

Discourse meets grammar

The case of Hungarian verbal particles*

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Abstract: This paper sets forward an information structural account of the position of verbal particles in present-day Standard Hungarian and in Old Hungarian. Diachronically a gradual change in the position of particles can be observed across different construction types, which is claimed to be governed by the discourse status of the culmination of the event expressed by the verbal particle. It is argued that the position of verbal particles is not to be accounted for by assuming an aspectual representation independent of information structure.

Keywords: information structure; verbal particles; diachronic change; aspect; Hungarian

1. Introduction

For present-day Standard Hungarian (SH) it seems uncontroversial that the verbal particle is an aspect marker; authors only differ in whether the (position of) verbal particles marks viewpoint aspect or situation aspect.¹ É. Kiss (2002) proposes that particles in preverbal position act as aspectualizers or aspectual operators, perfectivizing the event description. É. Kiss (2008c) argues from a diachronic perspective for particles being markers of situation aspect. Csirmaz (2008) comes up with a synthesis, and claims that the presence or absence of some particles can affect situation aspect,

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¹ Sentences contain aspectual information regarding eventuality types and viewpoint; following Smith (1991), the level of eventuality types (with the basic telic-atelic distinction) is referred to as situation aspect. The categories of viewpoint aspect (i.e., the perfective-imperfective pair) have the role of bringing into focus the whole eventuality or only a segment of it, respectively. For a general view on the distinction situation aspect vs. viewpoint aspect, see Smith (1991). A revised two-component theory of aspect for Hungarian is given in Németh (2012).

and the position of telicizing particles interacts with viewpoint aspect in that the particle immediately precedes the verb if the event description is perfective, and follows it whenever the event description is imperfective.

In contrast to these accounts, we suggest that the position of the verbal particle does not directly encode situation or viewpoint aspectual information in SH. While the presence (but not the position) of verbal particles is indeed the result of the grammaticalization (lexicalization) of situation aspect in that most of the verbal particles express the result state of telic events, i.e., mark telicity, the position of the verbal particle is determined by information structure, and the (im)perfective interpretation is a secondary effect. Viewpoint aspect is expressed only in case this is the main information conveyed by the sentence. (For arguments see section 4.) This information structural account can also cover diachronic data: from a diachronic perspective we can witness a gradual change of the position of verbal particles across construction types. This change is claimed to be determined by the information status of the result state expressed by the verbal particle. For example, when this result state is the main information, the verbal particle appears preverbally as early as the Old Hungarian (OH)² period, but it can never occupy this slot in case the attainment of the result state is negated. The diachronic change is viewed as a result of lexical, morphological and information-structural interactions.

The structure of the article is as follows: the paper sets out with an overview of diachronic facts regarding the evolution of Hungarian tense–aspect system, telicity and information structure marking. The order of the verb and verbal particle in OH and SH is the focus of section 3. Here the change of the preverbal pattern of verbal particles across different construction types is illustrated. Section 4 is devoted to the presentation of SH aspect and information structure, and arguments for their interrelatedness are listed. Section 5 proposes an explanation for the diachronic change related to the order of verb and verbal particle by presenting the relation between the discourse function and the position of verbal particles in constructions containing telic events. For a better contrast, an archaic dialect of Hungarian, the Csángó dialect is also introduced at this point. In section 6 a possible translation of the results into a generative framework is outlined. Finally, in section 7 cases of special constructions requiring further explanation are mentioned.

² Historical periods of the Hungarian language: Proto-Hungarian: 1000 BC–896 AD; Old Hungarian: 896–1526; Middle Hungarian: 1526–1772; Modern Hungarian: 1772–1920; Present-day Hungarian: from 1920.

2. Diachronic facts: OH compared to SH

2.1. Diachronic change in the tense–aspect system

OH was a language type with a grammaticalized viewpoint aspect, and had a rich morphosyntactic tense–aspect system as illustrated below:

Table 1: OH formal system

mond ‘say’	[– past] (simple present)
mond-ott	[+ perf, – past] (present perfect)
mond-a	[+ past] (simple past)
mond val-a	[– perf, + past] (past imperfective)
mond-ott val-a	[+ perf, + past] (past perfect)

The morphosyntactic marking of aspect has completely disappeared with the disappearance of the tense morphology of OH, and with the reinterpretation of the perfective aspectual morpheme as a tense morpheme (cf. É. Kiss 2008c). The morpheme encoding viewpoint aspect (*-t/tt*) has become a tense marker in SH, and the original tense marker (*-a/e*) has gradually disappeared, except for the most archaic, easternmost Csángó dialect of Hungarian. Here the two morphemes ([+ perf] *-t/tt* and [+ past] *-a/e*) still coexist, and both are tense markers. Complex verb forms like *mond vala* ‘say AUX-PAST’ or *mondott vala* ‘said AUX-PAST’ can also be documented in this dialect, however, these seem to be stylistic variants of SH simple past forms, i.e., the functional differences of the complex past tense forms have neutralized even in Csángó.

2.2. Marking telicity

Parallel to the loss of its complex tense–aspect system marking viewpoint aspect, Hungarian has developed systematic means of marking telicity, the key feature of situation aspect. The gradual grammaticalization of situation aspect marking took about 800 years, and by now telicity marking extends to all sentences describing a delimited change of state or location.

Both the system of definite/indefinite determiners and the inventory of verbal particles were ready by the beginning of the period of Middle Hungarian (MH). More precisely, the definite article (derived from the demonstrative pronoun), appeared in the 14th century, while the indefinite article (derived from the numeral *one*) appeared in the 15th century. The

emergence of determiners in the late OH period is relevant in that predicates expressing ‘creation/coming into being’ are also telic when combined with a non-specific indefinite theme argument.

