

Chapter 11

Predicates, negative quantifiers and focus: Specificity and quantificationality of *n*-words

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Prefixless definiteness effect predicates require their internal argument to be non-specific / non-presuppositional: they introduce a novel discourse marker (see Chapter 4). Predicates with prefixes impose a specificity / presuppositionality requirement on their internal argument (see Chapter 2). This chapter contends that in the domain of *n*-words, requirements of specificity and non-specificity incurred by different predicate types correlate with options in quantificationality: an ambiguity of Hungarian *n*-words between a quantificational (universal) and a non-quantificational (indefinite) interpretation. The simultaneous presence of these two options within the same language (confirming a prediction of Giannakidou 2000) has the significant implication that in a cross-linguistic typology of Negative Concord the same two interpretational options must be available.

The chapter investigates and derives the distribution of the differential availability of the two meanings of *n*-words in various domains of the clause. It is shown that neither interpretation can be realized in the syntactic focus position, because focussing affects the interpretation of *n*-words: their (morphosyntactically optionally realised) EVEN component (cf. Lee and Horn (1994), Lahiri (1998) and Horn (2000)) operates on the bare predicative restriction of *n*-words as an extreme element on a predicate scale (cf. Krifka 1995).

1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine the interpretational difference involved in the following pairs of sentences:^{*}

- (1) a. Nem érkezett senki
not arrive-PAST-3SG nobody-NOM
~‘There hasn’t arrived anybody’
b. Nem érkezett meg senki
not arrive-PAST-3SG PREF nobody-NOM
~‘Nobody has arrived’
- (2) a. Nem készítettem semmit
not prepare-PAST-1SG nothing-ACC
~‘I haven’t prepared anything’
b. Nem készítettem el semmit
not prepare-PAST-1SG PREF nothing-ACC
~‘I’ve prepared nothing’

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Recall that without a prefix, verbs expressing existence, coming into being (among them, coming into being in a certain location, e.g. *érkezik* ‘arrive’, and creation verbs, e.g. *készít* ‘prepare’) and consumption are definiteness effect predicates, discussed extensively in Chapter 4 (by Pinón), where it is argued that these predicates all introduce a novel discourse marker (cf. also Szabolcsi (1986), É.Kiss (1995) and references cited there). Consequently, definiteness effect predicates require their internal argument to be non-specific / non-presuppositional, as illustrated in (3) below.

- (3) a. *Érkezett* *egy vendég*
 arrive-PAST-3SG a guest-NOM
 ~‘There arrived a guest.’
 b. # *Érkezett* *a(z) (egyik) vendég* / *a legtöbb vendég*
 arrive-PAST-3SG the (one) guest-NOM / the most guest-NOM

As argued in Chapter 2 (by É.Kiss), verbal prefixes like *meg* and *el* in (1b) and (2b)—which in the perverbal [Spec,PredP] position determine the event type (situation aspect)—function as secondary predicates, predicating of the surface theme argument of the verb. This is claimed to be responsible for a specificity¹ / presuppositionality requirement that verbal prefixes impose on the theme argument (causing the verbs at hand to not function as definiteness effect predicates; see Chapter 4 for a polysemy based approach to this alternation). In (4a) the person who arrived must be a member of a presupposed set of guests (this is not a requirement in (3a) above). Whereas overt partitives are excluded in (3b), they are fine in (4b).

- (4) a. *Meg érkezett* *egy vendég*
 PREF arrive-PAST-3SG a guest-NOM
 ~‘A guest arrived.’
 b. *Meg érkezett* *a(z) (egyik) vendég* / *a legtöbb vendég*
 PREF arrive-PAST-3SG the (one) guest-NOM / the most guest-NOM
 ‘One of the guests / Most guests arrived.’

This specificity / presuppositionality requirement results in what appears to be a specific / presuppositional reading of the *n*-word functioning as the theme in (1b) and (2b). Given that the prefixless alternatives in (1a) and (2a) are definiteness effect predicates, only a non-specific / non-presuppositional reading is available there.

It is contended in this chapter that the specificity / non-specificity contrast in (1) and (2), triggered by the requirements of the verbal predicate, is to be analysed in terms of an ambiguity in the interpretation of the negative pronouns (*n*-words) themselves, namely between a quantificational and a non-quantificational lexical meaning. (1b) and (2b) involve an *n*-word that is universally quantified and scopes above negation, while (1a) and (2a) involve a Heimian indefinite *n*-word, which is existentially closed in the scope of negation (cf. Heim 1982). Although the two interpretations (‘ $\forall x \neg$ ’ and ‘ $\neg \exists x$ ’) are logical equivalents, they are compositionally different and they behave differently in natural language (for a detailed discussion of this issue, see Giannakidou (2000, to appear)). The simultaneous presence of these two options within the same language (confirming a prediction of

¹ Specificity here, as in Chapter 2, is to be understood in the sense of Enç (1991), i.e. as involving a subset relation to a set in the domain of discourse.

Giannakidou (2000: 518)) furnishes solid evidence that the same two options must be available within a cross-linguistic typology of Negative Concord.²

The chapter is structured as follows. In order to show that the ambiguity in (1) and (2) above is one of quantificational force, in section 2 the behaviour of Hungarian *n*-words is examined in various test environments. One battery of diagnostic tools will be shown to point to a construal of Hungarian *n*-words involving an existential indefinite in the scope of negation. At the same time, other tests suggest that *n*-words also have the interpretation of a universal quantifier scoping above negation. Various factors may rule out one or the other of the two interpretations in a given sentence, thus resulting in disambiguation. In fact (1) and (2) exemplify such cases. The ‘universal scoping above negation’ interpretation satisfies the specificity requirement introduced by the verbal prefix in (1b) and (2b), hence only that reading is available there. In (1a) and (2a), in contrast, a non-specificity condition is imposed by the prefixless variety of the verb on the theme, hence only the ‘existential indefinite in the scope of negation’ interpretation survives.

Section 3 investigates the distribution of the availability of the two readings in (various domains of) the clause. *N*-words can in fact be syntactically focussed, and focussing affects their interpretation – an issue taken up in section 4. When in focus, the (morphosyntactically optionally realised) ‘even’ component in the semantics of Hungarian *n*-words plays an active role (cf. Lee and Horn (1994), Lahiri (1998) and Horn (2000)). *N*-words in focus are shown to be of the Heimian indefinite variety: what is in semantic focus is their bare predicative restriction. This analysis correctly predicts the general optionality of specificity-inducing prefixes with focussed *n*-words.

2. Quantificationality of *n*-words

After a note on the distribution of *n*-words, we begin by applying various diagnostic tools to detect their quantificational status. *N*-words in this language may remain postverbal, or alternatively, they may be fronted to a preverbal position above negation, cf. (5a,b).³ Since this choice is available to each of the *n*-words in an NC clause, it is possible to front more than one *n*-word too (5c) (still with a Negative Concord reading).⁴

- (5) a. Nem jött el senki
not come-PAST-3SG PREF nobody-NOM
‘Nobody came along’

² Negative Concord (NC) is commonly understood as a descriptive cover term to designate constructions in which there appear several elements each of which is apparently capable of licensing sentential negation interpretation on its own. The term ‘*n*-word’ is due to Laka (1990).

³ *N*-words come in two flavours in Hungarian: they may or may not be modified by the particle *sem*. For the sake of simplicity of presentation, this variation will be ignored for the most part of this chapter (but we will return to the significance of the *sem* particle in section 4); illustrations will employ the unmodified variety (the presentation of the syntactic distribution of *n*-words above too is based on unmodified *n*-words, which exhibit what has become known as ‘negative doubling’ (Giannakidou’s (1998) ‘strict NC’) found also in Slavic and Greek). The related issue of the negativity of Hungarian *n*-words will also be pushed into the background here; I am assuming Hungarian *n*-words not to involve logical negation in their lexical semantics. For differing views on this matter, see Puskás (2002) and Surányi (2002a, b, to appear). In the latter works the issue is shown to be closely linked to the question of the distribution of the *sem* particle; the discussion of that topic here would lead us too far afield.

⁴ The same options are obtainable when negation precedes a preverbal focus expression: in that case, *n*-words can be raised past the preverbal focus to end up preceding both focus and negation, or stay postverbal. This latter option requires stress on the postverbal *n*-word.

- b. Senki nem jött el
 nobody-NOM not come-PAST-3SG PREF
 ‘id.’
- c. Senki sehova nem jött el
 nobody-NOM nowhere-to not come-PAST-3SG PREF
 ‘Nobody came along anywhere.’

The issue of the quantificational nature of *n*-words in general has been a matter of debate in the literature on Negative Concord, and it has been resolved variously for different language types. According to one approach, *n*-words (in some languages) are a case of Negative Polarity Items (NPI) and are interpreted as existentially quantified indefinites in the scope of negation (cf. Ladusaw (1992, 1994), Acquaviva (1993, 1997)). Another influential approach (Zanuttini (1991), Haegeman and Zanuttini (1991), Haegeman (1995); Giannakidou (2000)) holds that *n*-words (in some languages) are universal quantifiers, scoping above negation. The two interpretations are logical equivalents; however, they give rise to discrete linguistic effects. Giannakidou (to appear) provides an informative review of approaches to the question of the quantificational properties of *n*-words cross-linguistically.

