

Who invokes silent negation?  
The view from a hybrid negative concord language  
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### Background

Italian (non-strict NC)	Czech (strict NC)	(Zeijlstra 2004—2022)
<b>non</b> <b>iNeg</b> $\neg$	<b>ne</b> <b>uNeg</b>	
<b>nessuno</b> <b>uNeg</b> $\exists$	<b>nikdo</b> <b>uNeg</b> $\exists$	
Op $\neg$ <b>iNeg</b> $\neg$	Op $\neg$ <b>iNeg</b> $\neg$	

Two critical points: Strict/non-strict NC differ wrto Negative Markers (NM)  
NCIs are invariably uNeg (invoke Op $\neg$ )

Hungarian is a “true hybrid NC” language.

The NM, NEM is never optional, unlike in Catalan, Russian SL, Modern Greek...

If the preverbal NCI is SENKI, NEM must follow.

If it is SENKI SEM, NEM must not follow.

(1) a.	Nikto	ne	videl	nichego.	* w/o <i>ne</i>	‘No one saw anything’
(2) a.	Nessuno		ha visto	niente.	* with <i>non</i>	‘No one saw anything’
(3) a.	Senki	nem	látott	semmit.	* w/o <i>nem</i>	‘No one saw anything’
(4) a.	Senki sem		látott	semmit sem.	* with <i>nem</i>	‘No one saw anything’
(1) b.	Marija	ne	videla	nichego.	* w/o <i>ne</i>	‘M didn’t see anything’
(2) b.	Maria	non	ha visto	niente.	* w/o <i>non</i>	‘M didn’t see anything’
(3) b.	Mari	nem	látott	semmit.	* w/o <i>nem</i>	‘M didn’t see anything’
(4) b.	Mari	nem	látott	semmit sem.	* w/o <i>nem</i>	‘M didn’t see anything’

Postverbally, all combinations are available:

{Sen-ki / Mari}	{nem / sem}	látott	se-hol (sem)	sem-mit (sem).
{N-one / Mari}	{NM / NOR}	saw	N-place (NOR)	N-thing (NOR)

### Questions

- Hungarian requires a single unitary NM. Should it be uNeg or iNeg?
- Should NCIs be uNeg?

### Proposed answers

- NM is uNeg. (as in Zeijlstra for strict-NC)
- NCIs are not uNeg: they need to be exhaustified. An independently supplied intervening  $\neg$  ensures coherence. (as in Chierchia 2013 for non-strict NC)
- Hungarian SEM ‘nor’ is the overt counterpart of Chierchia’s null NEG head. (as in Szabolcsi 2017, 2018a,b)

This proposal builds on, but differs from, Surányi 2006 and Kenesei 2009.

It differs from Szabolcsi 2018a,b in that the unitary NM NEM is uNeg, not iNeg.

The analysis of NCIs is the same as in Szabolcsi 2018a,b.

## Part One: The Hungarian NM is uNeg

### 1. How do we know that Hungarian NEM is uNeg?

- Argument from fragment NCI answers, à la Zeijlstra

Everybody assumes that (unless NCIs are themselves negative), fragment answers need a deleted uNeg element and a null [iNeg, ¬] it invokes.

Szabolcsi 2018a, with NM=[iNeg, ¬] cannot account for the strict-NC case. (How does this NM scope over SENKI? How is it elided in positive context?)

Ki szólt?	Senki	[ <del>nem</del> szólt].	Hungarian strict-NC
who spoke –	N-one	NM spoke	

The non-strict case was okay, b/c SEM (like Chierchia's NEG) is uNeg:

Ki szólt?	Op¬	Senki sem	[szólt].	Hungarian non-strict NC
`Who spoke?		N-one NOR	spoke	

- Argument from ¬ scoping over material preceding the NM, à la Zeijlstra

If [...] is in Spec, NegP by remnant movement, [iNeg, ¬] NM scopes over it:

[Senki egy szót _____ nekem]	nem szólt.
N-one one word-acc to.me	NM spoke
`Nobody said one word to me'	

But KATI IS `Kati too' has no reason to be in Spec, NegP. It is in its canonical IsP position (a subtype of DistP); it is not a contrastive topic; and it does not reconstruct. [iNeg, ¬] cannot scope over it.