The category of verbal particles appeared at the beginning of the OH period and developed throughout this period. As a consequence, Hungarian (like several other Uralic languages, see Kiefer & Honti 2003) has phrasal predicate constructions in which a syntactically separable verbal particle (PRT) combines with a verbal stem. PRT–verb complexes express telic events in Hungarian.³ (1a,b) below⁴ are two OH translations of the same biblical locus (Matthew 1/24) in two different codices with a difference of less than a century.⁵

- (1) a. MünchK 8v: t̄on mikent **parāčola** n̄eki vrnac angala
 did as commanded-3SG him God-DAT angel-3SG
- b. JordK 358: vg: then, mynt vr Iftennek ang:ala **meg paranczola**
 so did as Lord God-DAT angel-3SG PRT commanded-3SG
 ‘He proceeded as was commanded by the angel of God.’

É. Kiss (2008c) argues that the appearance of verbal particles that encode situation aspect makes the expression of viewpoint aspect redundant, as viewpoint aspect can in the great majority of cases be inferred from situation aspect. Viewpoint aspect marking disappears by the gradual loss of the functional differences between the complex verb forms during MH (however, the distinction persists in Csángó for several centuries).

2.3. The locus of (information) focus

In SH, the locus of new information is the immediately preverbal position. This position could be the residue of the Proto-Uralic SOV basic word

³ However, there are a couple of verbs that are telic but particleless (e.g., *győz* ‘win’), and there are some particle verbs that express states (e.g. *megbecsül* ‘appreciate’) instead of a telic event. In the present article, we will confine ourselves to resultative and terminative particles, both markers of telicity.

⁴ In all examples, verbs are typeset in boldface, and verbal particles are bold-italic. Focus – when relevant – is marked with capital letters. Relevant adverbs are underlined in the examples cited throughout the article.

⁵ Sources of the OH data: HB: *Halotti beszéd és könyörgés* [*Funeral speech and prayer*] – 1192–1195; JókK: *Jókai Codex* – after 1370 (copy from 1440); MünchK: *München Codex* – after 1416 (copy from 1466); DöbrK.: *Döbrentey Codex* 1508; JordK: *Jordánusky Codex* 1516–1519; ÉrdyK: *Érdy Codex* – cca. 1526.

order. Parallel to the processes mentioned above (the gradual disappearance of morphosyntactic viewpoint aspect marking, the grammaticalization of situation aspect and definite/indefinite determiners), the preverbal slot of the Hungarian sentence became the locus of the information focus of the sentence (a fact not taken into account by É. Kiss 2008c), i.e., Hungarian became a discourse-oriented language. Modern Hungarian as a discourse-configurational language has designated phrasal positions for particular information structure roles.

2.3.1. A typological perspective: word order universals and information structure

It seems universally tenable that the canonical position of a syntactic category (the object) and that of a pragmatic category (the focus) can be matched. In one of her universals, Gundel (1988) assumes that the most unmarked position for a focus in a language is the position of the object. This is in accordance with what Cinque (1993) suggests: the main stress of a phrase is located on its most deeply embedded constituent, which is ordinarily the innermost complement of the phrasal head (thus in a VP, main stress is predicted to be to the right of V in VO languages and to its left in OV languages). It can be assumed therefore that in an SOV language the default topic position is the sentence initial (subject) position, while the default focus position is the preverbal slot (hosting the object). As main stress will fall on the object in an SOV language, objects that are topical can move out of VP to avoid main stress (and focus interpretation).

2.3.2. A diachronic perspective: losing and regaining the connection to information structure in Hungarian

Proto-Hungarian was an SOV language with a default preverbal focus position. It was closer to Ostyak (cf. Nikolaeva 1999) than to SH in that object agreement was dependent on the object being a (secondary) topic or a focus. Object agreement in modern Hungarian does not depend on information structure, instead, the triggering feature is definiteness. However, as data from earlier stages of Hungarian show (cf. Marcantonio 1985) in 15th–16th century Hungarian codex literature the verb could be marked for object agreement even if a (non-possessed) object was not preceded by the definite article (the use of the pronoun *a(z)* as a definite article was not yet completely established at that stage), which is impossible in modern Hungarian. This suggests that topicality rather than definiteness was the triggering feature for agreement in early Hungarian.

The markedness of the object can also relate to information structure. Some languages distinguish syntactically between marked and unmarked

objects. Marked objects are associated with the information-structural role of topic (cf. Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011). In Proto-Uralic, definite objects were case-marked, indefinites were not. OH non-finite verb constructions and some set phrases still show no marker on indefinite objects.

Thus, we can reconstruct a series of changes that include stages in which Hungarian agreement was triggered by third person topical objects, followed by stages in which this agreement pattern was reanalysed as definiteness marking, and was extended to definite third person objects whether they were topical or not. On the other hand, the grammatical marking of third person topical (definite) objects was gradually extended to nontopical (definite and indefinite) objects. At this stage of grammaticalization the connection to information structure was totally lost.

The gradual development of the two agreement paradigms on verbs (depending now on the definiteness of the object instead of its topicality), the appearance of definite and indefinite articles (encoding the (in)definiteness of the object), and the systematic morphological marking of the object (irrespective of it being topical or not) established the conditions for a shift to SVO. At the beginning of the Early Hungarian period, (S)OV and (S)VO coexisted. É. Kiss (2013) outlines a process by which the Proto-Uralic verb final SOV is reinterpreted as a verb initial (Top)(Q)(Foc)VX* by the time of written documents (OH). This amounts to saying that on the one hand, the basic word order changed to (S)VO by the Old Hungarian period as the result of rightward topicalization of definite objects, and on the other hand, the focus position remained preverbal and can now be filled by any constituent. However, the preverbal focus position is less stable in OH texts than today. In the first surviving coherent Hungarian text, *Halotti beszéd és könyörgés* [*Funeral speech and prayer*], written between 1192–1195, we have both postverbal and preverbal foci (cf. (2) and (3)).