The literature on Hungarian for a considerable period now has been assuming Hungarian *n*-words to be universal quantifiers (licensed in some form by negation) (cf. e.g. Szabolcsi 1981, 1997; É.Kiss 1987, 1994, 2002a, 2002b; Puskás 1998; Olsvay 2000). This view has an obvious descriptive appeal: the symmetry found between the distribution of *n*-words and universals like *every*-NPs fall out directly.⁵ For, both *n*-words and *every*-NPs can appear both pre- and postverbally (potentially taking wide scope, depending on stress), and in the former case they are positioned to the left of preverbal focus and to the right of topics.

I will argue now that appropriate diagnostics reveal that in some cases *n*-words in Hungarian can indeed be interpreted as universal quantifiers, yet in other cases probes indicate that they can be interpreted as existentially quantified.⁶

2.1 Modification

One test often applied is *almost*-modification (see Dahl 1970, Horn 1972, Zanuttini 1991, van der Wouden and Zwarts 1993). *Almost* (and *absolutely*) are taken to be able to modify universal quantifiers, but not existential indefinites (see Horn and Lee (1995) for a refinement).⁷ As Puskás (2000: 341) also points out, *n*-words can be modified by *almost* in Hungarian ((6) is adapted from her (70c)):

- (6) Tegnap (majdnem senkivel) 'nem beszélt Zeta
 Yesterday almost nobody-with not talk-PAST-3SG Z.-NOM
 (majdnem senkivel)
 almost nobody-with
 ‘Yesterday Zeta talked to almost nobody.’

⁵ The similarity extends to their prosody as well; see section 2.8 below. As discussed in section 3, the distributional (and prosodic) symmetry is not complete.

⁶ Several of the diagnostics to be applied are based on Giannakidou’s (2000) work.

⁷ *Almost* can modify determiners with a precise value (e.g. *I could solve almost half/50 of the problems*), NPI *any*-NPs in the protasis of (possibly implicit) conditionals, or in the scope of negation if negation is sufficiently far. Horn (2000) argues that what bars *almost* is in fact scopally adjacent negation. Given that, as also emphasized in Giannakidou (2000), the *almost* test remains a suitable diagnostics for the case at hand.

However, further qualification is in order. In reality, not all *n*-word occurrences allow *almost*-modification freely. Witness (7):

- (7) *?Nem találtam majdnem semmit a házi dolgozatában
 not find-PAST-1SG almost nothing-ACC the home paper-POSS-3SG-in
 ‘I found almost nothing in her home paper.’

We will return to the conditions of *almost*-modification in section 3 below. The lesson at this point is that the correct generalisation is that *n*-words sometimes may, sometimes may not be modified by *almost*. This should mean that some, but not all occurrences of Hungarian *n*-words are interpreted as universal quantifiers. An existential interpretation (in the immediate scope of negation, cf. Note 7) may be responsible for the degraded status of occurrences that do not tolerate modification by *almost*.

Modification by *egyáltalán* ‘whatsoever / at all’ also gives mixed results. ‘Whatsoever’ and ‘at all’ reinforce NPI *any* in the scope of negation in English, but they cannot modify universals. Consider now (8):

- (8) a. Nem vitt el egyáltalán senkit moziba
 not take-PAST-3SG PREF at.all nobody-ACC cinema-to
 ‘He didn’t take anybody at all to the cinema’
 b. *?Egyáltalán senkit soha nem visz el moziba
 at.all nobody-ACC never not take-3SGPREF cinema-to
 ‘He doesn’t ever take anybody at all to the cinema.’

It appears that some *n*-word occurrences behave like existential NPI-s, others do not. We return to the distribution of modifiability by *egyáltalán* ‘whatsoever / at all’ in section 3; for the moment, the implication of the test is that besides patterning with universal quantifiers, Hungarian *n*-words can also align with existential NPI-s.

2.2 Donkey anaphora

A second test involves donkey anaphora. It is well known from dynamic semantics that universal quantifiers do not normally support anaphora appearing outside the sentence that they appear in⁸, whereas existentials do. An illustration from English is the following:

- (9) a. I saw a boy. He was tall.
 b. I saw every boy. *He was tall.

Giannakidou (2000) argues that Greek emphatic *n*-words must be universals because they do not support donkey anaphora (whereas non-emphatic *k*-words occurring in non-veridical contexts do, so she analyses the latter class as existentials). A complication with the argument is that if Greek emphatic *n*-words were in reality existentials, to get the correct interpretation, they would be placed in the scope of negation; however, existentials in the scope of negation are known not to support donkey anaphora (being inaccessible, in terms of DRT; for the same point, cf. Richter and Salier (1998)) ((10b) = Giannakidou’s (2000) (39)):

⁸ Except in special, so-called telescopic contexts, as in (i) (Roberts 1989: 717):

- (i) Each degree candidate walked to the stage. He took his diploma from the Dean and returned to his seat.

- (10) a. I didn't see a boy. ($\neg > \exists$) *He was tall.
 b. *The students that didn't buy any/some book should show it now.

Now, Giannakidou (2000: 476) goes on to argue that in directive sentences like (11) below an anaphoric link *can* be established between the pronoun and the *any*-phrase; in other words, negated directives allow donkey anaphora in the case of existentials in the scope of negation ((11) = Giannakidou, 2000 (40a)). Then, the appropriate test case in Hungarian is (12), a negated directive.

- (11) Don't check any book out from that (Satanic) library; reading it might warp your mind.
 (12) Ne fogjál meg semmit (sem) a laboratóriumban!
 not touch-IMP-2SG PREF nothing-ACC (SEM) the laboratory-P-in
 Még *pro* megrázhat
 possibly *pro* PREF-give.shock
 'Don't touch anything in the lab. It could give you a shock.'

The grammaticality of such examples suggests that *n*-words in Hungarian *can* be interpreted existentially.

2.3 Predicative nominals

Giannakidou and Quer (1995) note that just like universal quantifiers of the *every*-NP type, *n*-words in Greek cannot function as predicate nominals. In contrast, existential indefinites can. Thus Greek *n*-words side with *every*-NPs in this respect. NC languages seem to be split in this regard: Italian, Spanish and French *n*-words follow the same pattern as Greek, while Russian, Polish and Serbian *n*-words disallow a predicative use (cf. Giannakidou, to appear).

Hungarian appears to be able to use *n*-words predicatively:⁹

- (13) a. Nem lesz semmi baj
 not will.be nothing problem
 'There won't be any problem.'
 b. Ez a zaj nem volt semmi a tegnapihoz képest
 this the noise-NOM not was nothing the to-yesterday's in.comparison
 'This noise was nothing compared to yesterday's.'
 c. Nem volt semmi köze hozzá
 not was nothing business-POSS-3SG it-to
 'He had nothing to do with it.'

These data suggest that Hungarian *n*-words may be interpreted as existentials.¹⁰

⁹ As (13a) illustrates, *n*-words can appear in existential constructions, even with the negative existential verb *nincs* 'not be':

- (i) Nincs itthon semmi
 not.be-3SG at.home nothing
 'There isn't anything at home.'

¹⁰ Puskás (2000) also considers this test, but makes note of a caveat, claiming that it cannot be applied to Hungarian. See Surányi (2002c, 2004) for an argument that it can. Puskás also notes that Hungarian has

2.4 Particles

Giannakidou (2000) points out that in Greek, *ke* ‘and’ is a modifier of existential quantifiers, and *n*-words and universal quantifiers are incompatible with it, thus forming a natural class in this respect. A similar consideration may turn out to be relevant in Hungarian as well.

Hungarian has a paradigm of weak negative polarity items (cf. Tóth 1999) licensed in a range of nonveridical contexts. This paradigm of weak NPI has the morphological structure *vala* + *Wh* + *is*, where *vala-* is ‘some’ (14a). Here *Wh* stands for a bare indefinite that functions as a *wh*-pronoun when on its own, and *is* is (homophonous with) *is* ‘also/even’.¹¹ Now *vala-* ‘some’ and *minden-* ‘every’ combine with the bare *wh*-indefinites to make the paradigms of existential indefinite and universal pronouns (cf. 14b). It is commonly accepted that weak NPI-s are interpreted existentially. Importantly, though *is* can modify weak NPI-s and *wh*-phrases (which are taken to be existentially quantified), cf. (14a), it cannot modify positive universal quantifiers, cf. (14c):

- (14) a. *valaki* *is* / *ki* *is*
 some-who also/even / who also/even
 b. *valaki* / *mindenki* / *ki*
 some-who / every-who / who
 c. **mindenki* *is*
 every-who also/even

As noted in section 2 (cf. Note 3), *n*-words may be modified by the particle *sem*. Historically *sem* is a combination of *is* ‘also/even’ + *nem* ‘not’. This means that the *n*-word paradigm and the existential weak NPI paradigm at an abstract level share the property of being modified by *is*. That *n*-words pattern with an existential weak NPI is suggestive evidence of the availability of an existential interpretation.¹²

2.5 Incorporation

A further relevant observation concerns incorporation. Bare singulars in Hungarian undergo ‘incorporation’ to the verb, cf. (15).¹³ In this incorporated position, bare singulars have an existential reading. They are scopally inert (cannot scope over any operator that has the predicate in its scope), and need not be in the scope of any operator. Ordinary weak existential complements too can, and with some verbs must, be incorporated (16a/a’). Universals, however, cannot be in the incorporated position, cf. (16b). Also, incorporated bare plurals lack a generic interpretation, but only have an existential one.¹⁴

predicative uses of *n*-words, but as pointed out in Surányi (2004: Fn. 21), her example is inappropriate to show this.

