex hunyorogva {jelzett/ jelezte}*   *hogy*   *valami*   very
Alex squinting   indicated.3SG(INDEF/DEF) that(c)   something   *nagyon*
fontosat   *lát.*
important.ACC   sees
'Squinting, Alex gave signals/ indicated that he saw something very important.'

b. *Halk koccanás {#jelzett/ jelezte},*   *hogy*   *a*   *kerékpárját az*
soft   clink   indicated.3SG(INDEF/DEF) that(c)   the   bike.ACC   the
egyik bádogasztalhoz támasztotta.
one   tin.table.ALL   leaned.3SG
'A soft clink indicated that he had leaned his bicycle against one of the tin tables.'

Although I claim that the two lexical entries at hand are distinct, it should also be admitted that they are related in a conceptual sense. In my view, Kenesei (1992) is right in stating that these intransitive predicates have an associated proposition in their "conceptual frame". This could be described in more recent terms as them being thematic adjuncts (Rákosi 2006). Such a thematic adjunct can then be "argumentalized", making it a "derived argument", in the sense of Needham & Toivonen (2011). According to them, such a process takes place for instance when adjunct *for*-beneficiaries become indirect object arguments in cases such as:

(32) a. *John baked cookies for Mary.*   b. *John baked Mary cookies.*

In fact, this is the standard approach to a wide range of verbs in Hungarian, including manner of speaking verbs.[8]

(33) a. *{ordít/   kiabál/   suttog},   hogy* ...
          shouts.INDEF   yells.INDEF whispers.INDEF that(c)

      b. *{azt   ordítja/   kiabálja/   suttogja}, hogy*...
          that.ACC shouts.DEF   yells.DEF   whispers.DEF that(c)
          'shouts/ yells/ whispers that…'

In sum, rather than viewing such predicates as equally subcategorizing for a propositional argument in some very broad communicative sense (as Laczkó 2021 argues), I believe it is semantically and syntactically motivated to make a distinction. By doing so, we eliminate the need to invoke the COMP function for the intransitive, seemingly problematic instances. The CPs in question are thematic ADJUNCTS, which may be reanalyzed as OBJ or OBL$_\theta$ (see footnote 7) arguments.

4   Addressing the problematic issues in the nominal domain

Laczkó (2021) expands the discussion of COMPs to the nominal domain. The relevant examples are repeated here for convenience, including simple event nouns (SENs).[9]

(34) *Kati jelz-és-e,   hogy   induljunk*
      Kate signal-DEV-POSS.3SG   that(c) leave.SBJV.1PL
      'Kate's signal that we should leave.'

(35) *a   gondolat, hogy   indulunk*
      the   thought   that(c)   leave.1PL
      'the thought that we leave'

(36) *a   kérdés, hogy   ki   induljon*
      the   question that(c) who   leave.SBJV.3SG
      'the question of who should leave'

If one accepts the conclusion in section 3 that *jelez* 'signal' may occur with a thematic adjunct clause, this position easily extends to the nominal version in (34), as well as to (35) and (36), making COMP unnecessary for these cases. In fact, this is the standard position in the literature, both cross-linguistically and specifically for Hungarian.

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[8] Kenesei (1992: 615) notes a contrast in the same vein, with the verb *bíztat*. According to him, this verb may occur with a CP alone with the meaning 'tell somebody to do something', or with a subative-marked demonstrative + associated clause dependent, with the meaning 'urge/encourage'. Thus, in this case, we have the thematic adjunct turned into an OBL$_\theta$.
Admittedly, this "argumentalization"-process needs further elaboration in future research. See Synder (1992) and Grimshaw (2015) for the syntax and semantics of manner of speaking verbs.
[9] I leave a discussion of complex event nouns from this perspective for further research. A paper on the topic by Laczkó, Szűcs & Rákosi (2020) does not reference the COMP function.

Regarding Hungarian, Kenesei (1992: 634) states that such nouns involve a proposition not as an argument but a "complement" in their "conceptual frame", akin analysis in the previous section. For English, it was argued as early as Stowell (1981) that such nouns (including nouns like *claim*, *belief*, *question*, *fact*, etc.) do not take CP-arguments. That is, in contrast with the classic PP-argument in (37), the CPs in (38) are not arguments, but appositive thematic adjuncts.[10]

(37) *the destruction [of the city]*

(38) a. *the claim/belief/fact [that all people are equal]*

b. *I'm a firm believer [that all people should have equal rights].[11]*

Bondarenko (2021) makes a parallel claim for Russian:

(39) *Mnenie   čto   belki   vpadajut v spjačku   ošibočno.*
    opinion   that(c) squirrels fall   in hibernation mistaken
    'The opinion that squirrels hibernate is mistaken.'