(2) HB: Heon **tilutoa** wt IG FA GIMILCETVL
 only bar-PAST.3SG him one tree fruit-3SG-from
 ‘He only barred him from the fruit of one tree.’

(3) HB: Latiatuc feyleym zumtuchel MIC **vogmuc**
 see-2PL fellows-1SG eye-2PL-with what are-1PL
 ýfa PUR Ef CHOMUV **uogmuc**.
 indeed dust and ash are-1PL
 ‘Do you see, my fellows, with your eyes what we are? Indeed we are dust and ashes.’

Although the postverbal focus position (and the verb initial sentences) of the codices are considered by some to be the result of translation (cf. Latin ← old Hebrew VSO), which implicitly suggests that the word order of spoken OH was different, the present paper can only undertake the task of modelling the attested states of the language even if it is a biased version compared to the spoken (and unattested) one. In the data we have, the changes point towards the consolidation of the preverbal focus position.

3. The data: the order of the verb and the verbal particle in OH and SH

In SH, verbal particles occur in preverbal position more often than in OH. As we have mentioned before, the category of verbal particles appeared at the beginning of the OH period and developed throughout this period.

Table 1 below illustrates that the position of particles varies through construction types. Below, OH examples are given.

Table 2: Particle position in different constructions containing telic events. ‘+’ stands for an immediately preverbal particle; ‘–’ for all other positions.

Construction type	OH	SH
(A) Perfective episodic event	+	+
(B) Presentational	–	+
(C) Quick sequence of events	no data	+ (–) ⁶
(D) Habitual	+, morphosyntactically ⁷	+, Adv ⁸
(E) Iterative	+, morphosyntactically	+, Adv ⁹
(F) Proximative	+, morphosyntactically	+, Adv
(G) Progressive	+, morphosyntactically	–
(H) Postverbal focus	–	+ ¹⁰
(I) Preverbal (exhaustive) focus	–	–
(J) Imperative	–	–
(K) Negation	–	–

⁶ In SH, a quick sequence of events normally requires a verbal particle–verb order. The inverse order is not completely out, but it needs special context, such as “live broadcast”.

⁷ Note that in habitual, iterative, proximative and progressive OH examples we find past imperfective verb forms (cf. section 2.1).

⁸ For conveying the given meaning, adverbial modification is necessary in the sentence.

Perfective episodic event ((A) in table 2):

- (4) JókK 145: Es **el** **mene** zent fferencz es tewn
 and PRT_{away} went Saint Francis and put-PAST.3SG
 fezket mend az madaraknak
 nest-ACC all the birds-for
 ‘And St. Francis (of Assisi) went away and made nests for birds.’

Presentational ((B) in table 2):¹¹

- (5) JókK 87: De tewrtenek hogy bodog ferencz **Yewue**
 but happened that happy Francis came
oda es meg uadoltatotuala neky.
 PRT_{to} and PRT accuse-PASS-PERF.3SG-be-PAST he.DAT
 ‘But is happened that Blessed Francis came there and someone
 was accused (by someone else) in front of him.’

Habitual ((D) in table 2):

- (6) JókK 94:
 (Es ezekett mend az fraterok ezkeppen tartyakuala zerelembelewl hogy ha valamelyk valamikor masyknak mondottauolna bozzosagnac auagy veresegnek bezedett:)
 llegottan fewld re **le** **teryezkedykuala** es az
 instantly ground to PRT_{down} lie-3SG-be-PAST and the

⁹ Iterative meaning can also be conveyed by morphology alone (i.e., by frequentative derivational morphemes) both in OH and SH. In SH, the doubling of verbal particles (cf. (i)) also results in an iterative interpretation.

(i) **Be-bedölt** a kocsi.
 PRT_{in}-PRT_{in}-sloped the car
 ‘The car has repeatedly sloped.’

¹⁰ More precisely: we can find postverbal foci in SH as well, but unless they are part of a double-focus construction (where the preverbal focus licenses the postverbal focus), they are not exhaustive (cf. (i)), while in the OH examples, the postverbal focus seems to be exhaustive.

(i) **Meghívtam** (például) JÁNOST.
 PRT-invited-1SG for instance John-ACC
 ‘I’ve invited John (for instance).’

¹¹ This construction is often used in titles or as the first sentence of a story. It serves to introduce a sequence of events through the presentation of the most prominent episodic event of the sequence (this is typical for titles) or through the episodic event starting the whole sequence (this is characteristic of first sentences).

bantatot fraternak labayt **meg apolyauala**
 hurt frater-DAT feet-his-ACC PRT groom-3SG-be-PAST
 ‘(And, for love, the brethren kept the habit that when one had hurt another with words of annoyance or whipping) he would instantly lay down on the ground and would groom the feet of the hurt brother.’

Iterative ((E) in table 2):

- (7) DöbrK 20: en iletemet földön **meg úmoóga**
 I life-1SG-ACC earth-on PRT press_{freq}-SBJV-3SG
 ‘[so that my enemy] should oppress my life in this world.’

Proximative ((F) in table 2):¹²

- (8) HB: Ef oz gimilfnec wl keferuv uola vize hug
 and that fruit-DAT so bitter was water3SG that
 turchucat mige zocoztia vola
 throat-3PL-ACC PRT tear3SG be-PAST
 ‘And the juice of that fruit was so bitter that it was riving their throat.’