¹¹ Hunyadi (1981) notes that the morpheme *is* ‘also/even’ in turn historically derives from the conjunction *es* ‘and’ (corresponding to Greek *ke*). This latter form in fact survives today in some dialects.

¹² Such modification by an ‘also/even’ element is found in a number of languages. For instance, Hindi NPI-s, which are licensed in non-veridical contexts (incl. long-distance) as well as generic environments (in which contexts they are prone to an indefinite analysis), are also modified by a particle *bhii* ‘also/even’ (Lahiri 1998).

¹³ ‘Incorporation’ here is meant as a cover term for the syntactic position of elements that occupy and immediately preverbal position in neutral clauses, often termed the VM position (cf. e.g. Komlósy 1994). This position is identified as PredP in Chapter 9 by É. Kiss. Incorporated nominals may be modified by adjectives, but crucially, cannot have a determiner. For details on Hungarian incorporation, see Farkas and de Swart (2003) and references therein.

¹⁴ According to Farkas and de Swart (2003) this is explained by the fact that the bare plural is required to be interpreted within the same minimal DRS box as its predicate, however, a generic operator is accompanied by a

- (15) a. János régi bélyeget gyűjt
 J.-NOM old stamp-ACC collect-3SG
 ‘John collects old stamps’
 b. *János gyűjt régi bélyeget
 J.-NOM collect-3SG old stamp-ACC
- (16) a. János valami híres embert alakít
 J.-NOM some(thing) famous person-ACC act-3SG
 ‘John plays the part of a famous person’
 a’. *János alakít valami híres embert
 J.-NOM act-3SG some(thing) famous person-ACC
 b. *Egy színész minden híres embert alakít
 an actor-NOM every famous person act-3SG
 ‘An actor plays the part of every famous person’

In this light consider now the data below. An *n*-word within an infinitival clause is licensed by matrix negation in both (17) and (18). As the acceptability contrast between the (a) and (b) examples show, the obligatory fronting of the *n*-word is due to incorporation (and not quantifier fronting, which, as we have seen, is optional). The fronted *n*-word must be adjacent to the verb—a trait of incorporation again.

- (17) a. Nem szeretnék Pálnak semmi hülyeséget mondani holnap
 not like-COND-1SG P-DAT nothing stupid-ACC tell-INF tomorrow
 ‘I wouldn’t like to tell Paul anything stupid tomorrow.’
 b. ?*Nemszeretnék Pálnak mondani semmi hülyeséget holnap
 not like-COND-1SG P-DAT tell-INF nothing stupid-ACC tomorrow
- (18) a. Nem szeretnék semmi különösnek látszani
 not like-COND-1SG nothing particular-DAT seem-INF
 ‘I wouldn’t like to seem anything particular.’
 b. *Nem szeretnék látszani semmi különösnek
 not like-COND-1SG seem-INF nothing particular-DAT

Given that incorporated nominals in Hungarian can only be quantified existentially, but not universally, these examples too demonstrate that *n*-words in Hungarian can receive an existential interpretation.

2.6 Existential import and split readings

It is well known that universal quantification has a pragmatic implicature of existence in natural language (cf. e.g. Strawson 1952).¹⁵ If an *n*-word is interpreted as a universal quantifier scoping above negation ($\forall > \neg$), then such existential import is predicted, unlike if an *n*-word is interpreted as an existential indefinite in the scope of negation. As Giannakidou (2000) demonstrates, existential import invariably gets generated in the case of Greek emphatic *n*-words (which she analyses as universal quantifiers). Hungarian *n*-words, however,

box-splitting operation. For van Geenhoven (1998), incorporation triggers type shift of the predicate to a complex predicate type involving the introduction of an existential quantifier.

¹⁵ Lawlike statements like *All trespassers will be prosecuted*, which are conditional in nature, are exceptional in this regard (cf. Strawson 1952, Moravcsik 1991).

appear to be different: they are not always presuppositional. Witness (19) (IRR. = irrealis marker):

- (19) a. Nem fedeztem fel semmi nyomát, hogy
 not discover-PAST-1SG PREF nothing trace-POSS-3SG-ACC that
 ott járt volna
 there go- PAST-3SG IRR.
 ‘I didn’t discover any trace (suggesting) that he had been there.’
- b. Nem látom semmi értelmét
 not see-1SG nothing sense-POSS-3SG-ACC
 ‘I don’t see any point (in it).’

These examples are perfectly felicitous. Equivalent sentences in Greek are pragmatically odd (cf. Giannakidou 2000: 505), because Greek *n*-words are invariably presuppositional. The speaker in (19b) asserts that there is no point in it, thus a conflict would arise if the *n*-word had to have an existential import. On the most prominent reading of (19a), the speaker is committed to assuming that there was no trace of him having been there earlier; if the *n*-word were presuppositional, the sentence would result in pragmatic oddity. *N*-words in such examples cannot be universals, but may be existentials in the scope of negation.

At this point we can return to our initial examples in (1a) and (2a). So-called ‘definiteness effect’ verbs (like ‘find’, ‘arrive’, ‘prepare’) (when lacking a prefix) require a non-specific, hence non-presuppositional, internal argument (cf. Szabolcsi 1986, É. Kiss 1995). Among others, existential indefinites can, while universals cannot combine with such verbs. As noted in É.Kiss (2002a, 2002b) and Surányi (2002a), these verbs allow an *n*-word as internal argument ((20) = (1a)).

- (20) Nem érkezett senki
 not arrive-PAST-3SG nobody-NOM
 ‘There hasn’t arrived anybody.’

Then *n*-words in such sentences cannot be universal quantifiers, but must be existentials in the scope of negation. Examples like (7) above confirm the accuracy of this conjecture. What renders (7) degraded is the conflicting requirements of *almost* (enforcing the universal reading) and the verb ‘find’ (enforcing an existential reading).

The availability of so-called ‘split’ readings with modal verbs (cf. e.g. Jacobs 1991, Rullmann 1995, de Swart 1996) once again points to the same conclusion. A German sentence like (21a), or an English example like (21b), has three distinct readings.

- (21) a. Die Firma muss keinen Angestellten feuern
 the firm-NOM must no-ACC employee-ACC fire-INF
 ‘The company must fire no employee.’
- b. One is allowed to fire no nurses

For (21b), these readings are the *de re* (‘there are no nurses such that one is allowed to fire them / for every nurse, one is not allowed to fire her’), the *de dicto* (‘what one is allowed to do is: not fire any nurse / what one is allowed to do is: for every nurse, not to fire her’) and the ‘split’ interpretation (‘one is not allowed to fire any nurses at all’). To see that the *de re* and the split readings are truth-conditionally distinct, consider the sentence *The hospital needs to fire no nurse* in a context in which the management of a hospital has decided that due to cutbacks a certain number of nurses need to be made redundant. In that context, the *de re*

reading is true (i.e. there is no nurse such that she needs to be fired), while the split interpretation is false (i.e. it is false that it is not necessary for the hospital to fire any nurse). As Giannakidou (2000) shows, the ‘split’ reading, which has been taken to be decomposed as ‘ $\neg > \text{modal} > \exists$ ’, is unavailable with the Greek counterpart (because Greek *n*-words translate as universal quantifiers). However, the Hungarian equivalent admits this reading rather easily:

- (22) Nem kell elbocsájtani egy ápolónőt sem / senkit (sem)
 not need PREF-fire-INF a nurse-ACC SEM / nobody-ACC (SEM)
 ‘One need not fire any nurses / anybody.’

Hence we have evidence that Hungarian *n*-words may get interpreted as existential quantifiers.¹⁶

2.7 Topicalisability

Universal quantifiers denote familiar discourse entities. This renders them suitable topics, and in a number of languages they can even undergo syntactic topicalisation (e.g. Italian, Greek; cf. Cinque 1990; Giannakidou 2000). As noted in Surányi (2002a), in Hungarian too, when descriptively sufficiently rich to make a topic (e.g. when modified by a relative clause)¹⁷, universal quantifiers can undergo syntactic topicalisation, cf. (23a) where the modified universal precedes another topic. Under the same proviso, *n*-words can also be syntactically topicalised, cf. (23b).

- (23) a. Mindenkinek aki ott volt Péter ajándékot ad
 everybody-DAT who-NOM there was P.-NOM gift-ACC give-3SG
 ‘Peter will give a gift to everybody who was there.’
 b. Senkinek aki ott volt Péter nem ad ajándékot
 nobody-DAT who-NOM there was P.-NOM not give-3SG gift-ACC
 ‘Peter will give a gift to nobody who was there.’

Given that an indefinite in the scope of negation is analysed as novel (e.g. Heim 1982) (and as such can be used in out of the blue contexts), it cannot topicalise. Additionally, it would also be problematic to analyse topicalised instances of *n*-words as indefinites for an independent reason. As argued in Surányi (2002a, 2002b, to appear) *n*-words not modified by a *sem* particle are non-negative; logical negation is contributed by the negation particle *nem*. When topicalised, indefinite *n*-words would escape the scope of their licensing negation, yielding the ‘ $\exists > \neg$ ’ (i.e. not the attested) scope relations. On a universal quantifier construal, however, topicalisation produces the unproblematic ‘ $\forall > \neg$ ’ reading. Then, topicalisability doubly argues that Hungarian *n*-words can receive a universal quantifier interpretation.