(Mari segít).	Ha	KATI is	nem segít,	baj	lesz.
Mary helps	if	Kati too	NM helps	trouble will-be	
`If it is not the case that Kati helps too, there will be trouble.'					

The plain meaning can only be computed if NM scopes over `Kati too'.

Note: The conditional is needed, b/c IS `too' is a PPI (needs to be "rescued").

- New argument from `neither... nor' constructions: see last section (in Part Two).



4. What to conclude? Does the NM have uNeg in just the NC languages that are “basically” strict, or in all NC languages, or in all languages? The main evidence for Italian NON having iNeg seems to be the one type *Molto non...* \*¬ > much.

Mne mnogo ne nuzhno.	Molto (pizza) non ha mangiato.
to.me much NM needed	much (pizza) NM has eaten
¬ > much: ‘I don’t need much’	* ¬ > much: ‘She hasn’t eaten much’

But even non-NC English allows negation to scope over preceding material:  
‘if it were not the case that even/also the Newtonian philosophy is permitted...’

“If *even the Newtonian philosophy were not* permitted to be questioned, mankind could not feel as complete assurance of its truth as they now do.”  
(J S Mill 1859, On Liberty, Chapter II <https://www.utilitarianism.com/ol/two.html>)

More fine-grained research is needed.

## Part Two: The other face of the hybrid: Non-strict NC in Hungarian

My main claim:

5. Hungarian SEM ‘nor’ is the overt counterpart of Chierchia’s null NEG head.

Recall, Chierchia says NCIs must be exhaustified by Op-EXH (officially, O<sub>ALT</sub>). In addition, he introduces a null syntactic head NEG that (i) needs an agreeing NCI in its specifier, and (ii) requires an abstract negation, ¬ to scope right above its projection.<sup>1</sup> On his account, ¬ is entirely abstract, it has no syntactic carrier.

Nessuno ha telefonato. ‘No one called’	
Op[iNeg, ¬] nessuno[uNeg] ha telefonato	Zeijlstra
O <sub>ALT</sub> ¬ (nessuno[[+n-D]] NEG[[+n-D]] ha telefonato )	Chierchia

Szabolcsi 2018a,b argued that Hungarian preverbal SEM ‘nor’ is an overt counterpart of Chierchia’s NEG with the n-word SENKI in its specifier:

O<sub>ALT</sub> ¬ (SemP senki[[+n-D]] **sem**[[+n-D]] telefonált )

The received wisdom in the literature on Hungarian:  
IS ‘too’ is a focus-associating head on the clausal spine, and  
SEM is its counterpart in the immediate scope of negation.

This makes for a natural connection with Chierchia’s NEG.

<sup>1</sup> Notation: Chierchia’s [[n-D]] feature corresponds to Zeijlstra’s [uNeg] (Chierchia 2013: 233) – in effect, not in content. [[n-D]] is checked by the exhaustifier O<sub>ALT</sub>.

IS/SEM must have a stressed element in its specifier. It accommodates a variety of different stressed elements, including lexical expressions and quantifiers. Unlike NEG, SEM doesn't specialize in NCIs.

### 6. IS has a sparse semantics: it activates alternatives

Szabolcsi 2017 argues that Hung. IS, Serbo-Croatian I, and Hindi BHII are "TOO-particles" that build additives, NPIs, NCIs, and FCIs, often aided by other particles. In Fox/Chierchia style theories these all involve exhaustification.

Hungarian	Serbo-Croatian	Hindi	English
Mari <b>is</b>	<b>i</b> Josip	Raam <b>bhii</b>	X too
még Mari <b>is</b>	(čak) <b>i</b> Josip	Raam <b>bhii</b>	even X
Mari <b>sem</b>	<b>ni</b> Josip	Raam <b>bhii</b>	X either
Hungarian	Serbo-Croatian	Hindi	English
valaki <b>is</b>	<b>i</b> -(t)ko / [bilo (t)ko]	koi <b>bhii</b>	anyone, NPI
még/akár csak Mari <b>is</b>	(čak/makar) <b>i</b> Josip	Raam <b>bhii</b>	even X, NPI
akár Mari <b>is</b>	(čak) <b>i</b> Josip	(koi) <b>bhii</b>	even X, FCI

E.g., consider the teamwork that builds the NPI *még/akár csak Mari is*.

Kevesen/\*Sokan gratuláltak *még/akár csak Marinak is*.