Postverbal focus ((H) in table 2):¹³

- (9) ÉrdyK 3: Ez may zent Epistolaat **yrta meg** ZENT PAAL APOSTOL
 this today’s saint epistle-ACC wrote3SG PRT Saint Paul Apostle
 ‘This epistle (that we read today) was written by Apostle St. Paul.’

Preverbal (exhaustive) focus ((I) in table 2):

- (10) JókK 146:
 [a farkas] ky NEMCZAK BAROMY LELKESEKET
 who not.only beast souls-ACC
veztualael De embereket es azonhokot es
 swoop.3SG-be-PAST-PRT_{away} but men-ACC and women-ACC also
 ‘[The wolf] which swooped down not only upon animals but also upon men and women...’

¹² The adverb used for proximative in SH is *majdnem* ‘almost’, as in (i).

- (i) Majdnem **megfulladtak**.
 almost PRT-choked-3PL
 ‘They almost choked.’

¹³ The SH example corresponding to the OH sentence would have a preverbal (exhaustive) focus; this doesn’t mean that there is no postverbal focus in SH (see footnote 11).

Negation ((K) in table 2):¹⁴

- (11) JókK 30: Es nem **nytya meg** nekewnk
 and not open PRT for.us
 ‘And he doesn’t open it for us.’

4. Aspect and information structure in SH

The standard assumption in Hungarian linguistics is that viewpoint aspect and information structure are two independent components. Counterarguments can be brought based on the fact that viewpoint aspect can be expressed only in neutral sentences: viewpoint aspect cannot be expressed morphosyntactically in sentences containing structural focus (see (12)), aspect cannot be negated morphosyntactically (see (13)), progressive sentences cannot be negated (cf. (14) with (15)) etc. On the other hand, an unambiguously perfective interpretation can be the secondary effect of focussing (see (16)), and finally the preverbal particle does not encode perfectivity by all means (see (17)). All these suggest that the possibility of marking viewpoint aspect is always related to information structure. That is: aspect and information structure are not independent.

(12) below is ambiguous in that in its perfective meaning the sentence can be paraphrased as (a) ‘It was Mary who had climbed up the tree when I arrived’, on its progressive meaning it can be read as (b) ‘It was Mary who was just climbing up the tree when I arrived.’ This illustrates that aspect cannot be expressed morphosyntactically in focus constructions.

- (12) MARI **mászott fel** a fára, amikor megjöttem.
 Mary climbed PRT_{up} the tree-to when PRT-arrived-1SG

(13) contains predicate negation. As progressive cannot be negated (cf. (15)), we won’t find the meaning similar to meaning (b) of (12). However, (13) is still ambiguous: it can be (a) the negation of a telic situation (‘it is not true that the telic event has culminated’, that is: ‘Mary started

¹⁴ A PRT–Neg–V construction can also be found in OH (and it sporadically appears up to the present day, with higher occurrence in some dialects such as Csángó, for instance). In OH it is usually accompanied by a negative pronoun or proadverb, cf. (i). For details on this construction see É. Kiss (to appear).

- (i) JókK 151: Es sonha **megnem sert** tyteket valamÿben
 and never PRT-not insult you.2PL-ACC something-in
 ‘And he never offends you in anything.’

climbing up the tree but she didn't manage to reach the top'), or it can mean that (b) 'Mary didn't even try to climb up the tree'. This shows that viewpoint aspect cannot be negated morphosyntactically.

- (13) Mari nem **mászott fel** a fára.
 Mary not climbed PRT_{up} the tree-to

Progressive in Hungarian can only be expressed morphosyntactically if the predicate of the sentence is a PRT-verb complex. Otherwise there is no difference between progressive and imperfective forms. As we see in (14a), a sentence with an atelic verb can be negated (see (14b)), as opposed to a telic predicate containing a verbal particle following the verb, which is a symptom of the progressive in Hungarian (see (15a)). (15b) therefore shows that progressive sentences cannot be negated.¹⁵ In the progressive sentence both the verb and the verbal particle following it have an accent of their own, which is not the case when the particle is placed after the verb due to focussing or negation.

- (14) a. **Fütyörésztem**, amikor megláttam Pétert.
 whistled-1SG when PRT-saw-1SG Peter-ACC
 'I was whistling when I noticed Peter.'
- b. Nem **fütyörésztem**, amikor megláttam Pétert.
 not whistled-1SG when PRT-saw-1SG Peter-ACC
 'I wasn't whistling when I noticed Peter.'
- (15) a. **Mentem át** a zebrán, amikor megláttam Pétert.
 went-1SG PRT_{across} the crosswalk-on when PRT-saw-1SG Peter-ACC
 'I was crossing the crasswalk when I noticed Peter.'
- b. Nem **mentem át** a zebrán, amikor megláttam Pétert.
 not went-1SG PRT_{across} the crosswalk-on when PRT-saw-1SG Peter-ACC
 *'I wasn't just crossing the crosswalk when I noticed Peter.'

¹⁵ Negation can of course operate on a predicate coerced to a state, cf. (i):

- (i) (Mindig akkor hasított belém a félelem, amikor éppen mentem át az úton.
 Most ugyanezt éreztem),
 pedig nem **mentem** (éppen) **át** az úton.
 though not went-1SG just PRT_{across} the street-on
 '(It was always when I was crossing the street that I was hit by this sensation of fear. Now I felt the same sensation), though I was not crossing the street.'
 The accent marks (´) show that both the verb and the verbal particle following it have an accent of their own.

