

How did the '*politeness effect*' develop in the case of two Hungarian adverbs *majd* 'later' and *talán* 'perhaps'?

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■ MAJD 'later'

- temporal adverb/adverbial particle expressing future-time reference
- HUNGARIAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY (Benkő 1970):

- 1 Benkő (1970: 819): the semantic development of *majd*: *itt* 'here'
- 2 → *most* 'now' → *rögtön* 'at once' → *nem sokára* 'very soon' → *később* 'later'

- PRESENT-DAY HUNGARIAN: descriptive (truth-conditional) meaning: → *majd* 'some time later but not now' (Kiefer 2012)

- (1) a. Csak nyergelyetek, *maid* el megyünk Szegedre,....
only saddle.imp.2pl MAJD prt go.1pl Szeged.to
'Just saddle (the horses), we are going to Szeged.' year: 1734
- b. mikor eszembe jutott, hogy majd én is megnősülök
when mind.to come.pst.3sg that MAJD i too pst.get.married
egyszer!
once
'when it came to my mind that I would get married too, once!' year: 1920

■ TALÁN 'perhaps':

- PRESENT-DAY HUNGARIAN: epistemic-inferential modal adverb (Kugler 2010)/modal particle (Kiefer 2018) expressing medium probability (p is at least as possible as not p)
 - HUNGARIAN ETYMOLOGICAL DICTIONARY (Benkő 1970):
 - 1 it originates in the first person singular form of *talál* 'to find', *találom* 'find.1sg'
 - 2 was formed the following way: ~~úgy~~ *találom*, ~~hogy~~ *vihar lesz* 'I find (that) there will be a storm' → *talám vihar lesz* → *talán vihar lesz* 'maybe there will be a storm'
 - Kugler (2010): epistemic-inferential adverb/modal function making the proposition uncertain, expressing cautiousness, carefulness, or modesty. The event is not a fact but a MERE POSSIBILITY (Kugler 2010:87).
 - Gyuris (2022): the truth of the proposition is considered by the speaker to be a POSSIBILITY, BASED ON INFERENCE. This contribution is not made at the level of truth-condition, but at the expressive/use-conditional level.

(2) *Talám engem is tudósítanak ezután...*
 TALÁN I.acc too inform.3pl after.that
 'Perhaps they will inform me after that.'

year: 1705

■ QUESTION:

- 1 the two adverbs are seemingly very different one expressing FUTURITY, one expressing UNCERTAINTY
 - 2 despite all that, they managed to develop similar functions
 - 3 possibility operators are used to mitigate the illocutionary force of requests and suggestions, but what about future-referring morphemes?
- (3) a. ...nézzük talán/ esetleg/*feltehetőleg/*valószínűleg akkor ezt
see.imp.1pl TALÁN/possibly/presumably/probably then that
a sebhelyet.
the lesion.
'...let's (perhaps) see that lesion.' year: 1978
- b. Ferkó, ha intek, majd gyere oda.
ferko if wave.1sg MAJD come.imp.2sg there
'Ferkó, if I wave, come there.' year: 1966

■ RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1 How did a (once) temporal adverb develop VARIOUS PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS?
- 2 How did this special, POLITENESS EFFECT developed in the case of *majd* 'later'?
- 3 How do FUTURE-REFERRING MORPHEMES develop SIMILAR FUNCTIONS TO POSSIBILITY ADVERBS?

■ CLAIM:

The meaning of the future-referring *majd* changed, and the once proximal component turned into a distal one.

PROX: certain time, close to the utterance-time → certain, definite, planned, high degree of speaker's commitment

DIST: uncertain time, some time in the future → uncertain, delayed, lack of speaker's commitment

■ STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENTATION:

- 1 The literature on *talán*: The non-modal functions
- 2 The literature on *majd*
- 3 The meaning change of *majd*
 - 1 its functions in Middle Hungarian
 - 2 its functions in early modern Hungarian
 - 3 its functions in Modern Hungarian
- 4 The formal analysis of *majd*
- 5 How did the expressive meaning of *majd* develop? What are the similarities to possibility modals?
- 6 What makes it capable of mitigating the illocutionary force of a request or a suggestion?
- 7 Conclusion and future aims

■ THE NON-MODAL FUNCTIONS OF *talán*:

- The pragmatic functions emerged on the basis of its modal functions (Kugler 2010:90).
- The use of *talán* indicates INDIRECTNESS and weakens the illocutionary force in requests, suggestions, and proposals.