¹⁶ The *de dicto* reading of examples in (21) (involving a ‘modal $> \neg$ ’ scope relation) is not available in Hungarian on a Negative Concord interpretation, given that negation is overtly above the modal verb, hence the ‘ $\neg > \text{modal}$ ’ scope relation is fixed. The lexical integrity problem pointed out by Geurts (1996) and de Swart (1996) does not arise with the Hungarian ‘split’ readings, since negation in the construction at hand is a lexeme that is realised overtly and (lexically) independently of the *n*-word.

¹⁷ Descriptive richness is also a condition on topicalisability of universal quantifiers in Greek, and *n*-words in both Greek and Italian (otherwise the universal quantifier apparently picks up a set too large for a discourse referent).

2.8 Licensing

Licensing conditions of existential NPI demand that the NPI be in the immediate scope of the licensor, for our purposes, negation: no other (non-NPI-licensing) operator may intervene (cf. Linebarger's (1987) Immediate Scope Constraint). If Hungarian *n*-words were invariably existentially quantified strong NPI-s (strong in the sense of Zwarts (1996)), they would be expected to obey this condition. As (24) shows, this is not the case. In (24a), the sentence is well-formed whether or not a universal quantifier, or a quantificational adverb occupying a preverbal focus position within the infinitival clause intervenes between the licensing negation in the matrix and the *n*-word in the infinitival clause. In (24b) we have the same configuration of 'negation > focus > *n*-word', only this time within one clause. The *n*-word needs to be stressed in both cases.

- (24) a. Nem akarok mindenkinek /
 not want-1SG everybody-DAT /
 / KÉTSZER elmondani 'semmit (sem)
 / twice PREF-say-INF nothing-ACC SEM
 'I don't want to say anything twice / to everybody.'
 b. Nem MA akarok elmenni 'sehova (sem)
 not today want-1SG PREF-go-INF nowhere SEM
 'I don't want to go anywhere TODAY.'

This pattern can be explained if these *n*-word occurrences are interpreted as universal quantifiers, and as such, covertly move above negation, where they are licensed locally (cf. Giannakidou (2000) for the licensing of universally quantified *n*-words). Indeed in Hungarian accent on a postverbal universal too marks wide scope of the quantifier with respect to a preceding operator (cf. e.g. É. Kiss (1994)); in Surányi (2002a) it is suggested (rejecting various other alternatives) that stress marks covert movement of the quantifier to achieve wide scope. In the case of postverbal occurrences of *n*-words in (24), this operator is negation itself. Notice that in light of section 2.6 the prediction is that these *n*-words can only be interpreted as *de re*. Indeed, this expectation is borne out.

The same consideration extends to explain the unacceptability of sentences analogous to (24) containing a verb that requires a non-presuppositional / non-specific argument:

- (25) Nem fog (*?minden nap) történni semmi
 not will-3SG every day happen-INF nothing-NOM
 'There won't happen anything every day.'

(25) is unacceptable with an intervening quantificational adverb, precisely because the presence of that adverb excludes the existential strong NPI construal, and enforces the 'universal over negation' construal instead (in effect the *de re* / presuppositional reading). However, given that the verb selects for a non-specific / non-presuppositional argument, the result is at best severe pragmatic degradation. We have confirmation then that *n*-words in (24) above can only be interpreted as universal quantifiers, but not as existentials below negation.

2.9 Distributivity

Predicates like *összegyűlik* ‘gather’, *szétszóródik* ‘scatter’, *körülvesz* ‘surround’, etc. require one of their arguments to be interpreted collectively (cf. Dowty 1987).¹⁸ Such predicates cannot be modified by adverbs like *egyenként* ‘individually’ and do not tolerate distributive QPs in their argument position:¹⁹

- (26) a. Az emberek (*egyenként)körülvették a házat
 the people-NOM individually PREF-surround-PAST-3PL the house-ACC
 ‘The people (*individually) gathered on the square.’
 b. *Minden ember körülvette a házat
 Every person-NOM PREF-surround-PAST-3SG the house-ACC
 ‘*Every person gathered on the square.’

With this in mind, consider the examples involving collective predicates occurring with *n*-words below:

- (27) a. Nem veszi körül a házat senki sem
 not take-3SG around the house-ACC nobody-NOM SEM
 ‘Nobody surrounds the house.’
 b. *Senki sem A HÁZAT veszi körül
 nobody-NOM SEM the house-ACC take-3SG around
 ‘Nobody surrounds THE HOUSE.’

It appears that the *n*-word argument can only receive a distributive reading in (27b), while that reading is not forced in (27a). Assuming that when *n*-words are interpreted as universal quantifiers, they are distributive universals of the *every*-NP type, we have evidence here that at least in some cases *n*-words must be interpreted as universal quantifiers (as in (27b)).

2.10 Results

In this section I have applied a number of diagnostics to detect the quantificational status of *n*-words in Hungarian. As demonstrated in sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6, *n*-words in this language can have an existential indefinite interpretation in the scope of negation.

Sections 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9 have provided evidence that they can be interpreted as universals scoping above negation. As I pointed out in the introduction to this section, the long-standing assumption that *n*-words in Hungarian are universal quantifiers also straightforwardly explains their distributional and prosodic similarities (but see section 3 below).

Finally, section 2.1 yielded mixed results: both a universal and an existential interpretation appear to be necessary; indeed this appears to be the conclusion from the whole of section 2 as well. A question that has been avoided so far concerns the syntactic

¹⁸ The relevance of such predicates in testing was pointed out to me by Katalin É. Kiss. It must be noted that apparently, not all collective predicates (e.g. scatter, make a good team, gather) behave completely uniformly in their interaction with *n*-word arguments.

¹⁹ As discussed by Szabolcsi (1997), ‘surround’ is actually ambiguous: estates, for instance, can surround castles in concentric circles too, in which case a distributive reading can be obtained: *Every estate surrounds the castle*. However, such concentric surrounding is unfeasible with persons, who can only collectively surround a building. In fact, whether a predicate is interpreted as distributive or collective (or ambiguous) is in part determined by pragmatic knowledge.

distribution of the two readings. This matter is taken up in the next section, where it will be shown that the two readings have distinct, albeit overlapping, distributions.

3. The distribution of the two interpretations

I turn now to investigate under what syntactic conditions the two interpretations are available to *n*-words. Before embarking on this task, however, we need to have a rough picture of the syntactic positions in the clause that *n*-words are able to occupy.

3.1 The distribution of *n*-words

As illustrated in (5) at the beginning of the chapter, *n*-words can in general either remain postverbal, in which case they can be assumed to be in situ, or they can be fronted (including fronting of multiple instances). As pointed out in the introduction to section 2 above, when fronted, *n*-words are positioned to the left of a preverbal focus and to the right of syntactic topics. This field is identical with what is often referred to as the ‘quantifier field’ of Hungarian clause structure (cf. É. Kiss 1994), which can be targeted by universal quantifiers and other increasing distributive QP-s, and which Szabolcsi (1997), in applying Beghelli and Stowell’s (1994, 1995, 1997) approach to Hungarian, analyses as housing (a recursive) DistP.²⁰

A fundamental question that has been left open thus far in the discussion is whether *n*-words can function as a syntactic focus. The issue is non-trivial, since simple word order considerations are not revealing. This is because verb–prefix inversion, which is the crucial linear indicator of syntactic focalisation in Hungarian, is triggered not only by focus fronting, but also in the presence of sentential negation, i.e. in all of the cases at hand. The issue is not settled in studies of Hungarian NC, and is not considered in overviews of Hungarian clause structure where NC is also discussed in some detail (É. Kiss 1992, 1994, 1998a, 2002a).²¹ I argue now that *n*-words in Hungarian are syntactically focussable, albeit not invariably in focus when preverbal.

Preverbal focus in Hungarian is marked by emphatic accent which is normally followed by a deaccenting of the immediately right-adjacent inverted verb, or the *nem* + verb sequence. Such a stress pattern is readily available with preverbal *n*-words, cf. (28a). On the other hand, if the *n*-word is not emphatic but bears neutral phrasal stress as determined by the Nuclear Stress Rule, then the following verb may also receive stress, cf. (28b). (Capitals indicate emphatic stress, ' marks neutral stress of phonological phrase, while ⁰ full stress reduction.)

²⁰ *N*-words can precede left-peripheral topics only in case they are syntactically topicalised themselves (a rather restricted option); see section 2.7 above. In Szabolcsi (1997), the quantifier field corresponds to the recursive DistP in (i) below, where (recursive) RefP houses topics, and FocP houses fronted foci. Positionally, RefP corresponds to Rizzi’s (1997) TopP projection.

(i) [RefP* (topic field) [DistP* (quantifier field) [FocP (focus) [. . .]]]]

²¹ Puskás (1998, 2000) analyses preverbal *n*-words as being focussed (multiple preverbal *n*-words form are multiply adjoined to [Spec,FocP]); however, no convincing argument is offered. Olsvay (2000) notes two seemingly relevant facts: (i) a preverbal *n*-word can be modified by a relative clause, and (ii) a certain stylistically marked pattern is possible for *n*-words (*n*-word PREF *nem* V). The crucial point is that neither option is available to preverbal focus. These facts, however, only indicate that there exist non-focussed preverbal instances of *n*-words, not that all instances of are non-focussed.