From another perspective, the sentences in (16) illustrate that atelic (i.e., particleless) predicates can be perfectivised by the focussing of their duration. That is: perfective interpretation is a secondary effect of mapping to information structure (here: of focussing). While in (16a) it can be the case that Peter was waiting for Eve for even more than two hours (i.e., imperfective reading), in (16b), with the duration in focus, this interpretation is banned.

- (16) a. Péter ma két órán át (csak) **várt** Évára.
 Peter today two hour-on across just waited Eve-for
 ‘Today Peter was waiting for Eve for two hours.’
- b. Péter ma **KÉT ÓRÁN ÁT** **várt** Évára.
 ‘Today Peter waited for Eve for two hours.’

Focusing can yield a perfective interpretation in cases when the corresponding neutral sentence would only allow an imperfective reading. Finally (17) gives an example for a third type of verbal particle. Locative particles (as opposed to resultative and terminative particles, which yield telic predicates) appear in atelic sentences expressing existence or spatial configuration; they denote the location of the argument whose existence or spatial configuration is asserted, and do not encode perfectivity.

- (17) **Ott állt** a kocsí egész nap a ház előtt.
 there stood the car all day the house in.front.of
 ‘The car was standing in front of the house the whole day.’

As an interim conclusion we may say that viewpoint aspect and information structure have complementary distribution, and that viewpoint aspect is information structure-dependent. If the main assertion is the aspectual information itself, the options of expressing information structure are limited and vice versa. That is: aspect and information structure are interdependent.

5. Explaining the diachronic change in the order of the verb and the verbal particle

As mentioned above, verbal particles have undergone grammaticalization. In the historical development of the Hungarian verbal particles, *meg* is the verbal particle that evolved first, and which has totally lost its descriptive meaning by now. Then other verbal particles came into existence by the

end of the 15th century (in the order of their appearance: *el* ‘away’, *fel* ‘upwards, up’, *ki* ‘out’, *be* ‘in’, *le* ‘down’, *alá* ‘under’, *össze* ‘together’). Many others have developed in later times (up to the present).

The assumption of the diachronic literature is that before the stabilization of the category of verbal particles, the (proto) verbal particles behaved as adverbs in being able to appear either pre- or postverbally, but marked perfective events in both cases (cf. Wacha 1992). This is assumed to have yielded free variation of the PRT–verb and verb–PRT word orders up to the MH period. However, as the statistics of *Jókai Codex* show (cf. table 3, adapted from Peredy 2011), the ratio of verb–PRT word order is 16%, and there is an even lower ratio (5%) in declarative sentences. This does not seem to be a free variation.

Table 3: Statistics of *Jókai Codex*

Verbal particle	Sum	Verb–PRT (%)	PRT–verb (%)
<i>meg</i> orig. ‘back’	370	15	85
<i>el</i> orig. ‘away’	117	25	75
<i>le</i> ‘down’	20	5	95
<i>fel</i> ‘up’	51	4	96
<i>ki</i> ‘out’	36	14	86
<i>be</i> ‘in’	29	16	84
<i>által</i> ‘by’	7	43	57
Sum	631	16	84

The present paper advances the view that diachronically there is a gradual change of the preverbal pattern of particles across different construction types governed by the discourse status of the culmination of the event expressed by the verbal particle. Therefore the claim is that the position of the verbal particles is not to be accounted for by assuming an aspectual representation independent of information structure.

5.1. Information status hierarchy

If we put forth an information status hierarchy that ranges from main assertion to negation, arguments for the hypothesis that discourse function and the position of the verbal particle are related, and that this can be seen as the motivation for the diachronic change can be deduced from the observed data themselves (see table 4).

The discourse function of information encoded by a certain expression can be:

- the **main assertion** of the sentence: it is true, it conveys new information; if there is only one expression conveying new information in the sentence, that is it;
- **asserted** by the sentence: it is true, it conveys new information;
- **presupposed** by the sentence: it is true and known in the context;
- **neither asserted, nor negated**: neither its truth, nor its falsity is asserted or entailed by the sentence;
- its **negation is presupposed** by the sentence: it is false, and its falsity is known in the context;
- **negated**: it is false and its falsity is new information.

In table 4, dialectal data from Csángó (spoken in Moldova, North-Eastern Romania) are included, too, as the Northern Csángó and Southern Csángó sub-dialects still preserve features of OH (thus qualifying for the label of the most archaic dialects of Hungarian). E.g., Csángó preserves residues of the richer tense–aspect system of OH shown in section 2.1.

5.2. Interpretation of the data

As we can see, if the culmination of the telic event is asserted by the sentence (in the case of perfective episodic events, habitual and iterative telic events, quick sequences of telic events, and telic sentences with a postverbal focus), the verbal particle can always occupy the preverbal position in SH. If the culmination is presupposed (preverbal focus), or negated (negation, imperative, proximative constructions), or neither asserted, nor negated (progressive sentences), then the particle is postverbal.

¹⁵ As opposed to SH, where a quick sequence of events normally requires a PRT–verb order (but see footnote 6), the verb–PRT order is more common in Csángó, as in (i):

(i) (Á, prăjitura. . .) **Gyúrtuk meg**, úgy borsval, ecetvel, s
 kneaded-1PL PRT that.way sourjuice-with vinegar-with and
 azt **süttük meg**. S azt **vágtuk ki, csántuk**
 that-ACC cooked-1PL PRT and that-ACC cut-PAST-1PL PRT_{out} did-1PL

Table 4: Relation between the discourse function and the position of verbal particles in different constructions containing telic events. (The Csángó corpus is based on Southern Csángó and Szekler Csángó interviews (cca. one and a half million text words).)