Bondarenko (2021) supports this position with evidence from optionality, binding-theoretic considerations, and case. For us, this last point is most relevant as it leads to another type of Hungarian nouns, which have not been discussed in the COMP-literature. She claims that nouns that do occur with clausal arguments also involve a genitive-marked demonstrative.

(40) *aspekty *(togo)   čto   načalas' èpoxa   Èllinizma*
    aspects that.GEN   that(c) began   period Hellenism
    'aspects of (the fact) that the Hellenistic time began'

Such nouns (*aspekty* and the ones discussed below) should be regarded as relational (RNs) as their conceptual structure necessarily involve an entity to which they are related: *aspect/benefit/*etc. #(of something). They display a similar behavior in Hungarian. While they can take a CP argument, I argue that the CP is not a COMP but a POSS, as suggested by the case marking. Kenesei (1992: 627) includes the Hungarian equivalents of nouns like *benefit*, *sense*, *consequence*, etc. in his discussion of the issue, see e.g. (41).

(41) *An-nak a haszn-a,   hogy   a   vírus-t   felfedezték,*
    that-DAT the benefit-POSS.3SG that(c) the   virus-acc   discovered.3PL
    óriási.
    enormous
    'The benefit (of it/that) that they discovered the virus is enormous.'

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[10] The "conceptual frame" / "*thematic* adjunct" qualifications are important since obviously not all nouns may be supplemented with a CP-adjunct (*the thought/*brain that we leave*).

[11] See Tyler (2023) for a detailed argumentation for the adjunct-status of complements of *er-*nominalizations in English.

For discussing this issue, the following piece of background about Hungarian possessors is necessary. Hungarian has two kinds of possessors: nominative and dative (Szabolcsi 1994, Laczkó 2004).
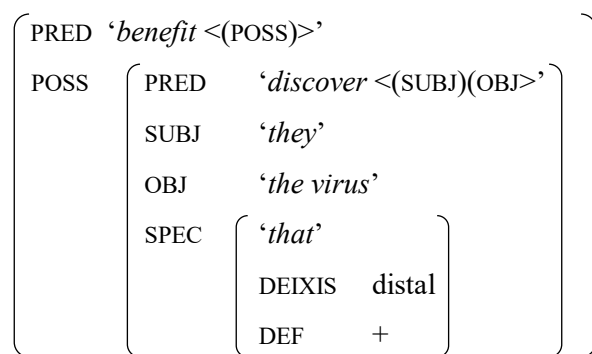
(42) *János   kalap-ja.*   b. *János-nak   a   kalap-ja.*
     John.NOM   hat-POSS.3SG   John-DAT   the   hat-POSS.3SG
     Both: 'John's hat.'

In my view, (41) corresponds to (42b). That is, RNs of this type subcategorize for a POSS, which may manifest as a simple nominal (e.g. *a cselekedet haszna/következménye* 'the action's benefit/consequence') or as a clause as well. Two auxiliary assumptions are needed. First, CPs cannot function as possessors directly, likely because they cannot receive appropriate case marking. This is why a demonstrative is used as a proxy in possessive constructions. Second, nominative demonstratives cannot function as possessors, a fact not unique to Hungarian, compare *that's hat* vs. *the hat of that*.

(43) a. **az   kalap-ja*   b. *an-nak   a kalapja*
       that   hat-POSS.3SG   that-DAT the hat-POSS.3SG
       Both: 'that's hat'

The combination of these factors results in a situation where the clause, together with the dative-marked demonstrative pronoun, functions as the POSS argument of the given predicate. The proposed f-structure is shown below in (44). (The nominal+clause complex serves as the SUBJ of *enormous*, this is not represented, to save space.)