3.2 Interpretations and syntactic positions

In order to examine the availability of the two detected readings as a function of syntactic position, the distribution of three properties will be examined, each of which have been correlated in the preceding section with one or the other of the two interpretations: modifiability by ‘almost’ and by ‘whatsoever / at all’, existential import, and split readings.

First, modifiability. ‘Almost’ can modify *n*-words both in their in situ position and in the quantifier field (cf. (6) above). That suggests that the universal quantifier reading is available in these positions. ‘Almost’ can modify *n*-words even in the focus position:

- (31) (?)Majdnem SENKI ⁰nem ⁰beszélte CSAK A SZOMSZÉDJÁVAL
 almost nobody-NOM not eat-PAST-3SGonly the neighbour-POSS-3SG-with
 ‘Almost nobody talked only to his neighbour.’

I will return to this latter observation in the next section to discuss how a potential problem it creates can be resolved.

Recall that *egyáltalán* ‘whatsoever / at all’ is able to modify existential indefinites in the scope of negation, but cannot modify universals. In this respect, the relevant fact is that *egyáltalán* can modify *n*-words in the postverbal field, as well as in the focus slot, though in the latter position some speakers report a degree of degradation.²² *N*-words modified by *egyáltalán* ‘whatsoever / at all’ are disallowed in the quantifier field; see (8b) above, as well as (32).

- (32) (*?Egyáltalán) senkit nem JÁNOS visz el moziba
 at.all nobody-ACC not J.-NOM take-3SGPREF cinema-to
 ‘JOHN doesn’t take anybody (at all) to the cinema.’

Since modification by *egyáltalán* ‘whatsoever / at all’ allows the existential but not the universal interpretation, the existential reading is apparently ruled out in the quantifier field.

As shown in section 2.6, *n*-words need not have existential presupposition when postverbal, cf. (19). However, in the quantifier field existential import is generated, and this is what makes (33) odd.

- (33) # 'Semmi értelmét 'soha nem láttam
 nothing sense-POSS-3SG-NOM never not see-PAST-1SG
 ‘I have never seen any point (in it).’

When the *n*-word is focussed, the sentence becomes perfectly acceptable again, cf. (34).

- (34) SEMMI ÉRTELMÉT ⁰nem ⁰láttam
 nothing sense-POSS-3SG-ACC not see-PAST-1SG
 ‘I didn’t see any point in it.’

²² This is illustrated by examples such as (i):

- (i) [?]EGYÁLTALÁN SEMMIT sem / nem csináltam
 at.all nothing-ACC SEM not do-PAST-1SG
 ‘I didn’t do anything at all’

In short, there is indication that an existential reading is available postverbally, while such a reading is ruled out in the quantifier field. Focussed *n*-words do not generate existential presuppositions.

As demonstrated in (20) (=1a) above, verbs requiring a non-specific / non-presuppositional argument are compatible with a postverbal *n*-word. In contrast, the quantifier field appears to enforce the universal interpretation, which is incompatible with the non-specificity requirement of the verb, whence the oddity of (35a). Focussed instances of *n*-words, however, are impeccable.

- (35) a. # Senki sehova nem érkezett
 nobody-NOM nowhere-to not arrive-PAST-3SG
 ‘There hasn’t arrived anyone anywhere.’
 b. SENKI ⁰nem érkezett

The conclusion we can draw from this is that the quantifier field enforces the universal interpretation, in contrast with the postverbal domain and the focus slot. (36) provides confirmation for the former conjecture:

- (36) Senki sehova nem érkezett meg
 nobody-NOM nowhere-to not arrive-PAST-3SG PREF
 ‘Nobody has arrived anywhere’

(36), forming a minimal pair with (35a) involves a prefix, which requires the theme argument of the verb to be specific (cf. Chapter 2). If, as we have concluded, the quantifier field (housing the theme argument in (36)) enforces a universally quantified interpretation, then the alteration in acceptability is wholly expected: the universal quantifier is in conformity with the specificity requirement.

In section 2.6 above, postverbal *n*-words were seen to allow a split reading, as well as a *de re* reading. As for the quantifier field, only the *de re* reading obtains there. This reading is derived if *n*-words in the quantifier field are universally quantified and their fronting is put down to universal quantifier movement, (cf. 37a, b). With the *n*-word in syntactic focus, as in (37c), the sentence is apparently ambiguous between describing a situation involving employees of a particular company and the split reading ($\neg > \text{modal} > \exists$), i.e. in this case, a general ethical statement. In other words, (37c) does not require a presupposed set of individuals, being similar in this respect to (22) above, where the *n*-word is postverbal.

- (37) a. Senkit soha nem kell elbocsájtani
 nobody-ACC never not need PREF-fire-INF
 ‘Nobody ever needs to be fired.’
 b. Senkit nem EMIATT kell elbocsájtani
 nobody-ACC not BECAUSE.OF.THIS need PREF-fire-INF
 ‘For nobody is it the case that s/he needs to be fired because of THIS.’
 c. SENKIT ⁰nem ⁰lehet elbocsájtani INDOKOLATLANUL
 nobody-ACC not may PREF-fire-INF unjustifiably
 ‘Nobody may be fired UNJUSTIFIABLY.’

Taking the *de re* reading to be generated in Hungarian by the ‘universal over negation’ construal, the quantifier field appears to be compatible only with a universal reading. A

focussed *n*-word has either a reading with a presupposed set of individuals, or the split reading.²³

It was demonstrated in section 2.9 that *n*-words are compatible with a collective predicate when in the postverbal position (27a), but not when in the quantifier field (27b). *N*-words in the focus slot can also occur with a predicate interpreted collectively:

- (38) SENKI ⁰nem ⁰veszi körül a házat
 nobody-NOM not take-3SG around the house-ACC
 ‘Nobody surrounds the house.’

3.3 Results and discussion

The findings of the previous discussion are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Summary of results

	implication	quantifier field	focus position	postverbal field
1. modification by ‘almost’ possible	can be universally quantified	yes	yes	yes
2. modification by ‘at all’ possible	can be existentially quantified	no	yes	yes
3. necessary existential presupposition	must be universally quantified	yes	no	no
4. compatible with definiteness effect verbs	can be existentially quantified	no	yes	yes
5. ‘split’ reading available	can be existentially quantified	no	yes	yes
6. incompatible with collective predicate	must be universally quantified	yes	no	no

Given these results, the conclusion to draw for the quantifier field is that there *n*-words must be universally quantified. In the postverbal field, both existentially quantified and universally

²³ Representing the *de re* reading with an existentially quantified *n*-word would involve negation scoping over the existential quantifier, which in turn would take the modal in its scope: ‘ $\neg > \exists > \text{modal}$ ’. This scopal representation is not feasible, since the preverbal surface order is ‘*n*-word > negation > modal’, and we have taken Hungarian *n*-words involved here not to carry logical negation; logical negation is contributed by the negation particle (see Note 3, as well as the references cited there). Note also that in case we find ambiguity between the split reading and a reading involving existentially presupposed set of individuals, this may be explained (i) as an ambiguity between the *de re* reading with universal quantification outscoping negation and an interpretation involving existential quantification in the scope of negation, or (ii) as vagueness of the existential quantification in the scope of negation reading in neither requiring, nor disallowing the presence of a given set of individuals in the discourse (that is, being able to be either specific or non-specific; see (i) below for illustrations of the latter), or (iii) a combination of (i) and (ii), i.e. as an ambiguity between the *de re* reading involving a universal over negation and a vague existential-in-the-scope-of-negation interpretation. As will become clear below, postverbal *n*-words represent case (iii), and focussed *n*-words represent case (ii) (i.e., focussed *n*-words are never universally quantified).

- (i) a. SENKI nem érkezett meg
 nobody-NOM not arrive-PAST-3SG PREF
 ‘Nobody has arrived.’

- b. He wrote five books altogether. If you read any book by him, you’ll know what he’s like.

quantified *n*-words are allowed (and the latter, similarly to positive universal QPs, undergo covert quantifier raising (to a position above negation)). I discuss the implications of these findings directly, and then I return to the results obtained for the focus slot.

If the conclusions thus far are correct, then a quantificational ambiguity approach to Hungarian *n*-words is required. Such an approach has been proposed in various forms in the literature (cf. van der Wouden and Zwarts (1993), Dowty (1994), Ladusaw (1994), Richter and Salier (1998), and Herburger (2001)); the ambiguity is generally taken to be one between a negative universal and a non-negative NPI indefinite construal.²⁴ The indefinite NPI treatment of the existential interpretation of *n*-words was first proposed in Ladusaw (1992), and was developed in Ladusaw (1994), Acquaviva (1993, 1997), Giannakidou and Quer (1995, 1997), Giannakidou (1997) and Richter and Salier (1998), among others. As discussed extensively by Giannakidou (2000; to appear), in fact the issue of universal / existential quantificational force and the issue of negativity are logically independent (she advocates the view that Greek *n*-words have universal force, and are logically non-negative).