Construction type	Discourse function of the PRT	OH	Csángó	SH
(A) Perfective episodic event	main assertion	+	+	+
(B) Presentational	asserted	–	+	+
(C) Quick sequence of events	asserted	no data	– (+)	+ (–)
(D) Habitual	asserted	+, morpho-syntactically	–/+ , Adv/ (+, morpho-syntactically)	+, Adv
(E) Iterative	asserted	+, morpho-syntactically	–/+ , Adv/ (+, morpho-syntactically)	+, Adv
(F) Proximative	negated	+, morpho-syntactically	–/+ , Adv	+, Adv
(G) Progressive	neither asserted nor negated	+, morpho-syntactically	–	–
(H) Postverbal focus	asserted or presupposed	–	–	+
(I) Preverbal (exhaustive) focus	presupposed	–	–	–
(J) Imperative	negation presupposed	–	–	–
(K) Negation	negated	–	–	–

meg úgy triunghion, *tettünk* *beléje* dulceatát, s osztán
PRT that.way triangular put-PAST-1PL PRT_{in} jam and then
tettük *bé* kemencébe, *süttük* *meg*. S mikor *ki*vettük,
put-PAST-1PL PRT_{in} oven-in baked-1PL PRT and when PRT_{out}-took-1PL
akkor *kevertük* *bé* úgy cukorba, finom.
then mixed-1PL PRT_{in} that.way sugar-in delicious

‘Well, the cookie. (We have prepared it in the following way:) We kneaded it with sour juice and vinegar, and we baked that. Afterwards we cut that, made it triangular, put some jam in it, and then we put it in the oven and baked it (again). And when we took it out we plunged it into sugar, like that, (it comes out) delicious.’

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We find two exceptions. In proximative sentences, the culmination is negated and still the verbal particle is preverbal. In this case adverbial modification compensates.¹⁶

The other exception is the construction with postverbal focus, in the case of which the culmination can be either asserted or presupposed, but we have a preverbal verbal particle even in the latter case. We can argue that in this case, there is no better solution. If the verbal particle were postverbal, the verb itself would carry the main stress, but the event expressed by the verb is presupposed when its culmination is. As the pattern of a stressed preverbal verbal particle is more frequent (and therefore less marked) in SH than the pattern of a verb carrying main stress, the preverbal particle, as a default case, is chosen in postverbal focus constructions. In contrast to this, in OH, where verbal particles were not so widespread yet, and therefore stressed verbs occurred more often, the verbal particle stays behind the verb carrying main stress in postverbal focus constructions. The situation is the same in Csángó: stressed verbs are more common, and postverbal focus goes with postverbal verbal particles.

In habitual and iterative sentences and in quick sequences of events, single telic subevents culminate, which is encoded by the preverbal position of the verbal particle, but the superevent is atelic. This is expressed by adverbial modification in SH, while in OH, imperfective viewpoint aspect could be expressed morphosyntactically (at least in past tense). In Csángó iterative and habitual constructions, the use of postverbal particles is also a possibility. As (18a) shows, habitual constructions can follow both the verb–PRT and the PRT–verb pattern. In the latter case, adverbial modification is needed, just like in SH. In (18b) we find a past imperfective verb form and a preverbal PRT, as in OH. In (19) the iterative construction is exemplified: (19a) resembles OH in that iterativity is expressed morphosyntactically, and the verbal particle is preverbal, (19b) is like the SH PRT–verb pattern with adverbial modification, while (19c) has a verb–PRT order.

¹⁶ Adverbials that modify the proposition (not the event) can influence the truth value or the probability of the truth value of the proposition. The adverbial *majdnem* ‘almost’ is an extreme in the sense that it turns true to false.

- (i) a. *John reached the top.* – culmination is true
 b. *John almost reached the top.* – culmination is false
 c. *Perhaps John reached the top.* – the probability of truth is not very high

- (18) a. **Mosod meg, teszed belé** hordóba, bidonba,
 wash-2SG PRT put-2SG PRT_{into} barrel-in, cask-in
réa sótt, s aztán altulnap, egy héten
 PRT_{on} salt-ACC and then that-day-from one week-on
keresztül megzavarod, hogy legyik jó.
 through PRT-stir-2SG that be-SBJV3SG good
 ‘You wash it, you put it in a barrel, a cask, you put salt on it, and then from that day on you stir it for one week so that it will come out tasty.’
- b. Hamarább **megtartsák vala** a bötöt.
 earlier PRT-keep-3PL be-PAST the fast-ACC
 ‘They used to fast before.’
- (19) a. Estére még a káposztatorzsákat is mind **kiesszük vala**.
 evening-to even the cabbage-strunks-ACC also all PRT_{out}-eat-1PL be-PAST
 ‘By evening we (always) ate up even the cabbage-strunks.’
- b. Most Pusztinába úgy van, hogy mielőtt lenne a lakodalom
 now Pusztina-in that.way is that before be-COND3SG the wedding
 három vasárnap akkor mindig így **felöltözik** a menyasszony.
 three Sunday then always this.way PRT_{up}-dress3SG the bride
 ‘Now in Pusztina it is customary that before the wedding the bride always dresses up, on three Sundays.’
- c. [...] addig es mentek el ott mások es, [...]
 till.then also passed-3PL PRT_{off} there others also
rikojtottak fel oda, **kiáltottak fel**, hogy mit csinálsz...
 called-3PL PRT_{up} there shouted-3PL PRT_{up} that what-ACC do-2SG
 ‘There were others passing by as well, they called out (to her), and shouted up there, (asking) what are you doing?’