'Few/\*Many people congratulated even Mari (let alone others)'

(i) Abrusán 2007 argued that *még* and *akár* are *even*-style exhaustifiers.

(i) Unlike the indefinite *valaki*, *Mari* does not inherently fall at the low end of any scale. The presence of *csak* brings that about; here *csak* is similar to Dutch *slechts* 'merely'. Szabolcsi 1994 showed that *csak*, in this sense, can be added to numerals that are downward monotonic ('fewer than *n*') or non-monotonic ('between *n* and *m*' or focused '*n*' interpreted as 'exactly *n*'), but not to irrevocably upward monotonic ones ('more than *n*').

(iii) Finally, the particle IS is absolutely critical here. *Valaki*, by itself, is 'someone,' a PPI, not an NPI. *Még/akár (csak) Mari*, by itself, is a word salad.

Chierchia assumes that it is a lexical property of expressions that they have obligatorily active alternatives. The Hungarian/Serbo-Croatian/... data suggest that activating alternatives is a function that can be delegated to a separate morpheme. Active alternatives then must be figured into the meaning of the sentence, e.g. by exhaustification. Note that IS itself does not exhaustify alternatives; it co-occurs with other particles that probably do just that.

In sum, SEM (i) activates alternatives and, like Chierchia's NEG, (ii) calls for an exhaustifier, and (iii) invokes an abstract negation.

O<sub>ALT</sub> ¬ (semP (még) MARI (sem[+n-D] telefonált ))  
 'Mari didn't call either / Even Mari didn't call'

7. Matters related to locality (phases and intervention)  
 -- Skippable --

Postverbal SemPs are in reiterating lower fseqs:

VALAKI IS/SENKI SEM and MARI IS/MARI SEM can occur post-verbally:

Ha láttam valakit is / Marit is, ...  
 'If I saw anyone(=someone IS) / Mary too, ...'

Nem láttam senkit sem / Marit sem.  
 'I didn't see anyone / Mary either'

Following Hallman 1997, Szabolcsi 1997 and Brody & Szabolcsi 2003 propose that the same operator-head sequence that is clearly visible in the preverbal field reiterates postverbally, above each inflectional head that will be suffixed onto V. The only exception is Neg, which only occurs in the preverbal field. The low fseqs host all manner of quantifiers, IS and SEM heads happily occur there.

So, post-V occurrence is not an obstacle for the SEM  $\approx$  NEG correspondence.

Postverbal SEM heads cannot invoke Op $\neg$ . This is clear from the fact that they require an overt NM or a preverbal SEM. I assume this is because Op $\neg$  can only show up in the same high phase as overt NM, and postverbal SEM is too far below (inside vP).

Hungarian has at least two distinct NegPs (Koopman & Szabolcsi 2000, App. B)

[NegP1 Nem [FocP **Mari** [NegP2 nem [TP telefonált]]]].  
 'It is not Mary who didn't call' (absolutely not Double Negation)

Pre-focus NegP1 supports preverbal NCIs, but not postverbal NCIs:

Senkinek nem **Mari** nem telefonált.  
 'For no one was it Mary who didn't call him/her'  
 \* It was not Mary who didn't call anyone'

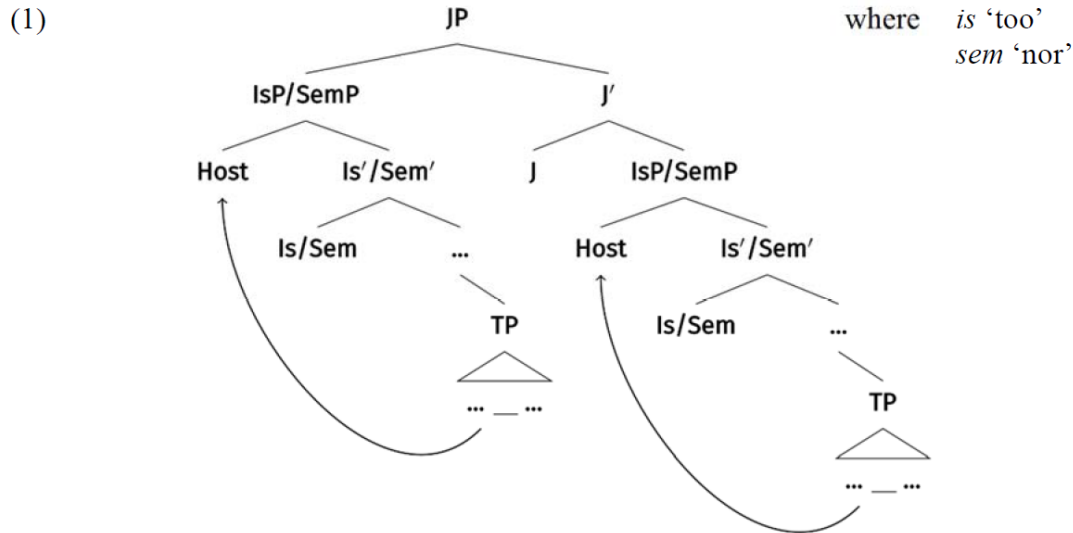
Nem **Mari** nem telefonált senkinek.  
 'It was not Mary who didn't call anyone'  
 \* For no one was it Mary who didn't call him/her' (unless *senkinek* scopes up)