(44)   *the benefit (of it/that) that they discovered the virus (is enormous)*

$$
\begin{bmatrix}
\text{PRED} & \text{`}benefit\text{ <(POSS)>'} \\
\text{POSS} & \begin{bmatrix}
\text{PRED} & \text{`}discover\text{ <(SUBJ)(OBJ>'} \\
\text{SUBJ} & \text{`}they\text{'} \\
\text{OBJ} & \text{`}the\ virus\text{'} \\
\text{SPEC} & \begin{bmatrix}
\text{`}that\text{'} \\
\text{DEIXIS} & \text{distal} \\
\text{DEF} & +
\end{bmatrix}
\end{bmatrix}
\end{bmatrix}
$$

That SENs and RNs are different can be seen by the fact that the latter, but not the former, instantiates a genuine possessive relationship, which can be paraphrased using the Hungarian construction for 'X had a benefit' (Kenesei 1992: 628).

(45) *An-nak,   hogy   Kati   megérkezett,   volt   {haszn-a /*
     that-DAT   that(c)   Kate   arrived.3SG   had.3SG   benefit-POSS.3SG
     **gondolat-a}.*
     thought-POSS.3SG
     'That Kate arrived had some benefit/*thought.'

Furthermore, RNs *must* occur in the possessive frame with the dative demonstrative, as the possessor is a basic argument for them. While a possessor may also be added to SENs (so the dative proform is licit in 46b) but compared to RNs, this is only an additional element for them. Accordingly, SENs (but not RNs) can also occur with a nominative, non-possessor demonstrative.

(46) a. *az   a   {gondolat / *haszon}, hogy...*
  that   the   thought   benefit   that(c)
  'the (that) thought that…'

  b. *annak   a   {gondolat-a /   haszn-a},   hogy...*
  that-DAT   the   thought-POSS.3SG benefit-POSS.3SG   that(c)
  'the thought/benefit of it that…'

In sum, nouns either occur with ADJUNCT clauses (simple event nouns: *belief*, *thought*, etc.) or POSS clauses (relational nouns: *benefit*, *consequence*, etc.). COMPs are not needed in the analyses, making this grammatical function superfluous for Hungarian.

5   Additional considerations

5.1   Clauses with adverbial associates – an unresolved issue

Belyaev et al. (2017), in their defense of COMP, invoke Moksha Mordvin data such as (47), where the adverbial proform *aftə* 'so' references a clause. Since their assumption is that OBJ and OBL$_\theta$-clauses are referenced by appropriately case-marked nominal proforms, *aftə*-related clauses then must bear a different grammatical function, namely, COMP. (This point is further reinforced by replacement with a contentful noun and coordination.)

(47) *Nu   mon   t'<u>aftə</u>   af   dumand-an.*
  well   I   thus   NEG   think-1SG
  'Well, I don't think so (thus).'

While as I noted in the introduction, my goal is a more modest one of arguing for a COMP-less approach in Hungarian and not generally, the data is still relevant as some Hungarian clauses can be associated with a comparable adverbial manner demonstrative proform, *úgy* 'so.DIST'. In most instances there is an alternation with the nominal form (47a), but there are cases where the adverbial is the only option (e.g. 48b).[12]

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[12] A reviewer noted that the notion "adverbial", not being a technical term of LFG, should be elaborated upon. I use it in a descriptive, traditional way, to refer to modifiers of verbs. For Moksha Mordvin, I simply Belyaev et al.'s (2017: 94) label. For Hungarian, the adverbial nature of *úgy* 'so.DIST' can be easily seen from the fact that in its standard pronoun use, it can replace a manner adverb, as shown in (i). For a relatively recent overview of propositional anaphors, including English *so*, see van Elswyk (2018).

  (i) *{Szépen/úgy}   csináltam.*
  quickly so.DIST   did.1SG
  'I did it quickly/in that way.'

(48) a. *Kati {az-t /   úgy}   gondolja,   hogy   együnk.*
     Kate that-ACC so.DIST thinks.DEF that(c)   eat.3PL.SBJV
     'Kate thinks that we should eat.'

   b. *Kati {*az-t /   úgy}   emlékszik,   hogy   ettünk.*
     Kate that-ACC so.DIST remembers   that(c)   ate.3PL
     'Kate remembers (it/so) that we ate.'

We may treat the pronoun+clause complex as a single argument of the main predicate. Alternatively, only *úgy* 'so.DIST' is the argument of the main predicate and the clause is associated in some other fashion (Szűcs 2022 vs. Laczkó 2022, see also the next section). In either case, the question of the grammatical function remains.