My proposal for Hungarian is a variety of the ambiguity approach: Hungarian *n*-words are ambiguous between a logically non-negative universal quantifier interpretation, and a logically non-negative Heimian indefinite interpretation. In particular, I adopt the view that indefinite NPI-s are licensed in the (immediate) scope of negation, and they are interpreted as a Heimian indefinite (contributing a variable and a descriptive restriction only; for the particular implementation, see below): their existential interpretation is due to the fact that they come to be bound under existential closure applying to the nuclear scope of negation (cf. Heim 1982, Giannakidou 1997).

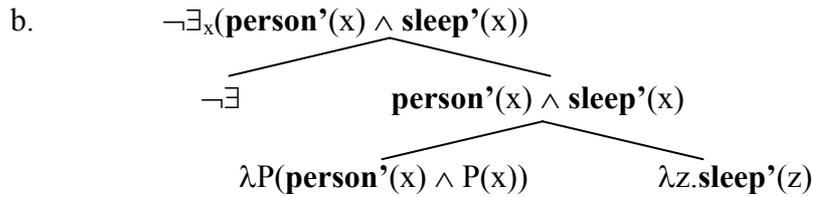
The existential reading in the postverbal field is now straightforward to account for: here, being in the scope of negation, indefinite NPI-s are subject to existential closure. In particular, following Heim (1982) and Giannakidou (1997), negation is taken to be interpreted either as \neg or as $\neg\exists$, where the latter interpretation arises in the case of existential closure in the scope of negation. As for the interpretation of indefinites, I follow von Stechow's (1993, 2004) implementation of the Heimian view of indefinites in assuming the variable and descriptive restriction part of indefinites to yield an expression of type $\langle\langle et \rangle\rangle$ (e.g. *senki* 'nobody' is interpreted as $\|\lambda P(\mathbf{person}'(x) \wedge P(x))\|$).²⁵ Given that *n*-words are (non-quantificational) indefinite NPI-s on their existential reading, it also follows that they cannot be fronted to the quantifier field. This is because the quantifier field is essentially the target domain for the fronting of increasing distributive quantifiers (Szabolcsi 1997). Given that non-quantificational indefinite NPI-s do not belong to this class, they cannot undergo such quantifier raising.

Note that as far as the test results in the postverbal field are concerned, the ambiguity of *n*-words could well be one between a universal quantifier and an existential quantifier interpretation. However, what I have proposed is an ambiguity between a universal QP and a non-quantificational indefinite reading. I come to reasons for opting for a non-quantificational indefinite meaning as one of the two lexically available interpretations, instead of an existential quantifier meaning, after presenting an outline of the proposed picture, which I turn to presently.

Besides the existential reading, Hungarian *n*-words have been demonstrated to also exhibit the universal reading. The universal quantifier itself can possibly be identified with the

²⁴ That *n*-words can be ambiguous between a negative and a non-negative interpretation within a single language has also been entertained; see van der Wouden and Zwarts (1993) and Zwarts (1997) for a configurational / contextual ambiguity treatment, and Longobardi (1991), Herburger (2001) and Giannakidou (to appear) for suggestions of lexical ambiguity.

²⁵ The particular choice for the interpretation of non-quantificational (Heimian) indefinites contributing a predicative restriction and a free individual variable is immaterial for the present purposes.



Derivation (41a) involves QR of the universal quantifier *n*-word, while on the indefinite reading, the *n*-word is existentially closed under negation. The lexical ambiguity is one between the absence and presence of the universal quantificational force.

Let us turn to the results obtained for the focus position in Table 1 above. The findings are identical with those in the case of the postverbal field. I show now that treating focussed *n*-words as universally quantified is not feasible, but focussed *n*-words cannot be existentially quantified QPs either. If so, then the ambiguity of *n*-words is not one between a universal QP and an existential QP.

Consider first (37c), a sentence with an *n*-word in focus that is apparently ambiguous between the *de re* and the so-called ‘split’ (‘ $\neg > \text{modal} > \exists$ ’) readings. A complication that would arise if focussed *n*-words were lexically quantified existentially (as one of two quantificational force options here) is the following. Given that a focussed *n*-word is situated in an A-bar position above the modal verb, which it c-commands from this A-bar position, therefore obligatorily taking it in its scope, there is no way one can get ‘ $\neg > \text{modal} > \exists$ ’ scope relations. Clearly, the universal quantifier interpretation cannot be applied here either, since that would *have to* generate an existential presupposition, which is simply not the case with *n*-words in focus. It appears then that paradoxically, when the *n*-word is in focus, what appears to be the ‘split’ reading does not involve a lexically existentially quantified *n*-word and is not represented as ‘ $\neg > \text{modal} > \exists$ ’, but must be associated with a different semantic description.

Quite independently of the apparent ‘split reading’, if a focussed *n*-word, which is in an A-bar position above negation, is interpreted as an existential quantifier, the result is wrongly predicted that negation is in the scope of existential quantification (‘ $\exists > \neg$ ’). Once again, it appears that an *n*-word in focus cannot be an existential quantifier. However, it must be existentially quantified, according to the implication in lines 2, 4 and 5 in Table 1 above (line 2 records the fact that *n*-words in focus can be modified by ‘at all’, and line 4 registers that they can combine with a definiteness effect verb).

Focussed *n*-words can (with some degree of degradation) be modified by ‘almost’ (cf. (31)), which in the present context has been taken to be a property of universals. This fact is remarkable, since universals (whether containing a count or a mass noun, cf. English ‘every’ or ‘all’) cannot be syntactically focussed in Hungarian.²⁶

- (42) *MINDEN BORT ivott meg
 all wine-ACC drink-PAST-3SG PREF
 ‘He drank ALL THE WINE.’

This fact strongly suggests that *n*-words in focus are not interpreted as universal quantifiers. This is unexpected, given our earlier conclusion that the existential quantifier interpretation is unavailable to focussed *n*-words: the remaining other option would have been the universally quantified interpretation.

²⁶ This restriction is not limited to Hungarian; see, for instance, Rizzi (1997). Note that syntactic focus in Hungarian is identificational, not informational or ‘new-focus’, cf. É.Kiss (1998b).

That *n*-words in focus should be invariably universally quantified is also questioned by the observation, illustrated in (35b), that *n*-words in focus can be internal arguments of ‘definiteness effect’ verbs, i.e. verbs requiring their internal argument to be non-specific.

If the conjecture is conjecture that *n*-words in focus are not interpreted as universally quantified is correct, it also explains the fact that a ‘definiteness effect’ verb, which normally does not tolerate an *n*-word modified by ‘almost’ (cf. (7) above), tolerates a similarly modified *n*-word up to full acceptability:

- (43) ^(?)Majdnem SENKI ⁰nem ⁰érkezett PONT IDŐBEN
 almost nobody-NOM not arrive-PAST-3SG exactly time-in
 ‘Almost nobody arrived exactly on time.’

The bottom line of the foregoing discussion appears paradoxical: *n*-words in focus are interpreted neither as existential quantifiers nor as universal quantifiers. This evidently raises the question what interpretation focussed *n*-words in fact have. A resolution of this issue that I offer is based on the proposal above that the lexical ambiguity of *n*-words is one between a universal quantifier and a non-quantificational indefinite reading. Accepting that universal quantifiers cannot be in syntactic focus in Hungarian (cf. (42)), I suggest that *n*-words in focus are of the non-quantificational (Heimian) indefinite variety. The particular treatment that I lay out in the remainder of this chapter in section 4 is grounded on the assumption that when in focus the Heimian indefinite variety of *n*-words receives a scalar interpretation due to a scalar focus particle ‘even’.

The view that the existential reading of *n*-words derives from a Heimian bare indefinite interpretation finds suggestive support in the following pattern:

- (44) a. Nem írtam semmit
 not write-PAST-1SG nothing-ACC
 ‘I didn’t write anything.’
 b. *Nem írtam egy levelet
 not write-PAST-1SG a letter-ACC
 ‘I didn’t write a letter.’
 c. Nem írtam levelet
 not write-PAST-1SG letter-ACC
 ‘I didn’t write a letter.’

While an *n*-word can co-occur with a definiteness effect verb postverbally (44a), the same is disallowed for an indefinite DP (with an indefinite article) (44b). At the same time, bare nominal indefinites are just as fine as *n*-words (44c). Bare nominals are usually treated as being interpreted as contributing a variable and a predicative restriction (cf. van Geenhoven 1995, 1998, Farkas and de Swart 2003, Chung and Ladusaw 2004, and references cited there). Since I have assumed *n*-words be on a par with bare nominals in this regard, the fact that they pattern together in (44) above is expected.

4. *N*-words and focus

In order to understand how syntactic focussing can affect the interpretation of *n*-words in Hungarian, we need to examine the semantics of indefinite *n*-words and NPI-s in a little more detail.

4.1 Scalarity and focus

The interpretation of indefinite *n*-words / NPI-s has often been likened to that of minimizers, expressions like the ones below.

- (45) a. Egy cseppet sem érdekli Pétert
a drop-ACC SEM interest-3SG P-ACC
'It doesn't interest Peter a bit.'
- b. Egy fillért sem költött el
a penny-ACC SEM spend-PAST-3SG PREF
'(S)he didn't spend a penny.'