Facts first observed and analyzed in Szabolcsi 1981 (assumed NCI= $\forall$ ).  
 Kenesei 2009 revisits this, with NCI= $\exists$ ; attributes missing readings to phases.  
 Szabolcsi 2018a proposes, instead, that the exhaustive operator of contrastive focus intervenes between pre-focus NEM and low-scoping SENKI. Compare:

- \* Nem mindenki látott senkit.
- \* Not everyone saw anyone.

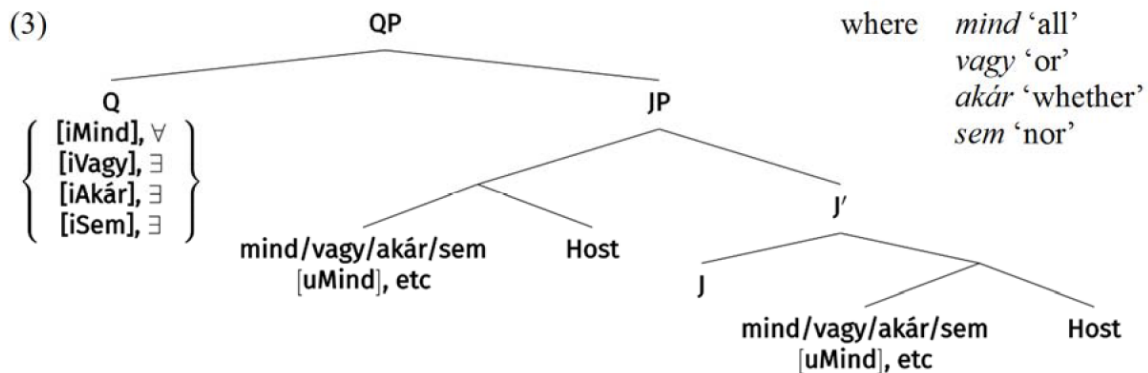
## 8. Two types of SEM: Head on the clausal spine vs. quantifier-phrase internal (Szabolcsi 2018b)

(1)-(2) represent the type where each particle is argued to be a head on the clausal spine, with a focus-accented constituent of the complement in its specifier. The reiteration is a coordination of self-contained propositions. For readability, the schematic Junction Phrase in (1) shows just two junct:



- (2) a. A hó **is** esik, a szél **is** fúj, a gyerek **is** nyűgös.  
the snow **too** falls the wind **too** blows the child **too** cranky  
'The snow is falling, likewise the wind is blowing, and likewise the child is cranky.'

The type in (3)-(4) has not, to my knowledge, been scrutinized in the literature on Hungarian or other languages. The reiterated construction is argued to represent one big quantifier, interpreted in terms of propositional quantification in the spirit of Kratzer & Shimoyama (2002). The overt particles are uninterpreted and merely signal the presence of a contentful but unpronounced quantifier. Again, for readability, the JP schema in (3) shows just two junct:



- (4) a. **Vagy** a hó esik, **vagy** a szél fúj, **vagy** a gyerek nyűgös.  
**or** the snow falls **or** the wind blows **or** the child cranky  
'Either the snow is falling, or the wind is blowing, or the child is cranky.'

The overall meanings of sentences with the two constructions seem identical, but those meanings are assembled differently.