While I cannot provide a definitive account to the issue of adverb-related clauses and do not exclude the possibility of a COMP-based analysis, I would like to highlight some relevant factors.

It is likely an important fact that that Hungarian *emlékszik* 'remember' can occur with a subative marked nominal (*emlékszik valami-re* 'remember something-SUB'), which may support an analysis involving OBL$_\theta$. However, this cannot be generalized: for instance, the verb *vél* 'deem' exclusively occurs with the adverbial manner demonstrative. Additionally, it is unclear whether the nominal and adverbial proforms for *gondol* 'think' should be treated as surface alternations of an OBJ or there is a deeper grammatical distinction to be uncovered.

Another possibility worth investigating as a relevant grammatical function is OBJ$_\theta$. Belyaev et al. (2017) also entertain this option but ultimately reject it, citing a lack of independent evidence, such as morphological contrasts between different kinds of OBJs. While this is a valid point, I do not believe it is conclusive. Admittedly, more investigation is needed, and the burden of proof lies with the proponents of the OBJ$_\theta$-analysis.

Belyaev et al. (2017) also note that the adverbial proform is associated with certain semantic effects, suggesting that there may be more to this issue than grammatical function alone. In particular, both the Moksha Mordvin and the Hungarian adverbial proforms are linked to (non)-factivity. This is illustrated in (48), where the predicate alternates between occurring with the nominal and the adverbial proform, with the former triggering a factive interpretation and the latter a non-factive interpretation.

(49) *{Azt/ úgy}   tudom,   hogy   Kati okos.*   (Hungarian)
    that.ACC so.DIST know.1SG   that(c)   Kate smart
    With that.ACC: 'I know the fact that Kate is smart.'
    With so.DIST: 'According to my knowledge, Kate is smart.'

It must be acknowledged that the issue of adverbial elements has broader implications beyond the COMP-debate. The general question concerns the status of arguments with an adverbial nature. What grammatical function should be assigned to the entailed manner meaning component of a predicate like *behave*? Notice that even in the absence of an explicit adverb, the predicate still strictly entails that the behavior happened in some contextually appropriate manner.

(50) *They should behave #(appropriately / nicely / badly / etc.).*

This is a non-trivial question that necessitates further investigation. OBL$_\theta$ seems much more intuitively appropriate here than any other option (including COMP). If this is correct, then perhaps the variability inherent of the OBL$_\theta$ function might be exploited in the domain of the clausal arguments discussed in this section as well.

5.2   On demonstratives as clausal associates

In the constructions examined, demonstrative pronouns played a prominent role, so I would like to offer some insights regarding their syntactic and semantic status. This discussion is partially based on Szűcs (2022), viewed from the perspective of the present paper, with some additional considerations.

The Moksha Mordvin *t'aftə* 'thus' in (47) is clearly an argumental demonstrative pronoun, serving whatever grammatical function is most appropriate for the propositional argument of the predicate *dumand* 'think'. The same is true for the Hungarian equivalent below where the manner demonstrative has both distal and proximal forms. Both are usable, the choice depending on discourse deictic considerations (speaker's attitude, information structure, etc.)

(51) (responding to an earlier statement)
Én nem {úgy/ így} gondolom.
I not so.DIST so.PROX think.1SG
'I don't think so.'

Example (48a) is different, as there is a formal association between the pronoun and the clause and in some sense, as they jointly serve as the propositional argument. (7c), (8c) and (9c) illustrate the same phenomenon as (48a). The distinct status of these pronouns is supported by special licensing conditions – related to the semantic nature of the main predicate and the information structure of the sentence – as well as the marked status of the proximal form (see Szűcs 2022 for details).

Szűcs (2022) endorses a "unification" analysis based on insights by Berman et al. (1998), in which the proform contributes a PRED attribute and the clause is a restriction over that attribute, as they jointly serve as the appropriate grammatical function. Szűcs (2024) is also an analysis in this spirit in a Minimalist framework, the pronoun being a secondary predicate in the specifier of the CP. As an alternative, Laczkó (2022) proposes that the pronoun is the argument of the main predicate by itself, and it is also a predicate that licenses the clause. Essentially, both analyses recognize the special status of the clausal associate demonstrative, and they converge on its predicative nature. The key difference between the two lies in whether the relationship between the main predicate and the complement clause is direct (Szűcs) or indirect (Laczkó).

