

Word order change and the position of verb modifiers in Hungarian

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Aims and Claims

Background:

- Hungarian has changed from an OV language to a more regularly head-initial language (at least in the functional domains; É. Kiss 2013, 2014).
- Various constituents, together called Verb Modifiers (VMs; e.g. É. Kiss 2006), such as (separable) verbal particles, primary and secondary predicates, bare nominal objects etc. are preverbal.
- They have been claimed to occupy a preverbal functional position as a result of historical reanalysis

Aim: We examine the diachronic changes in the word order properties of VMs, relying on corpus data from the 14th to the end of the 16th centuries.

Claim: The preverbal position of these elements is the outcome of a syntactic reanalysis. The change took place prior to the recorded period; however, what belongs to the group of VMs has broadened in time. This movement to the preverbal position got generalized, with some delay in specific contexts.

OV > VO change and the role of particles

- In English, the OV > VO word order change also resulted in postverbal particles. Kroch & Taylor (2000): the timing of the change can be diagnosed by the position of particles (see also Elenbaas 2006).
- In Hungarian, particles (as well as other VMs) are preverbal, despite the larger-scale change in word order.
- The historical data we examine in detail provide evidence that the preverbal position of VMs is not a remnant property but an innovation. Particles are preverbal in the majority of cases from early on (with some exceptions), the other VMs are more revealing in their variation.

Corpus data from Old and Early Middle Hungarian

Old Hungarian: We looked at samples of the Old Hungarian Corpus (Simon & Sass 2012; Old Hungarian: 896–1526); these are religious texts translated from Latin.

Early Middle Hungarian: We looked at the Old and Middle Hungarian Corpus of Informal Language Use (Dömötör et al. 2017), making targeted searches in texts from the 16th century.

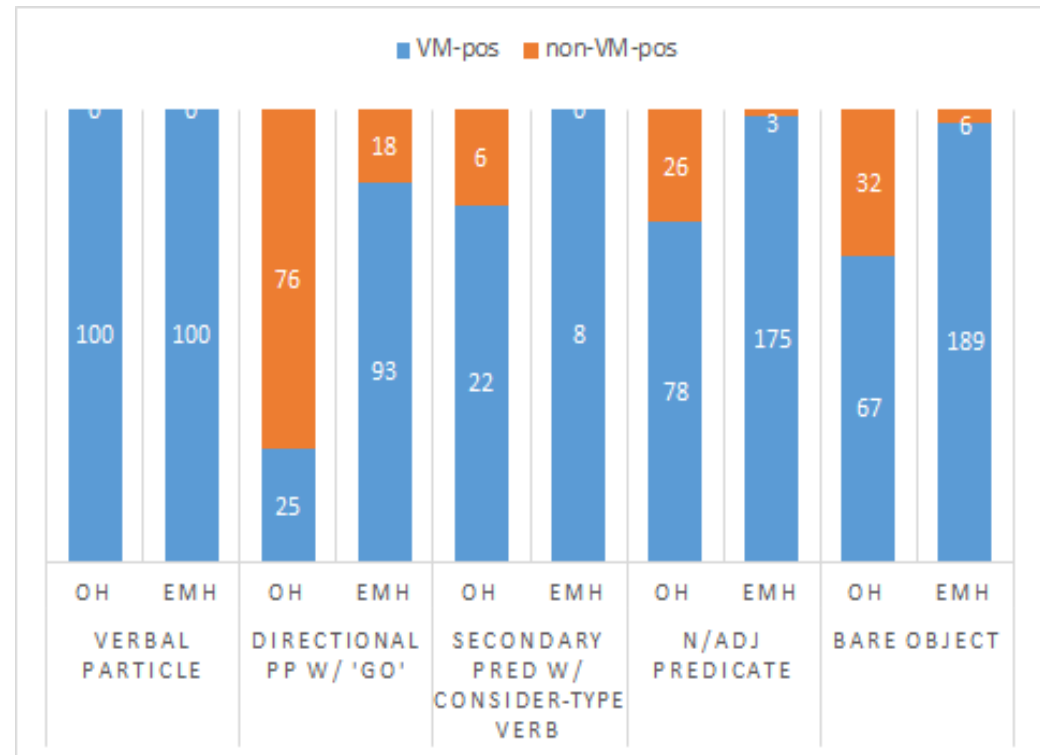


Fig. 1: VMs until end of 16th c.