### 9. Surface-identical particles in the two roles are not unique to Hungarian.

The possibility of syntactic ambiguities is highlighted by the *sem* data discussed in the foregoing sections. The right-hand column of (66) recaps how *sem* syntactically parallels both *mind* and *is*:

(66)	a.	mind-en-ki	‘everyone’	<b>sen-ki</b>	‘n-one’
	b.	mind X mind Y	‘X as well as Y’	<b>sem X sem Y</b>	‘neither X nor Y’
		X is Y is	‘X as well as Y’	<b>X sem Y sem</b>	‘neither X nor Y’
	c.	X is	‘X too’	<b>X sem</b>	‘nor X’
	d.	*mind X		<b>*sem X</b>	

Now consider Persian in the right-hand column of (67) (A. Kahnemuyipour, p.c.):

(67)		<i>Hungarian</i>		<i>Persian</i>	
	a.	mind-en-ki	‘everyone’	[har kas, harki]	‘everyone’
	b.	mind X mind Y	‘X as well as Y’	<b>ham X ham Y</b>	‘X as well as Y’
		X is Y is	‘X as well as Y’	<b>X ham Y ham</b>	‘X as well as Y’
	c.	X is	‘X too’	<b>X ham</b>	‘X too’
	d.	*mind X		<b>*ham X</b>	

(67b,c,d) make it plausible that Persian *ham* plays the syntactic roles of both Hungarian *is* and Hungarian *mind*, even though there is a gap in (67a): Hungarian *mind* builds *mindenki* ‘everyone’ (and serves as the floating quantifier *mind* ‘all’), whereas Persian *ham* does neither.

Persian

Ham Ali umad, ham Maryam. ‘Ali as well as Maryam came’

Ali ham umad, ham raqsid. ‘Ali came as well as danced’

Ali ham umad. ‘Ali too came’

\*Ham Ali umad.



## 10. A syntactic argument in favor of the Hungarian NM being uNeg

As a supplement, I comment on strict-NC iterations that include the verb (i.e. where the verb is not ATB extracted, cf. (57)). These are notoriously complicated and difficult to account for in Russian, for example (e.g. Tiskin 2017). In Hungarian, pattern (58) without *nem* ‘not’ only exists as a frozen idiomatic expression that preserves a stage of the Jespersen cycle from more than 500 years ago (É. Kiss 2015), whereas the parallel pattern in Russian is the only possible one:

- |      |                                       |  |
|------|---------------------------------------|--|
| (58) | <i>Hungarian</i>                      | <i>Russian</i>                                 |
|      | Peti <b>se</b> lát, <b>se</b> hall.   | Petja <b>ni</b> (*ne) el, <b>ni</b> (*ne) pil. |
|      | Peti <b>nor</b> sees <b>nor</b> hears | Petja <b>nor</b> not ate <b>nor</b> not drank  |
|      | ‘Peti neither sees nor hears =        | ‘Petja neither ate nor drank.’                 |
|      | is too excited to perceive anything.’ |  |

Modern Hungarian differs from Russian: *nem* ‘not’ invariably appears on each verb.

- (59) Peti **sem** nem evett, **sem** (pedig) nem ivott.  
 Peti **nor** not ate **nor** PEDIG not drank  
 ‘Peti neither ate nor drank.’

What explains the obligatory *sem nem* sequences? Predicate clefting, i.e. contrastive topicalization of the verb, as in (60), could be the source (Szabolcsi 1981: 145). It provides truth-conditionally vacuous material that *sem* can attach to:

- (60) Peti **sem** en-ni nem evett, **sem**(pedig) in-ni nem ivott.  
 Peti **nor** eat-INF not ate **nor** PEDIG drink-INF not drank  
 ‘As for eating, Peti didn’t eat, as for drinking, he didn’t drink.’

(60) exhibits the same *sem X nem VERB*, *sem Y nem VERB* pattern as (61), and if the *nor* finite verbs *enni* and *inni* are silently present in (59), then (59) does, too:

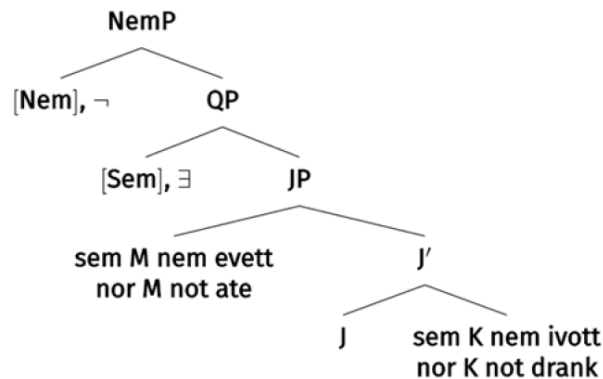
- (61) **Sem** Mari nem evett, **sem** (pedig) Kati nem ivott.  
**nor** Mari not ate **nor** PEDIG Kati not drank  
 ‘Neither Mari ate, nor Kati drank.’