Finally, we also observed demonstrative pronouns with the nominals like *gondolat* 'thought' and *haszon* 'benefit' in section 4 (examples 41, 45, 46). Here, I see no reason to assume that these should receive an analysis distinct from run-of-the-mill demonstrative determiners in Hungarian. There are no special licensing conditions or deictic restrictions that would motivate such a special treatment. Thus, in terms of the syntactic and semantic status of demonstratives, (52a) and (52b) are analogous. The

same applies to *benefit*-type relational nouns. This analysis is reflected by representing its contribution to the f-structure SPEC in (44).[13]

(52) a. {*az / ez*}   *a*   *kutya*
      that this the   dog
      'that/this dog'

   b. {*az / ez*}   *a*   *gondolat, hogy…*
        that this   the   thought that
        'the thought that…'

6 Conclusion

In this paper, I defended Szűcs's (2018) COMP-less approach to finite complement clauses in Hungarian. While Laczkó (2021) raises some valid concerns with respect to coordination, subcategorization and nominals which seem to support the invocation of COMP, I argued that the concerns are not conclusive, and a closer scrutiny actually favors analyses without COMP. The problematic data can be addressed through general considerations (about coordination), reference to thematic adjuncts (CPs occurring with verbs like intransitive *jelez* 'signal' and simple event nouns like *gondolat* 'thought'), and the POSS function (for relational nouns). Overall, my conclusion is that all relevant facts in Hungarian can be captured with a COMP-less analysis and thus using this grammatical function offers no analytical advantage.

Admittedly, the COMP-debate cannot be considered as closed. A narrower question concerns the functional status of adverbial arguments (both clauses and genuine adverbs), for which COMP might be a potential solution. While this issue primarily arose in the context of Moksha Mordvin and Hungarian, the cross-linguistic diversity of complement clauses suggests that similar questions may arise in other languages.

The related broader question is a meta-theoretical one: what constitutes sufficient grounds for postulating a given grammatical function? Historically, LFG began with COMP in its inventory, so the burden of proof seems to rest on those who, in the words of Alsina et al. (2005), seek to "get rid of it". However, one could argue that historical precedent alone should not dictate what constitutes a null hypothesis. After all, Bresnan (1982) did not introduce COMP after a comprehensive evaluation of the theoretical and empirical landscape. Unlike SUBJ and OBJ, this grammatical function did not have precursors in the traditional literature – rather, it was an intuitive and useful analytical tool that was incorporated into the LFG-framework. Hence, COMP's existence is not a logical, theoretical necessity and it is easy to imagine an alternative history where it was not introduced.

Now one can ask this question: in this alternative timeline, would facts like the ones we saw in Moksha Mordvin and Hungarian in section 5.1 be enough for inventing a new grammatical function like COMP? And, for that matter, why stop at COMP and not add more grammatical functions? I believe the danger of the slippery slope is real: as I said, I suspect the range of the cross-linguistic data would allow for some arguments in that direction. For instance, Bodomo & Lee (2001: 422) states that "a introduction of a degree of mixedness" is necessary and Falk (2005) adds $XOBL_\theta$ and $XOBJ_\theta$. Given

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[13] Obviously, (52a) and (52b) differ in that the SENs and RNs license a propositional dependent (as thematic adjunct or as a POSS argument, respectively), while simple nouns like *dog* do not. Also, it is a presently irrelevant syntactic detail that English does not permit the co-occurrence of a demonstrative determiner and a definite article while Hungarian does. This might be not very common cross-linguistically but is not unheard of either. For examples, see Dékány (2021: 93-94).

LFG's generally conservative stance on adding new categories (see e.g. Börjars et al. 1999) it is perhaps unsurprising that these proposals never gained much traction, and researchers would rather opt for problematic data to be handled with the help of a more restrictive GF-inventory. That said, others may interpret the situation differently and argue that the complexity added by the auxiliary considerations do shed favorable light on adding a separate grammatical function.

At any rate, I hope to have shown that a COMP-less view like Szűcs's (2018) for Hungarian is a viable one. What this means for a *COMP*lete view of the theory remains to be seen.

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