- (1) mert fogadek neked engedelmesseget because vow.pst.1sg dat.2sg obedience.acc ‘because I vowed obedience to you’ (JókK 12/5)
- (2) mihelyt neki pénzét adott as.soon.as dat.3sg money.acc give.pst.3sg ‘as soon as he gave money to her’ (Bosz 15, 1591)

Reanalysis in the preverbal field

- The reanalysis of the preverbal position happened already by the recorded period, as shown by the regular preverbal position of verbal particles.
- The particle *meg* (orig. ‘back’) provides evidence for the fully grammaticalized, functional nature of particles.
- Verbal particles did not take part in the shift of arguments to the postverbal field, since they are neither referential, nor heavy; they were reanalyzed in their preverbal position as functional elements in the clause (cf. Hegedűs 2018).

We assume that **VM-movement became general**:

- We assume the preverbal position to be Spec,PredP (following É. Kiss 2006 etc.), a low functional projection on top of VP; while VMs often have aspectual contribution, it is not always the case, we aim to maintain a uniform syntax for them.
- Syntactic change: The position of preverbal particles gets reanalyzed as a predicative position (as opposed to postverbal arguments), then all other predicates move there in syntax.
- Primary and secondary predicates, as well as non-referential bare objects complete the change in a few generations. (Other factors, such as information structural roles may play a role in the possibility of their variation.)
- Two verb types show variation for a longer period due to distinct properties.

To sum up:

The result of this is that despite the change of the head-finality in the language, VMs remained preverbal on the surface, but this is a novel property and not a remnant.

Delayed changes

There are two types of verbs with which the VMs are not consistent by Early Middle Hungarian; however, the reasons for this variation are different in the two cases.

Motion verbs

- (3) és mindenek mennek vala ő városuk-ra and all go.3pl be.pst he city.poss.3pl-sub ‘and everyone went to their cities’ (MünchK. 55vb)
- (4) Onnant el-menvén ment Bodonc-ra, és csakhamar utána nagy kőeső lett there.from away-gone went Bodonc-sub and soon after big hailstorm became ‘Leaving that place, she went to Bodonc and soon after there was a big hailstorm’ (Bosz 455, 1562)

- É. Kiss (2014) observes the variation with lexical directionals and attributes this to their more referential nature. While particles were not postverbal on the surface at any point (generally), directionals followed the general VO reanalysis by Old Hungarian.
- This is undergoing a quick change in Middle Hungarian, but we need more verbs and need to look at 17th c. to see when the change goes to completion.
- All this goes along with and is influenced by changes whereby the aspectual system changes, particles become more frequent (and new ones grammaticalize), and telicity is overwhelmingly expressed by the VM+V complex (and not the verb alone).

(Semi-)auxiliaries

- (5) kellett volna gyewtewrnewd meg engemet tulaydon zemelyemben need.pst.3sg be.cond torment.inf.2sg prt me own person.ine ‘You should have tormented me myself’ (JókK. 158)
- (6) de Úrjzus Krisztus akará meg-vigasztalni ez ő hűségés lányát but Jesus Christ wanted prt-comfort.inf this he faithful daughter.poss.3sg.acc ‘but Jesus Christ wanted to comfort this faithful daughter of his’ (JókK. 73)
- (7) Akarnám értenem, mit végeztél. want.cond.1sg understand.inf.1sg what finish.pst.2sg ‘I would want to understand what you managed to get done.’ (Nád., 1556)
- (8) kell kegyelmed előtt magamat mentenem. must your.highness before self.1sg.acc plead.inf.1sg ‘I must excuse myself in front of your highness.’ (Nád., 1550)

- Today (semi-)auxiliaries only bear main stress when focused, otherwise the embedded infinitive or the VM of the infinitive moves to the finite (semi-)auxiliary
- “with embedded VM” = the V_{inf} has a VM; the % shows raising of the embedded VM (most often particle)
- “no embedded VM” = the V_{inf} has no VM; the % shows raising of the V_{inf} to the preverbal position
- V_{inf} raising is still less common, but there is a change going on in that order as well