Now the puzzle, shared by (60) and (61), is this. The *sem sem* construction is a propositional existential QP that must be within the immediate scope of negation. Consider two conceivable sources that are ungrammatical as they stand. If the source of (61) is (62a), then each *sem* is within the scope of its own *nem*, but it is not clear how the *sem sem* QP is ever formed. If the source is (62b), it is not clear how a subsequently merged *nem* will insert itself into the two junct. Thus, (62a,b) are not promising. A similar paradox is pointed out in Tiskin (2017).

- (62) a. (\*) [JP [ nem evett sem Mari] [Jr [ nem ivott sem Kati] ]  
           not ate nor Mari not drank nor Kati  
       b. (\*) [NegP nem ... [QP [ JP [sem Mari evett] [Jr [ sem Kati ivott] ] ] ] ]  
           not nor Mari ate nor Kati drank

A possible solution may be to extend the propositional QP structure in (35) to a propositional NemP structure, as in (63). On this assumption, *nem* is present in both junctives but, just like *mind*, *vagy*, *akár* and (strict NC) *sem*, it merely signals the presence of an unpronounced but contentful operator. It is an open question why the intervening [Sem] does not prevent [Nem] from reaching its target via feature checking or concord.

(63)



The unpronounced [Nem], ¬ and the overt, contentless *nem* morphemes will immediately remind the reader of Zeijlstra's (2004) proposal for strict negative concord, under which *nem* would be [uN], to be checked by a null [iN] operator interpreted as ¬. Szabolcsi (2016) argues against such an analysis. First, the assumption that the overt sentential negation marker is uninterpreted leaves its mandatory presence unexplained. Second, because strict and non-strict negative concord co-exist in Hungarian, the two types cannot be distinguished by uninterpreted vs. contentful sentential negation markers. The straightforward choice is to

I have argued that the Hungarian NM *nem* is in fact uNeg.

The puzzle in (60)-(61) then presents a syntactic argument in favor of that analysis, rather than a problem for it.

Finally, we now see that all three Boolean operators, ∃, A, and ¬ present themselves as meaningless functional elements that point to silent actors at the left periphery, generalizing the picture in Szabolcsi 2015 in the spirit of Carlson 2006.

## 11. Leftovers

### 11.1 Double Negation

Puskás 2012 is correct regarding the patterns that she postulates for strong DN and weak DN (=reconstruction). But her actual examples are mostly unacceptable to me and another semanticist native speaker. The main problem is, DN is really not productive in Hungarian, see below. I am putting DN aside.

(i) The lowest scoping NCI must be SEMMIT 'N-thing.acc'. Puskás's examples have SENKI 'N-one' and they are unacceptable.

(ii) Only a restricted set of verbs support DN. I haven't figured out the generalization yet, but some examples:

OK as DN: Senki nem mondott semmit  
'Nobody said nothing = Everybody's speech was contentful'

OK as DN: Semmit/\ nem mondott senki 'idem'

OK NC: Senki nem érzett/magyarázott el/vett észre/tört le semmit.  
BAD as DN: 'Nobody felt/explained/noticed/broke off nothing = Everybody felt/explained/noticed/broke off something'

OK NC: Semmit/\ senki nem érzett/magyarázott el/vett észre/tört le.  
BAD or ?? as DN: 'idem'

Maybe DN is okay with some fragment answers to negative questions (see Surányi 2006 and Falaus—Nicolae 2019).

### 11.2 Why *senki semmit* but not *senki sem semmit sem*?

See Surányi 2006.

### 11.3 Why no *Senki/Mari sem nem...*?

Italian *Nessuno non...* would be double negation. The Hungarian counterparts seem ungrammatical, rather than semantically problematic.

### 11.4 NM and NCI in nominals

Semminek a meg nem értése \*(nem) ...

N-thing.dat the pfx NM understanding.poss.3sg

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