

## From Proto-Hungarian SOV to Old Hungarian TopFocVSO

Katalin É. Kiss (ekiss@nytud.hu)

Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

### 1. Goal

The talk presents evidence of a change from SOV to TopFocVSO in late Proto-Hungarian. It discusses the facts proving that the Proto-Hungarian sentence was SOV; it speculates about what might have led to the reanalysis of sentences generated by an SOV syntax as outputs of a VSO grammar; and it demonstrates that the first coherent Old Hungarian text is already TopFocVSO, with split thematic and functional clausal domains. Finally, it argues that various changes in the Old and Middle Hungarian periods are symptoms of the restructuring of Hungarian syntax from head-final to head-initial.

### 2. Evidence for Proto-Hungarian SOV

The claim that the Proto-Hungarian sentence was SOV is based on three types of evidence:

- (i) The languages most closely related to Hungarian, Vogul and Ostyak, are strictly SOV, with a morphologically unmarked subject and object. In the Vogul and Ostyak sentence, the topic must be identical with the subject, which is attained by extensive passivization.
- (ii) Old Hungarian displays relics of a previous SOV period (to be illustrated by examples of the 14th century Jókai Codex, and the 15th century Vienna Codex), among them
  - a non-finite clause-type in which the object is still unmarked and is strictly preverbal;
  - a clause-final interrogative particle cognate with the clause-final interrogative particle of Vogul and Ostyak;
  - strict 'V–Aux' order of the verbal complex;
  - 'verbal particle–negative particle–V' order in negative clauses (which is evidence of rightward V-to-Neg movement according to Jäger (2008))
- (iii) Hungarian has many SOV typological characteristics, e.g., head-final NP and PP.

### 3. Why/how did the SOV order change?

In late Proto-Hungarian, a *-t* suffix, originally marking objects functioning as secondary topics (Mikola 1966, Marcantonio 1985, Nikolaeva 1999, É. Kiss 2011), developed into a generalized accusative marker, which allowed a more flexible word order, and made extraposition possible. Extraposition seems to have been restricted to definite constituents, which suggests that it was primarily a means of rightward topicalization (although some instances of clause-final focus have also been attested). It is claimed that by the beginning of the Old Hungarian period, the spreading of extraposition had led to a „critical mass” of postverbal constituents, which came to be analyzed by new generations of speakers to be *in situ*. The preverbal constituents of the Proto-Hungarian SOV sentence, where S also functioned as a topic, and O functioned as a focus, were reinterpreted as constituents proposed into functional positions. That is:

<u>Proto-Hungarian SOV</u>		<u>Early Old Hungarian TopFocVSO</u>
subject-topic	→	topic
object-focus	- if specific: →	focus
	- if non-specific: →	a V-modifier semantically incorporated into the V
extraposed constituents	→	arguments <i>in situ</i>

The claim that this word order change was triggered by the spreading of extraposition is supported by facts such as (i) the order of postverbal constituents is free in Old Hungarian (and has been free ever since); (ii) only specific, referential arguments occur postverbally; (iii) parallel developments have been hypothesized for Niger-Congo (Hyman 1975) and Latin (Polo 2005); and (iv) in the most archaic Hungarian clause type, *-ván/vén* participial clauses, the change took place in the Old Hungarian period, and is documented by examples like (1a,b), the translations of the same sentence from the first two surviving Bible translations, (a) involving an OV clause with a non-case-marked object, (b) involving a VO clause with an accusative-marked object:

- (1) a. *azoc* [*legottan haloioc meg haguā*] *kouetec otet*  
 they immediately net-POSS.3PL PRT leaving followed him  
 'Immediately leaving their net, they followed him' (München Codex, 1416/1466)
- b. *Azok kedyg* [*legottan el hagywan haloyok-at es hayoyok-at*],  
 they however immediately PRT leaving net-POSS.3PL-ACC and boat-POSS.3PL-ACC  
*kóweteeek hewtet*  
 followed him  
 'They, on the other hand, immediately leaving their net and their boat, followed him'  
 (Jordánszky Codex, 1516-1519)

#### 4. Evidence for Old Hungarian TopFocVSO

The claim that Old Hungarian is already TopFocVSO (more precisely, Top Foc V ARG\*, with the order of postverbal arguments free) is based on the analysis of the 50 clauses of *Funeral speech* (1193-95). About half of its clauses are V-initial; arguments are only preposed into preverbal position if they function as topics or foci. In (1), the topicalized possessor is clearly extracted from a postverbal subject:

- (2) *Es oz gimilsnek<sub>i</sub> vvl keseruv uola* [<sub>i</sub> *vize*]  
 and that fruit-DAT/GEN so bitter was juice-POSS.3SG  
 'And of that fruit, the juice was so bitter'

#### 5. More recent changes from OV to VO

It is argued that the restructuring of Hungarian grammar from head-final to head-initial also continued after the shift from SOV to TopFocVSO (perhaps motivated perceptually by the Early Immediate Constraint of Hawkins (1998)). Various constructions surviving from the SOV period have disappeared, e.g., the new auxiliaries precede, rather than follow, the V; the 'verbal particle–neg–V' pattern has been replaced by a structure involving a left-peripheral Neg attracting the V ('neg–V–verbal particle'); some nonfinite clause types have been replaced by finite clauses, etc.

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