Minimizers are polarity elements which denote a minimal quantity or extent. According to Horn (1989: 400), when these elements 'occur in negative contexts, the negation denotes the absence of a minimal quantity, and hence the presence of no quantity at all.' Hence, in negative contexts, they act as a means of negative reinforcement (cf. Vallduvi 1994). Significantly, minimizers in Hungarian are normally modified by the *sem* particle. As pointed out above, *sem* is historically a morphological combination of *is* 'also'/'even' plus *nem* 'not', the negation particle. Analogously to what is argued by Vallduvi (1994) for Catalan, *sem* contributes 'not even' to the interpretation of minimizers: it holds for not even the minimal quantity *x* (e.g. *csepp* 'bit', *fillér* 'penny') that *p*. Hungarian then realizes overtly in the *sem* scalar additive particle what Fauconnier (1975a, 1975b) argues to be an implicit 'even' built into the semantics of minimizers; see also Heim (1984).

N-words can optionally be modified by the *sem* particle (see Note 3). I contend that a modified indefinite *n*-word in focus is interpreted in much the same way as minimizers. It has been proposed that NPI-s / indefinite *n*-words are interpreted as the conventionalized extreme element of a scale for which the given property is most likely to hold, cf. Fauconnier (ibid.), who claims English *any* as well to mark an endpoint on a contextually derived pragmatic scale; see also Lee and Horn (1994) (according to whom *any*-phrases are combinations of indefinites + *even*) and Krifka (1995) for more recent proposals along the same lines, and also Lahiri (1995, 1998) for an essentially similar view of Hindi.²⁷ Hindi (among other languages, e.g. Japanese and Korean) morphologically overtly combine a scalar particle 'even' with an indefinite or indeterminate pronoun in their paradigm of NPI-s. Krifka (1995) considers NPI pronouns to denote general predicates, e.g. 'thing' or 'person'. In focus, then, the bottom element is identified as the element for which the property does not hold, and by implicature, the property also fails to hold for all elements higher on the scale (in the case of *senki* 'nobody', it fails to hold for all sets of persons).

Hungarian (similarly to Hindi, Japanese, Korean, etc.) appears to grammaticalize the scalar (i.e. alternative set invoking) nature of *n*-words in exhibiting an *n*-word paradigm with an overtly appended scalar additive particle. The option of syntactic focussing itself is just another facet of such grammaticalization.

The scalar implicature is directly and overtly triggered by *sem* 'even', but it can be generated in the absence of *sem* as well when the (unmodified) *n*-word is in syntactic focus.. In this latter case, however, the focussed *n*-word is perceived as more marked. Thus, in fact (46a) is slightly more marked than (46b) with a modified *n*-word.

²⁷ According to Lahiri (1998), NPI-s in Hindi are inherently focussed. This might be the case for Hungarian *n*-words modified by *sem* generally, although this type of focus is clearly different from the one for which Hungarian reserves the immediately preverbal position, and which is characterized by identification and exclusion, a type of contrastive focus (on different kinds of focus, see É.Kiss (1998b)).

Tsimplici and Roussou (1996) suggest that Greek *n*-words (which are invariably emphatic) are instances of focus. Watanabe (2004) proposes that *n*-words check a focus feature universally.

- (46) a. SEMMIT ⁰nem ⁰találtam
 nothing-ACC not find-PAST-1SG
 ‘I didn’t find anything.’
 b. SEMMIT SEM ⁰találtam
 nothing-ACC SEM find-PAST-1SG
 ‘I didn’t find anything.’

This markedness difference is even more pronounced with minimizers: in (47) below the scalar particle *sem* is missing, hence it involves some extra processing to generate the appropriate implicature.

- (47) a. Egy FILLÉRT ⁰nem ⁰költött el
 a penny-ACC not spend-PAST-3SG PREF
 ‘(S)he didn’t spend a penny.’
 b. Egy SZÓT ⁰nem ⁰szóltam Péterhez
 a word-ACC not say-PAST-1SG P.-to
 ‘I didn’t say a word to Peter.’

That the analogue between minimizers and indefinite *n*-words in Hungarian is correct (and that *n*-words involve a separate ‘even’ component) is confirmed by examples from nineteenth century Hungarian like (48). Here the pseudo-object *n*-word itself functions as a minimizer (and in present-day Hungarian it would be replaced by the minimizer *kicsit sem*, lit. little-ACC SEM ‘not a bit’). The ‘even’ and the ‘not’ components are separate free morphemes:

- (48) Az istentől pedig mi semmit is nem félünk
 the God-from TOP-PRT we nothing-ACC even not be.afraid-1PL
 ‘And as for God, we are not afraid of him a bit.’
 [Szilágyi, 1889, Chapt.5]

Further, some minimizers allow the suppression of their indefinite article in present-day Hungarian, once again suggestive of a close link between minimizers and bare indefinite *n*-words:

- (49) SZÓ ⁰nem ⁰volt róla
 word-nom not be-past-3sg about.it
 ‘It wasn’t even mentioned.’

4.2 Interpretation in syntactic focus

Let me now characterize the semantic interpretation of sentences with an *n*-word in the syntactic focus position more explicitly. Karttunen and Peters (1979) argued that ‘even’ scopes over clausemate negation in cases like *Sam doesn’t know even Italian*, cf. [even [not [Sam know [_F Italian]]]], where the scalar focus particle ‘even’ is associated with ‘Italian’ as focus. I will assume the same for the LF of sentences with a focussed *n*-word: [even [_F *n*-word] [not [...]] (cf. Wilkinson 1996, Guerzoni 2002, 2004). The focus associated with ‘even’ is the *n*-word itself, i.e. the extremely general (therefore in the context extremely likely) predicate: focus interpretation lambda-abstracts only this predicate (*P* in (38a) below), leaving the individual variable behind, where it is safely bound under existential closure. In other words, the analysis of *n*-words in the focus slot is one of predicative focus: what is in semantic focus is the predicate part of the *n*-word. A sentence like (50) is interpreted as

represented in (51a) (the representation here is given in a somewhat simplified form, and is formulated in a structured meanings approach to focus, but nothing hinges on this choice). The assertion itself is provided in (51c) and the relevant presupposition (a conjunction of an existential and a scalar presupposition) is spelled out in (51d).²⁸

(50) SEMMIT ⁰nem ⁰talált János
 nothing-ACC not find-PAST-3SG J.-NOM
 ‘John didn’t find anything’

(51) a. $\| \text{even} \| \langle \| \text{thing}' \|, \| \lambda P. [\neg \exists x. (P(x) \wedge \text{found}'(j)(x))] \| \rangle$
 b. $>_{\lambda x. \text{found}'(j)(x)} = \{ \langle P, Q \rangle \mid \text{It's more likely that there is an } x \text{ that is a } P \text{ such that John found } x, \text{ than that there is a } y \text{ that is a } Q \text{ such that John found } y \}$
 c. $\neg \exists x. (\text{thing}'(x) \wedge \text{found}'(j)(x))$
 d. $\exists Q(Q \neq \text{thing}' \wedge \text{thing}' > Q \wedge \neg \exists y(Q(y) \wedge \text{found}'(j)(y))) \wedge \forall Q(Q \neq \text{thing}' \rightarrow \text{thing}' > Q)$

(51a) can be paraphrased informally as ‘Even for the (most general and therefore most likely) predicate **thing'** it is not the case that there is something that is (a) **thing'** and that John found it’. According to the presupposition (51d) the following holds: there exist(s) (an)other predicate(s) *Q* such that it is less likely for John to find a *Q* than to find a **thing'**, and for this/these *Q* predicate(s) it is also not the case that there is a *Q* that John found; and in fact **thing'** is the most likely predicate (the upper bound) on the scale defined by the relation given informally in (51b).²⁹

²⁸ As for the (universal) quantification over properties in the second line, the set of predicates to be quantified over is to be understood (as usual with ‘even’) as appropriately restricted (e.g. only entities that *can* be meaningfully found should be relevant).

Note that on the approach to the interpretation of focus presented in Chapter 9 (by É. Kiss), where preverbal focus is located in PredP (which corresponds to the FocP of mainstream clause architecture, cf. Rizzi 1997), an exhaustive identificational focus expression serves as a specificational predicate: it provides a set that characterises the other set that is denoted by the logical subject of the predication involving the focussed phrase as a predicate. A non-exhaustive focus is treated as predicational. The present analysis can also be cast in this approach, where *n*-words in the focus position, *qua* indefinite expressions, can function as either of these two types of focus (the relevant predicate serving as either predicational or specificational focus being **thing'**). Recall from Chapter 9 that specificational foci allow for the cancellation of the exhaustivity that is implied by the specificational focus interpretation. Similarly, on its specificational (in another terminology, identificational) interpretation, focussed *n*-words also allow for cancellation of the exhaustivity implication:

(i) SENKI nem jött el, csak Péter / de Péter igen
 nobody-NOM not come-PAST-3SG PREF only P.-NOM / but P.-NOM yes
 ‘Nobody came along, except Peter / but Peter did.’

²⁹ In essence, the proposed interpretation of *n*-words in focus renders them analogous to other bare indefinites in focus which represent endpoints of a scale, for instance the idiomatic example in (i). A paraphrase of (i) would be ‘Even for the lowest predicate on the pragmatically relevant scale DOG it is not the case that John considers Peter to be DOG.’

(i) János kutyába sem veszi Pétert
 J.-NOM dog-in SEM take-3SG P.-ACC
 ~‘John doesn’t (even) take notice of Peter.’

