

Adjectives or participial clauses: the case of *-ható* (–able) in Hungarian

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Main goals*

- the current general view holds that *-ható* is a productive derivational affix, deriving adjectives from passive verbal roots, e.g. as [_{Adj} [_v V_{pass}] *-ható*] (Kiefer 2008, also English *-able* in Wasow 1977)
- using a set of (language specific) criteria we show that *-ható* forms come in two types: lexicalized adjectives and participial *clauses*
- this leads us to the conclusion that:
 - i. *ható* is not a derivational affix, but it attaches to verb *phrases* in a syntactic process, leading to participial clauses
 - ii. *ható* participials are not adjectives, but function similarly to non-finite verb forms like *ír-ó* 'writ-ing', *ír-ott* 'writt-en'
 - iii. *ható* adjectives differ from *-ható* participials in that they are *lexicalized* as adjectives

1. Lexicalized adjectives vs. participial clauses with *-ható*

-ható (i.e. *-ható* / *-hető* depending on vowel harmony) forms have two types: lexicalized adjectives and participial clauses. The two can be differentiated on the basis of the following criteria:

- (i) combination with intensifiers/adverbs
- (ii) availability of comparative forms
- (iii) availability as predicate complement
- (iv) being a suitable input to lexical derivations
- (v) availability of non-compositional meaning (not derived from that of the source verb)
- (vi) retention of argument structure and event structure

1.1. Properties of *-ható* lexicalized adjectives

(i) *ható* adjectives can be preceded by intensifiers, such as *kifejezetten* 'particularly', or *nagyon* 'very'

- (1) a. *kifejezetten ért-hető szöveg*
particularly understand-ABLE text
'particularly understandable text'
- b. *Ez a változás nagyon érez-hető.*
this the change very feel-ABLE
'This change is very palpable.'

(ii) *ható* adjectives have comparative forms

- (2) a. *ért-hető*
understand-ABLE
'understandable'
 - b. *ért-hető-bb*
understand-ABLE-COMP
'more understandable'
 - c. *leg-ért-hető-bb*
SUP-understand-ABLE-COMP
'most understandable'
- (3) a. *beszámít-ható emberek*
PV.count-ABLE people
'sane people'
 - b. *beszámít-ható-bb emberek*
PV.count-ABLE-COMP people
'more sane people'

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(ii) *ható* participial clauses do not have a comparative form (cf. also Farkas to appear)

- (15) a. * Ez a szöveg gyerekek által ért-hető-**bb** (mint az).
 this the text children by understand-ABLE-COMP than that
 lit. 'This text is more understandable to children than that.'
 b. * Öt ember leültet-hető-**bb**, mint tíz.
 five men seat-ABLE-COMP than ten
 'Five people can be better/easier seated than ten.'

(iii) *ható* participial clauses cannot be a predicate complement

- (16) * Ez a szöveg gyerekek által ért-hető-nek tűnik.
 this the text children by understand-ABLE-DAT seems
 'This text seems to be understandable to children.'

(iv) *ható* participial clauses cannot form input to further lexical derivations

- (17) * Ez az író gyerekek által ért-hető-en ír.
 this the writer children by understand-ABLE-ADV writes
 'This writer writes understandably/in an understandable manner by children.'

(v) *ható* participial clauses do not have idiomatic, non-compositional meaning compared to that of their base verb

- (18) Egy lakás be számít-ható az árba.
 a flat PV count-ABLE the price-INTO
 'A flat counts towards the price.'

Table 1: Summary of findings

Properties of <i>ható</i> forms	lexical adjectives	participial clauses
(i) combination intensifiers or adverbs	intensifiers	adverbs
(ii) availability of comparative forms	✓	*
(iii) availability as predicate complement	✓	*
(iv) input to lexical derivations	✓	*
(v) non-compositional meaning possible	✓	*
(vi) argument and event structure present	*	✓

1.3. Structural account of the two types

ható PARTICIPIAL CLAUSES: *ható* combines with verb phrases and yields a clausal constituent:

[CP [AspP [ModP(deontic) [vP(passive) [VP ... V-*ható* ...]]]]]

Evidence for clausal structure: left peripheral *discourse* items such as topics and focus can be expressed in the participial *ható* clause:

- (19) Mi a [csak TÁVCSŐVEL_{FOCUS} lát-ható] csillagokat kutatjuk.
 we the only telescope.WITH see-ABLE stars.ACC research.1PL
 'We research those stars that can only be seen with a telescope.'

ható ADJECTIVES: *ható* forms derived in the syntax and lexicalized as adjectives

2. A similar distinction in other languages

The distinction we are making in Hungarian is not novel, it has been established in one form or another for other languages, too.