The proximative construction was expressed by imperfective aspect marking in OH, while (20) exemplifies the proximative construction in Csángó. The most common structure is (20a) with a postverbal particle in accordance with the hypothesis that the verbal particle cannot be stressed when the culmination is negated. In (20b), we can see a construction similar to SH, but instead of the typical adverb used for proximative in SH, *majdnem* ‘almost’ (see footnote 12), we find the dialectal and colloquial *majd* ‘almost’. A peculiarity of the proximative construction with *majd* is the fact that the verb *is/can* be stressed instead of the verbal particle.

- (20) a. Jere, me **hal meg** a lejánkám!
 come.IMP-2SG because dies PRT the daughter-1SG
 ‘Come, as my daughter is dying.’

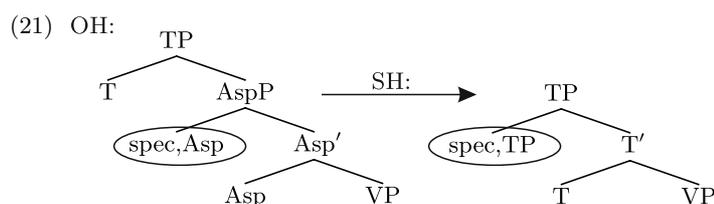
- b. Egyszer majd **bé** **haltam** a Szeretbe.
 once almost PRT_{in} died-1SG the Siret-in
 ‘Once I almost died in the river Siret.’

Progressive was expressed by imperfective aspect marking in OH. The emergence of the progressive construction with a postverbal particle in SH (and also in Csángó) is in accordance with our hypothesis, too. The starting point of this hypothesis is that the locus of new information is the immediately preverbal position as early as in OH. When the emerging category of verbal particles referring to the culmination appears in this position, perfectivity is associated with the preverbal verbal particle. As more and more telic events have a particle following this pattern, and as the class of verbal particles becomes richer, more and more non-compositional (lexicalised) PRT–verb complexes emerge. These complexes tend to appear in this sequence not only in episodic sentences, but in other (habitual, proximative, etc.) constructions, as well. If the meaning of the whole construction contradicts the culmination of an episodic event (as in proximative), the intended meaning (e.g. proximative) can be achieved either by morphosyntactic aspect marking (in OH) or by adverbial modification (in SH). As there are fewer and fewer constructions containing a verbal particle where the verb carries the main stress, stress on the verb becomes associated with a specialised meaning: that of the progressive.

As is shown by Peredy (2011), the verb–PRT and PRT–verb word orders in neutral sentences do not display free variation in OH. The verb–PRT orders are typical of presentational constructions, i.e., they introduce longer series of events as titles or as first sentences in a story. Although the particular event expressed by the presentational construction is culminated, the viewpoint is not perfective owing to the postverbal position of the verbal particle, and by this means the attention is focused on the forthcoming story. Why this construction has disappeared from SH can be explained similarly to the emergence of the progressive. Sentences describing telic events and containing a verb carrying main stress are associated with the lack of culmination. However, the particular event of a presentational construction is culminated and, although the subsequent events of a story are strongly related, they are not perceived as an atelic superevent (in contrast to habitual, iterative or quick sequence events). That is, not only the single events culminate but the story as a whole, as well. Therefore SH requires a preverbal particle in this case. In Csángó, too, while postverbal particles are typical of atelic sentences, they are rare in the case of presentation.

6. Syntactic analysis

Below we give a brief outline of how these results could be interpreted in a generative framework. We follow É. Kiss (2008c) in claiming that the TP projection of OH disappeared and the original AspP was reinterpreted as TP (21).



According to É. Kiss (2008c), a PredP¹⁷ projection dominating the VP, hosting the verbal particle in Spec, PredP, takes over the role of (situation) aspect marking during the MH period, whereby viewpoint aspect marking in OH is replaced by situation aspect marking.

In contrast to É. Kiss, however, we assume neither a PredP (which is the locus of complex predicate formation in her account) nor any higher information structural positions (like NonNeutP, cf. Olsvay 2000, or FocP, usually assumed in Hungarian sentence structure). For Standard Hungarian, we claim that the focus position is determined by the tense bearing element of the sentence (cf. Kádár 2006),¹⁸ therefore this position is assumed to be the specifier of TP. That is, in our analysis, the position of new information is Spec, TP. This is in accordance with Szendrői's (2001) claim that movement into the preverbal position occurs in order to gain prosodic and information structural prominence.

Our analysis works with a single feature (\pm information focus) instead of three (\pm pred, \pm perfective, \pm focus). The expression carrying an [ifocus] feature will move to Spec, TP if it is a full XP. If it is the verb that carries the [ifocus] feature, it will move to T, and Spec, TP remains empty.

¹⁷ There is no consensus in the literature either on whether the focus and the verbal particle are alternative fillers of the same slot, or on the label of such a slot. É. Kiss (2008c) advances the idea that it is the preverbal Spec, PredP position for which the verbal particle and the identificational focus compete, which is also the locus of main stress assignment, and therefore the constituent in Spec, PredP (or the whole PredP projection) functions as the information focus of the sentence.

¹⁸ While Kádár (2006) comes to this conclusion via the analysis of nominal predicates and predication, Brody (1995) states this on the basis of analysing infinitival constructions.

Along these lines the diachronic change can be interpreted as follows: the observed gradual change of the preverbal pattern of particles construction by construction means that gradually the [ifocus] feature gets associated with the verbal particle instead of the verb (the verb and the verbal particle making up a complex predicate).

The exhaustive vs. information focus reading will depend on the semantic type of the holder of the [ifocus] feature (see É. Kiss 2008a). The verb can also be the carrier of this feature, in which case Spec,TP is not filled.