Note that the interpretation for sentences with an *n*-word in focus is not a third type of interpretation; it arises as a regular result of focussing a predicative indefinite, which in turn is one of the two readings of *n*-words in Hungarian.

Interesting corroboration of the present analysis in terms of a Heimian indefinite treatment of focussed *n*-words comes from a somewhat archaic construction involving bare *wh*-pronouns instead of *n*-words, with an equivalent interpretation. *Wh*-pronouns function as bare Heimian indefinites in this construction (and according to Lipták (2001), in various others in Hungarian).

- (52) a. Mit sem használt
 what-ACC SEM use-PAST-3SG
 ‘It had no effect whatsoever.’
- b. Mit sem változtat a tényeken
 what-ACC SEM change-3SG the facts-on
 ‘It does not change the facts at all.’

This construction is equivalent to corresponding variants with an *n*-word in place of the bare *wh*-pronoun precisely because in focus, *n*-words, just like bare *wh*-pronouns, are interpreted as pure indefinites.³⁰

Note that what I have argued is that when *n*-words are in syntactic focus, they are interpreted as containing an ‘even’ element. It appears that when not in syntactic focus, they do not have an interpreted ‘even’ component. The ‘even’ component is morphosyntactically realised as the *sem* particle. As pointed out above, when the *n*-word is in syntactic focus, the *sem* particle can be absent, however, in such cases the sentence becomes more marked since ‘even’ is interpreted but is not morphosyntactically expressed (cf. 46a); and the same is true of minimizers containing the *sem* particle (cf. 47). The ‘even’ component of meaning is clearly not present on the universal quantifier reading of *n*-words (indeed the positive polarity counterpart *is* ‘even’ cannot modify positive universal quantifiers like *mindenki* ‘everybody’: **mindenki is*). In the postverbal field, the appearance of the *sem* particle with indefinite *n*-words is completely optional, without any clearly perceivable semantic difference:

- (53) Nem találtam semmit (sem)
 not find-PAST-1SG nothing-ACC SEM
 ‘I didn’t find anything.’

It appears that the ‘even’ component of meaning is faded from *n*-words (even in the overt presence of the *sem* particle), and it is only activated in the focus position. *Sem* in minimizers is preserved and interpreted across the board when not in focus: their *sem* particle is obligatory.

- (54) Nem költött egy fillért *(sem) el [cf. (47a)]
 not spend-PAST-3SG a penny-ACC SEM PREF
 ‘(S)he didn’t spend a penny.’

³⁰ Such *wh*-pronouns modified by *sem* must be syntactically focussed. A non-focussed, postverbal occurrence is unacceptable:

- (i) *Nem használt mit sem [cf. (52a)]
 not use-PAST-3SG what-ACC SEM

Another construction where *n*-words are interchangeable with bare *wh*-indefinites is illustrated in (ii).

- (ii) Nem tudok / lehet mit csinálni
 not can-1SG / may what-ACC do-INF
 ‘I can’t do anything. / Nothing can be done.’

4.3 Results in focus reconsidered

With the above interpretation in mind, let us re-examine the behaviour of *n*-words in focus in light of the results of section 3. Since *n*-words in focus are interpreted neither as universal nor as existential quantifiers, the paradoxes highlighted in section 3.3 dissolve. Significantly, it is not problematic that *n*-words can be in syntactic focus while positive universals cannot, as *n*-words in focus are not universals. This is also the reason why existential presupposition is not necessarily generated by focussed *n*-words. On the other hand, no scope reversal of negation and existential quantification ($\exists > \neg$) is generated either, given that *n*-words in focus are not existentially quantified above negation (existential closure is *below* negation).

It was shown in section 3.2 (cf. (31)) that focussed *n*-words can be modified by ‘almost’. As pointed out in section 2.1 (cf. Note 7), ‘almost’-modification is basically a diagnostic for end-of-scale (or exact) values. If the two available alternatives are analysing *n*-words as universal quantifiers or as existential indefinites in the scope of negation, then this diagnostic would suggest that *n*-words are universals. The reason why it cannot modify NPI existential indefinite *n*-words in the scope of negation is that ‘almost’ cannot appear in the immediate scope of negation; see Horn (2000) for detailed discussion of this point. As we have seen, however, when functioning as identificational focus, *n*-words receive an interpretation where their bare (nominal) predicate component is set in semantic focus. Given that bare *n*-word predicative restrictions are taken to be end-of-scale values when in focus triggering an appropriate scalar implicature, they can be modified by ‘almost’. The fact that ‘almost’ here does not modify a universal QP, but an end-of-scale predicative element, might be responsible for the perceived difference in acceptability (‘almost’-modification of *n*-words in focus is slightly degraded.)³¹

‘Almost’-modification was seen not to render a focussed *n*-word incompatible with a verb that selects for a non-specific argument, cf. (44). This can be also understood in terms of the present analysis: since *n*-words in focus modified by ‘almost’ are not universals, but are indefinites, they are expected to be appropriate arguments for ‘definiteness effect’ verbs (cf. also (34)). Modification by ‘at all’ fits the picture in the same manner: ‘at all’ can modify indefinites, hence it can modify the indefinite *n*-word of focus as well.³²

³¹ An alternative would be to admit ambiguity even in the focus slot: besides the *n*-word-predicate-in-focus interpretation, one would allow universally quantified *n*-words to be syntactically focused. Recall that this option was dismissed above in view of the fact that (positive polarity) universal QPs are not syntactically focussable in Hungarian (cf. (42)). One could argue that *n*-words are negative polarity counterparts of such universal QPs, and this may be responsible for the fact that they, in contrast to positive polarity universal QPs, *can* be syntactically focussed. This in turn could explain why *almost*-modification is possible in focus (albeit not why it is slightly degraded). The fact (to be discussed immediately below) that a focused *n*-word is compatible with definiteness effect verbs would also be explicable. It is a general observation that definite NPs can combine with definiteness effect verbs when in focus, cf. (i). (Note that universal quantifiers are nevertheless uniformly incompatible with definiteness effect verbs in Hungarian.)

- (i) A SZINTAXIS ELŐADÓ érkezett TEGNAP
the syntax lecturer-NOM arrive-PAST-3SG yesterday
‘It’s the SYNTAX LECTURER that arrived YESTERDAY.’

³² As noted in section 3.2, Note 22, for some speakers such examples are slightly degraded. This degradation can be explained in terms of a redundancy that exists in such sentences: by placing the *n*-word in semantic focus *qua* an extreme element of a scale (operated on by the (overt or covert) ‘even’ focus particle), the widening effect of ‘at all’ is redundant. A similar oddity deriving from an analogous redundancy is witnessed in English with minimizers when ‘even’ is overt:

- (i) ?He didn’t even spend a penny at all

Finally, apparent ‘split’ readings with focussed *n*-words, just as with postverbal *n*-words, involve existential closure in the scope of the modal operator ($\neg > \text{modal} > \exists$): focussing set only the predicative restriction part of the *n*-word in semantic focus (modulo ‘even’), the scope of existential closure is unaltered. In effect, no existential presupposition (here: specific set of employees) is necessary (although the sentence is of course compatible with a discourse involving a given set of employees).

In sum, the mysteries encountered in the behaviour of *n*-words in focus can be resolved in terms of the proposed semantic analysis.

5. Concluding remarks

I have argued in this chapter that *n*-words in Hungarian are ambiguous between a (polarity sensitive) universal quantifier and non-quantificational indefinite interpretation. This is the ambiguity that is involved in the specificity contrast in the pair of examples in (1). Significantly, this result confirms the prediction of Giannakidou (2000: 518) that there must be languages that realize both universal and existential negation with their *n*-words.³³

Hungarian has an existential paradigm of NPI-s (made up of the morpheme *vala-* plus bare *wh*-indefinites) which are licensed in a range of averidical environments, including the scope of negation. However, there appears to be an anti-locality requirement: *vala*-NPI cannot be clausemate to negation. This pattern is also found with Slavic languages. If *n*-words also have an indefinite (existential) interpretation, as I have argued here, then we can understand this as a blocking effect: local existential reading can be expressed by *n*-words, hence *vala*-NPI-s are blocked locally to negation.

I also demonstrated that *n*-words in Hungarian can be syntactically focussed, due to the scalar ‘even’ particle overtly appearing in negative *n*-words paradigm. The interpretation of *n*-words in focus was argued to crucially depend on the non-quantificational indefinite analysis of the existential reading of *n*-words.

If correct, these results make two significant theoretical points. (i) The two major mechanisms proposed for Negative Concord structures cross-linguistically are both needed in a single language, therefore both are necessary in a typology of NC. (ii) The issues of negativity and quantificationality are independent: both non-quantificational indefinite and quantificational *n*-words can be logically non-negative.

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³³ The quantificational ambiguity uncovered here may also be made sense of in the context of Jespersen’s cycle. Jespersen’s description of the historical development of various languages revealed that in many cases *n*-words enter the language as NPI-s, and over time, potentially going through several stages, they shift to semantically negative expressions (i.e. expressions carrying logical negation) (cf. Jespersen, 1917), typically also acquiring quantificational force of their own. Therefore, from this perspective it is not so surprising after all to find languages which in their present stage simultaneously exhibit both the quantificational and the non-quantificational *n*-word varieties.

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