2.1. French *-ble*

Leeman (1992): *-ble* forms in French fall in two classes: 'forme verbale' & 'forme adjectivale' (cf. also Perridon and Sleeman 2011)

(a)(=i) verbal forms can be modified by an adverb, adjectivals cannot

- (20) a. une manette qui est abaissable rapidement
a lever that is lowerable quickly
b. *un homme qui est abominable rapidement
a man who is horrible quickly

(b)(=iv) verbal forms do not allow adverb formation with *-ment*, while adjectives do

- (21) a. *abaissablement
lowerability
b. abominablement / aimablement
horribly kindly

(c)(=v) verbal forms are paraphrasable by passive verbs, while adjectival forms are not paraphrasable by the original verb

- (22) a. La manette ne paraît pas abaissable mais j'y arriverai quand même
the lever NE seems not lowerable but I in-it will.succeed anyway
b. un prix abordable = ?? un prix qu'on peut aborder
a price reasonable/affordable a price that one can reach

2.2. English *-able*

Fabb (1984): *-able* forms can be the result of a lexical derivation or a syntactic one (following Kayne 1981, and contra Wasow 1977)

(a) (=vi/iv) lexically derived *-able* adjectives do not have arguments and can be affixed by *in-*, *-ity* or *-ly*:

- (23) a. irreversible (*by the judge), indigestible (*by babies)
b. rentability, inflatability
c. acceptably, identifiably, allowably

(b) lexically derived *-able* adjectives can be non-productive and can be found with intransitive verbs or nouns; but only without the presence of arguments

- (24) a. perishable; variable
b. palatable, objectionable, comfortable, seasonable
c. * it is flammable to ashes
d. * he is risible out of the room

(c) (=vi) syntactically derived *-able* adjectives on other hand apply to transitive verbs only and can have resultative secondary predicates

- (25) a. rememberable, conquerable, wearable
b. Beef is eatable raw. / Trout is hammerable flat.

Importantly, lexical *ható* adjectives do not allow for splitting:

- (31) A: Be-számít-ható János?
 PV-count-ABLE J.
 'Is János sane?'
- B: * Be [_{TP} számít-ható János].
 PV count-ABLE J.
 'He is.'

Conclusion:

- in *ható* participles, the above syntactic environments (negation/focusing and question-answer pairs) trigger the same syntactic mobility of PV particles as observed in finite and some nonfinite clauses → this argues for a clausal status of *ható* participles and their derivation in the *syntax*
- with *ható* adjectives, these syntactic environments cannot split up the *ható* form → this argues for their lexical status, as syntax has no access to the internal structure of lexical words (aka *Lexical integrity* or *Word Structure Autonomy Condition*, Selkirk 1982, Booij 1985)

3.2. A morpho-phonological difference: variation in the linking vowel in plural affixation

Adjectival predicates in Hungarian agree with their subject in number, cf. (32)

- (32) Ezek a lány-ok szép-ek.
 these the girl-PL beautiful-PL
 'These girls are beautiful.'

PL *-ek* consists of the plural marker *-k* + 'linking vowel' *-e-* harmonizing with the stem

Adjectival forms ending in *-ó/-ő*, show variation in the presence of the linking vowel: most speakers find the linking vowel optional (with some individual preferences detectable) (Kálmán et al 2012):

- (33) Ezek a lány-ok méltó{-k/-ak} voltak a díjra.
 these the girl-PL worth-PL were the prize-ONTO
 'These girls were worthy of the prize.'

In a survey with 28 informants, we found that *ható* adjectives show the same variation: most speakers find the linking vowel optional (with some individual preferences detectable):

- (34) A piros színű gombák nem ehető{-k/-ek}.
 the red coloured mushroom-PL not edible-PL
 'Red mushrooms are not edible.'

ható participials, however, differ in that speakers systematically disprefer the linking vowel with them:

- (35) A 10 évesnél régebbi használt autók nem számítható{-k/*-ak} be egy új autó árába.
 the 10 year-at older used cars not countable-PL PV a new car price.POSS.IN
 'Cars older than 10 years cannot be counted toward the price of the new car.'
- (36) A legfiatalabb asszisztensek még nem bízható{-k/*-ak} meg nehezebb feladatokkal.
 the youngest assistants yet not trustable-PL PV difficult.COMP tasks.WITH
 'The youngest assistants cannot yet be trusted with more difficult tasks.'

This behaviour is entirely parallel to the behaviour of present participials. Lexicalized forms show variation in the presence of the linking vowel, clausal participials do not use a linking vowel:

- (37) (Sok diák volt a teremben.) A kiváló{-k/-ak} jutalmat kaptak.
 many student was in the room the separate.ING-PL prize.ACC received
 '(Many students were in the room.) The excellent ones received a prize.'
- (38) (Sok diák állt a téren.) A tömegből kiváló{-k/*-ak} hazasétáltak.
 many student stood the square.ON the crowd.FROM separate.ING-PL home.walked
 'Many students stood on the square. The ones separating off the crowd walked home.'

Conclusion:

- the morphophonological form of the plural marker *-k* is sensitive to the category of the *ható* form:
ható participial clauses cannot appear with a linking vowel
ható adjectives optionally can

This concludes our review of the distinct properties of the two classes of *ható* forms. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of findings

Properties of <i>ható</i> forms	lexical adjectives	participial clauses
(i) combination intensifiers or adverbs	intensifiers	adverbs
(ii) availability of comparative forms	✓	*
(iii) availability as predicate complement	✓	*
(iv) input to lexical derivations	✓	*
(v) non-compositional meaning possible	✓	*
(vi) argument- and event structure present	*	✓
(vii) PV can split off the verb under focus/negation/ellipsis	*	✓
(viii) plural form	<i>-k</i> or <i>-Vk</i>	<i>-k</i>

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