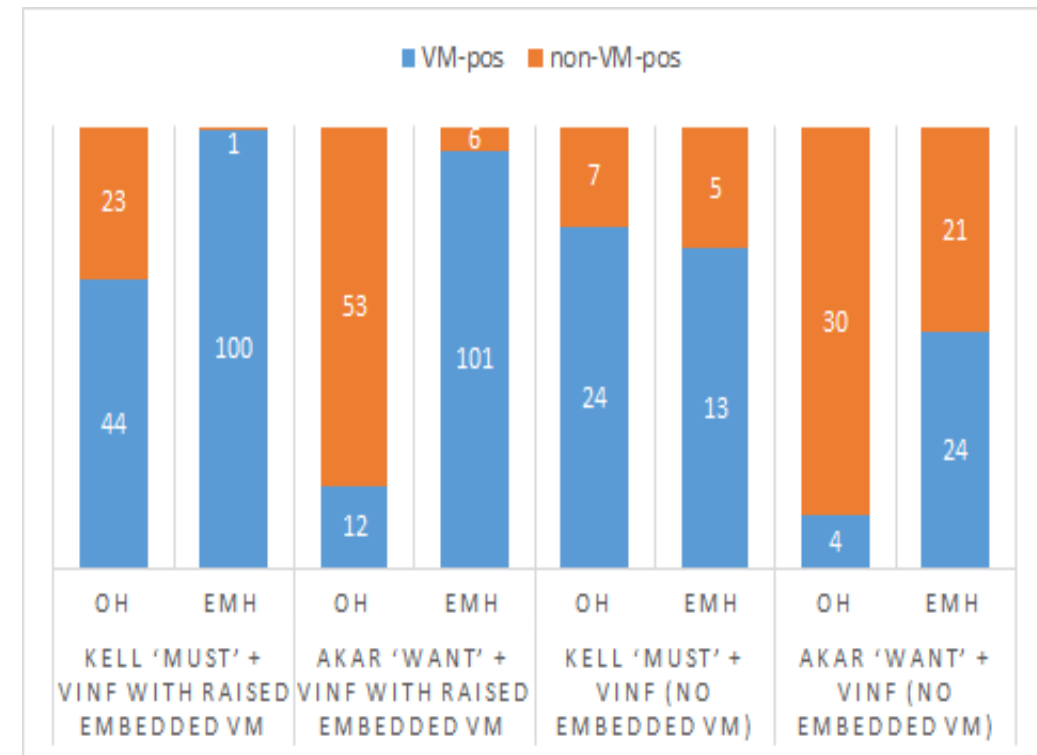


Fig. 2: Auxiliaries until end of 16th c.

- Observation: With *kell* ‘must, need’, *akar* ‘want’ etc., particles more and more often get raised to the VM-position of the finite (semi-)auxiliary, while their infinitival complements maintain variation, even though the frequency of V_{inf} raising increases.
- If particles are what drive the change (as claimed by Hegedűs 2018 and here), the particle generally (but not always) already moves to a Spec position in the embedded clause, and its further movement is just one more step
- These semi-auxiliaries are becoming ‘restructuring’ verbs at a slower pace; the movement of the infinitival complement creates a clause union
- The complement of *akar* ‘want’ used to be larger, as evidenced by the presence of inflection on the infinitive; this changes to uninflected infinitives along with the change in VM-movement.

Outlook

- Regular occurrence of the V – VM pattern in neutral sentences in the Eastern dialects (9): Is it an archaic feature or a further innovation?
- As opposed to this, the very same dialect shows a consistent predominance of the VM – NEG – V pattern in negative sentences (instead of NEG – V – VM) (10): Explanation?

- (9) Holt meg életének 22-dik esztendejében. die.pst.3sg prt life.poss.3sg.dat 22nd year.poss.ine ‘He died in the 22nd year of his life.’ (Bethlen K., before 1759)
- (10) meg nem másolja prt not change.defobj.3sg ‘He does not change it.’ (Bethlen K., before 1759)

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