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Aspectual System in Hungarian. The Problem of Stativity

– abstract of the Ph.D. thesis –

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3. THE SHORT ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The thesis is concerned with two major theoretical problems: modelling the Hungarian aspectual system (which thereby contributes to the modelling of aspectuality in general linguistics) and the coherent analysis of the problems related to stativity. The first part of the thesis presents a general theoretical framework created by the significant modification of the well-known general theory of aspectual compositionality. The second chapter constitutes the practical application of the above mentioned framework to the analysis of some specific domains of Hungarian aspectuality. The next part of the thesis is concerned with the most important general and specifically Hungarian problems related to stativity (this chapter is based on Hungarian and English linguistic data). The last chapter deals with the Hungarian resultative construction types which constitute further evidence for the applicability of the elaborated theoretic framework and the theory of stativity presented in the third part.

4. ABSTRACTS OF THE MAIN CHAPTERS

4.1. Chapter II.: General aspectual framework

4.1.1. Theoretical framework

The first part of the chapter deals with the most important theoretical questions related to aspectuality in general. This part includes the presentation and critical analysis of some influential theories and the outline of a general aspectual framework based on linguistic data and on the conclusions drawn from the results of the critical analysis. The discussed works are those of Zeno Vendler (1967), Bernard Comrie (1976), Östen Dahl (1985), David R. Dowty (1986), Carlota Smith (1991), Wolfgang Klein (1994), Carol L. Tenny (1994), Laura Michaelis (2002), Olga Borik – Tanya Reinhart (2002), Henk J. Verkuyl (2005), Annerieke Boland (2006) and Beth Levin – Malka

Rappaport Hovav (2008). The subparts give the specification and detailed study of those subdomains of the topic, which actually are the most controversial in the linguistic theory.

Besides the well-known studies on the so-called Slavic aspect the number of the general aspectological theories has also largely increased in the last 30 years. One of the most important questions in Hungarian and international linguistics is the applicability of these theories in general and to the description of Hungarian and other aspectually similar languages in particular (Hungarian being highly relevant for the theory, showing a lot of specific properties of aspectuality). Most of these works make references to the Hungarian language for their conclusions. Analysing the various theoretical interpretations in the above mentioned approaches I came to define more exactly the main subdomains of the research topic: the problems of the compositional nature of aspectuality and the ways of description of aspect marking, the role of verbal aspect and verbal prefixes in expressing semantic and aspectual features, correlations of verbal and aspectual categories, relations between aspect and voice, relations between aspect and temporal system.

The comparative analysis leads to the conclusion that there are some phenomena and some domains of aspectuality that cannot be adequately explained within the confines of the modern theories. Some of these are: the nature of aspectual compositionality, the role of verbal aspect in marking semantic aspectual categories and the relation between the different aspectual categories. The interpretation of these problems result in the elaboration of a new theory, based on universal principles, also applicable to such aspectually complex languages as Hungarian.

The main hypotheses of the presented framework are the following:

- (i) The two elementary components of aspectuality are situation aspect and viewpoint aspect (according to Smith 1991), on the stipulation that there is a hierarchical relation between the two components.
- (ii) The basic universal component is that of situation aspect. Viewpoint aspect is a secondary component which is language specific (i.e. it is not a universal phenomena), and it has an important role in the compositional marking of situation aspect. Therefore the two components are not independent systems.
- (iii) Situation aspect is a compositionally marked category which is defined by the aspectual features assigned to the event structure of a predicate. The main aspectual features are [\pm Telic] and [\pm Dynamic], and their valid combinations result in the three

basic categories of situation aspect: events [+Telic, +Dynamic], processes [-Telic, +Dynamic] and states [-Telic, -Dynamic] (cf. Dowty 1986, Boland 2006).

- (iv) Viewpoint aspect is a different component in the complex aspectual system. The categories that belong to this level are usually marked by grammatical means and are not inherent in the semantics of the predicate. Their function is focussing on a specific part or on the quantificational features of the event structure assigned to a predicate. As Smith (1991) and Boland (2006) also point it out, only the focussed part(s) are available for the semantic interpretation. The categories labelled as viewpoint categories are the perfective, the imperfective, the ingressive, the progressive, the egressive and the perfect, and they are formally defined by the means of the well-known Reichenbachian tense system (speech time, event time and reference time).

4.1.2. The Hungarian aspectual system

The second part of the chapter deals with the Hungarian aspectual system and the most important language specific questions related to aspectual phenomena. The first subpart presents the critical analysis of the most influential works dealing with the topic. In Hungarian linguistics there are relatively few researches in the domain of aspectology, most of the works being concerned in the adaptation of the universal theories to the Hungarian language, often neglecting the typological differences among the studied languages. The subpart specifies the Hungarian versions of the linguistic tests given by the universal theories and also some language specific tests.