Now the verbal particle will be preverbal¹⁹ if it carries the information focus feature, otherwise it stays in postverbal position. There are sentence types where it is obvious that the verbal particle, which expresses the culmination point of the telic event, has to be [+ifocus]. This is the case with neutral sentences expressing an episodic perfective event. Similarly there are sentence types where the verbal particle cannot be the carrier of the [+ifocus] feature, either because the event does not culminate (negation), or because the event is presupposed (focus constructions).

All the other sentence types assert a complex event. For instance a habitual event is an atelic superevent the parts of which can be telic subevents. If the verbal particle is focussed in this case, it expresses that the single subevents are culminated. If it is the verb that carries the [+ifocus] feature, it expresses that we consider the series of events as a whole, i. e., both possibilities are compatible with the system.

Diachronic change (and differences between dialects) can be found in cases where the function of the sentence type is compatible with both a [+ifocus] and a [-ifocus] verbal particle. As neutral sentences represent the most frequent type, they have an analogical effect, so the preverbal pattern gradually spreads across construction types, but the different constructions can co-exist for a long period. This is in accordance with the findings of Westergaard (2009). She argues that the acquisition of different structural variants is possible on the basis of micro-cues, which results in a gradual change.

It still requires some explanation why Spec,TP could be exempt from the subject requirement. EPP is generally considered to be a subject requirement for a given language, that is, the EPP feature is restricted to

¹⁹ We do not intend to discuss here the position in which Hungarian verbal particles are merged into the structure. For different positions on the issue see for instance Szendrői (2001); Ackema (2004); É. Kiss (2008d).

[Φ] (or any nominal-related) features. Under Chomsky's definition,²⁰ however, the EPP feature to be checked in Spec,IP (our Spec,TP) can be parametrized and therefore it is not restricted to subject properties. Oda (2002) suggests that the parameter is either [Φ] or [+Pred], as these are often regarded as the most fundamental notions of the predication relation, and EPP is considered to be a feature expressing the predicational requirement, that is EPP is a principle of predication. This enables us to keep the universality of the principle. Technical details could then be worked out along the lines of Massam & Smallwood (1996), their "privileged feature" being substituted for by our [+ifocus] feature.²¹

7. Cases requiring further explanation

7.1. Imperative

The morphological marking of subjunctive and imperative is the same in Hungarian; it is the pre- or postverbal position of the particle that is considered to be the distinctive feature of the two functions. The standard analysis of the SH imperative is that the V moves to a higher functional projection, therefore the PRT is postverbal in imperative sentences (cf. (22a)). However, there are sporadic examples where preverbal particles occur with imperative morphology even in main sentences (cf. (22b)).

- (22) a. **Tűnj** *el* innen!
 disappear-IMP.2SG PRT_{away} from.here
- b. **Elűnj** innen!
 PRT_{away}disappear-IMP.2SG from.here
 'Get lost!'

Constructions like that in (22b) have special emotional content focussing on the subjective interest of the speaker both in SH and in Csángó. It is possible to argue (as Varga 2013 does) that these constructions are special cases of subjunctive (i.e., matrix subjunctive clauses).

²⁰ The Extended Projection Principle (EPP) states that [Spec, IP] is obligatory, perhaps as a morphological property of I or by virtue of the predicational character of VP (cf. Chomsky 1995, 55).

²¹ Massam and Smallwood (1996) advance an analysis for Niuean in which they postulate a strong [T] feature. This [T] feature can be checked off by predicate movement, realized as head adjunction to T (when the predicate is realized as X⁰) or as movement to the specifier of T (when the predicate is realized as XP).

7.2. Negation

In SH, the verbal particle follows the verb in negative sentences, and it is the negative particle *nem* that immediately precedes the verb, as in (23a). However, another construction containing a verbal particle preceding the negative particle coexisted with this for a long period of time, and can be found sporadically up to the present day (23b).

- (23) a. Nem **megyek** *be*.
 not enter-1SG PRT_{in}
- b. **Be** nem **megyek!**
 PRT_{in} not enter-1SG
 ‘I won’t go inside.’

The pattern in (23b) is usually accompanied by a negative pronoun or proadverb in OH. In this PRT–Neg–V pattern it is not the negative particle but the verbal particle preceding it that carries the main stress of the sentence, which contradicts our analysis assuming that main stress expresses the assertion of the culmination of a telic event. This can be explained if we assume that this word order is a relic of the SOV word order (preserved also in subordinate clauses). Piñón (1991) advances an analysis in which the PRT is claimed to raise to focus, while Varga (2013) places it in Spec,NegP (dominating a Non-Neutral Phrase that hosts the verb in its head).

8. Conclusions

The verbal particles contribute to situation aspect in Hungarian. In SH telic events can mainly be expressed by PRT–verb complexes. Above an information structural account of the position of verbal particles was set forth, both for Present-day Standard Hungarian and Old Hungarian, taking the (im)perfective interpretation to be a secondary effect. An information status hierarchy (ranging from main assertion to negation) was set up according to the discourse function of the information encoded by a certain expression. The observed gradual diachronic change of the preverbal pattern of verbal particles across different construction types was claimed to be governed by the discourse status of the culmination of the event expressed by the verbal particle. This scenario suggests that the position of verbal particles is not to be accounted for by assuming an aspectual representation independent of information structure.

The findings of this paper can be interpreted in different theoretical frameworks. In a generative framework a reformulation of the EPP as a principle of predication, and the postulation of an [i(nformation)focus] feature (replacing features like [\pm pred], [\pm perfective], and [\pm focus]), can be assumed to account for the preverbal or postverbal position of verbal particles. Thus we can also explain the diachronic change in the distribution of particles: parallel to the grammaticalization/lexicalization of verbal particles, a shift of the [ifocus] feature from the verb to the verbal particle can be observed in all cases of focussing, when an event is asserted.

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