The second subpart serves as an application of the theoretical framework (defined in the previous part) to the Hungarian aspectual system. Besides the definition of the two aspectual components with their categories and the rearrangement of the universally used tests the subpart also gives the Hungarian language specific tests that are relevant in dividing aspectual categories. Most of these language specific tests are taken over from Kiefer (1992, 1996, 2006, 2007) and Wacha (1976, 1989, 2001), and are modified to some extent.

As we have seen, the modified two-component theory presented in the first part interprets viewpoint aspect to be a subsystem of the compositional markers of situation aspect – the other

means of compositional marking being the argument structure and the adjuncts of the predicate. A very important part of this chapter is that which deals with the different viewpoint aspect categories that can be found in the Hungarian aspectual system.

Part 2.2.2.1. describes the Hungarian progressive which is defined as being a so-called pre-aspectual category in terms of Johanson (2000), and from the point of view of situation aspect it is regarded as an aspectual operator that converts events into processes or does not change the process predicate's situation aspect. Part 2.2.2.2. describes the Hungarian existential construction type which in turn is regarded as an operator that changes any kind of input predicate into a complex event predicate; part 2.2.2.3. presents two types of habitual constructions and regards habituality as an aspectual operator that results in complex process predicates when added to the structure of any type of input predicate, finally part 2.2.2.4. presents two resultative construction types: the eventive resultative which does not change the input predicate's situation aspect and the stative resultative which is regarded as an aspectual operator that converts any type of input predicate into complex stative predicates. The other categories mentioned in the general framework (the ingressive and the egressive) are not presented separately (for their detailed description see Kiefer 2006).

4.2. Chapter III.: Stativity in Hungarian

4.2.1. The aspectual category of states and the specific stativity tests

The well-known aspectual taxonomies show that stativity is considered to be one of the three main aspectual categories of the Hungarian aspectual system (the three categories being the perfective, the imperfective and the stative aspect), nevertheless there is no analysis of stativity-related linguistic phenomena in Hungarian linguistics. The modelling of this aspectual category has theoretic relevance for Hungarian and general aspectology.

The first part of chapter III. deals with general theoretical and Hungarian language specific questions the discussion being based on Hungarian and English linguistic data.

The most significant conclusions drawn from the detailed analysis are the following:

- (i) The main features of stativity are internal homogeneity, non-alteration, inherent persistence and non-agentivity.
- (ii) There is a hierarchical relation among the features: the basic features are internal homogeneity and inherent persistence in such way that internal homogeneity entails non-alteration while inherent persistence entails non-agentivity.
- (iii) The four features are important from a prototype theoretical point of view: (process) predicates can be classified according to the number of features that are assigned to them, therefore predicates can be located on a scale which has prototypical states on one end and prototypical processes on the other. As a result the ambiguity of alternative stativity interpretations/theories can be sorted out.
- (iv) Predicates, including Hungarian predicates, can be tested for their aspectual value applying the feature specific tests presented in detail in the thesis.

4.2.2. Derived states: the Hungarian stative resultative

The second part of chapter III. discusses in detail the various problems related to the Hungarian resultative constructions or predicative participle constructions shortly described in part 2.2.2.4. The two types of resultative perfect-like constructions are the stative resultative (*VAN + V-vA* constructions) and the eventive resultative (*LETT + V-vA* constructions). These categories are described and analysed at the level of viewpoint aspect and that of situation aspect, thus part 4. supports the validity of the modified two component theory and presents a specific type of complex stative predicate at the same time.

The most important conclusions of this part are the following:

- (i) Based on the specific formation patterns and the semantic/pragmatic features the Hungarian predicative participle constructions are perfect-like constructions which belong to the category of *preaspectual* items.
- (ii) On the basis of Tóth's (2000) account and of the arguments presented in the thesis, it is sustainable that *VAN + V-vA* constructions represent a resultative construction type. The main arguments supporting this are the following: the pragmatic constraint

on current relevance discussed in part 4.2.1.1. holds for these constructions; they only allow for telic input predicates; the output is always stative, consequently it is incompatible with event-related adverbials or oblique representation of the agent.

- (iii) The *LETT + V-vA* constructions in Hungarian represent a substitute for the aspectual category of the perfect. The main arguments supporting this are the following: the current relevance constraint and the telicity requirement hold for the construction type, but, unlike the simple resultative, these predicative participle constructions have an eventive reading and they allow for event-related adverbials and the oblique representation of the agent; consequently the output aspect is not stative but dynamic and telic.
- (iv) On the level of situation aspect the stative resultative can be interpreted as an aspectual operator that converts [+Dynamic, +Telic] predicates into [-Dynamic, -Telic] predicates.
- (v) On the level of situation aspect the eventive resultative cannot be regarded as an operator that changes the input predicate's situation aspect, because the productivity restrictions and the constraint on the output situation aspect are identical, therefore no other aspectual feature can be assigned to the construction type than telicity.

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