(4) *talán* inkább ha nem lesz, kire nézve jobban meg
TALÁN rather if not will.be.3sg who.on look.va better prt
kell magyarázni édes Szívem.
must explain.inf sweet hear.poss.1sg

'Perhaps if there won't be anyone for whom, we should explain it
better, sweetheart.' year: 1706

- "The meaning component 'possibility' is inactive here as far as the evaluation of the event is concerned..." (Kugler 2010:91).
- In sentences in whose verb is in the imperative, the role of *talán* is the diminishing of the illocutionary force, the expression of politeness (Kugler 2010:92).
- Kugler (2010): Higher degree of possibility tend to strengthen the illocutionary force, those located in the middle or express lower degree of probability like *talán* or *esetleg* tend to weaken it.

■ *Majd* 'later': special

- Similar in meaning: *később* 'later', *idővel* 'in time', and *egyszer* 'once'
- Even if it has a distribution identical to other Hungarian adverbs, Kiefer (2012) considers *majd* an adverbial particle: both adverbial and pragmatic functions.
- WHY SO SPECIAL?
 - The use of *fog* 'will' is obligatory in future-referring utterances with stative predicates. Both Kiefer (2012) and Palffy-Muhoray (2016) argue that the only 'adverb' that can make a difference in acceptability is *majd* 'later'.

(5) *Context*: Peter is learning Chinese and he is quite good at it.

a. Péter jól fog tudni kínaiul.
peter well will know.inf chinese

'Peter will be able to speak Chinese.'

b. Péter jól tud majd kínaiul.
peter will know.npst.3sg later chinese

'Peter will be able to speak Chinese.'

c. #Péter jól tud később/idővel/egyszer kínaiul.
peter well know.npst.3sg later/in.time/once chinese
intended meaning: 'Peter will be able to speak Chinese later.'

■ KIEFER (2012) ON *majd*:

- descriptive meaning: '*sometime in the future but not now*'
- when expressing futurity: almost never expresses a purely descriptive meaning. "*It expresses various pragmatic functions (uncertainty, delay) expressing the speakers' attitudes*" (Kiefer 2012:428).

(6) *Majd* elolvasom.

later prt.read.npst.1sg

'I will read it later.'

- (6)– delay, uncertainty, might not even happen, lack of commitment from the speakers side → incompatible with making a promise
- This effect is present whenever *majd* precedes the verb except for complex expressions like *majd mindjárt* 'MAJD very soon' or idiomatic expressions like *Majd én...* 'MAJD I...' (strengthening the illocutionary force of an offer/threat).
- Kiefer (2012) claims that *majd* can never be in the scope of negation. If it had a purely descriptive meaning, it should be possible to negate it.
- In the case of *majd* and *talán* (Kiefer (1981), Gyuris (2022)), descriptive negation is not possible.

- Metalinguistic negation: the entailment/(implicature) is denied /contrastive negation/

(7) a. Majd?! Nem majd, hanem most!

MAJD not MAJD but now

'Later? Not later, but now.'

doc# 739

b. ...talán még jó is tenne, nem talán, biztosan.

TALÁN yet good.acc too go.inf not TALÁN surely

'...perhaps it would do good, not perhaps, surely.' doc# 1016

- → *Majd*: when it is contrasted to expressions expressing proximity (e.g. *most* 'now/very soon proximity marker' (Virovec 2021), *rögtön* 'immediately', *már ma* 'already today').

- *Talán*: when it is contrasted to expressions expressing certainty

- → *Majd*: can never refer to the immediate future, it is frequently contrasted to *most* 'now/PROX marker', delaying effect is prominent; delaying something means it might never happen (Kiefer 2012:430)

■ HALM (to appear): a diachronic perspective:

- discusses the approximator-use of *majd* and argues that it came about the temporal-adverb *majd*

(8) Majd elájulok.
 soon/almost prt.faint.npst.1sg
 'I will faint soon.' / 'I am almost fainting.'

- *majd* 'soon' to *majd* 'almost'

(9) *majd* 'soon':
 TEMPORAL: w_1 is a continuation of w_0 (asserted)
 PROXIMAL: $\exists w_1 \in S_{ALT}(w). close_s(w_1, w_0) \wedge p_{w_1}$ (entailed)
 POLAR: $\neg p_{w_0}$ (scalar implicature)

- Halm (to appear): w_1 is such that it is a temporally close continuation world of w_0 , the *s* is fainting in w_1 . Since w_1 and w_0 are temporally close, they are also close que possible worlds under any closeness metric. There is a scalar implicature to the effect that the speaker is not fainting of now.
- *majd* 'almost': semantic-bleaching: the temporal meaning component was lost, the proximal component was reinforced, and the polar component became part of the semantic meaning

- *Majd* in Middle Hungarian (1526-1772):

- Methodology: 400 randomly selected hits from The Old and Middle Hungarian corpus of informal language use (OMHC) were examined and categorized.

- Temporal uses:

- 1 asking for immediate help:

(10) Jaj majd megh öllnek a komlóért,
 wo MAJD prt kill.npst.3pl the hop.for
 'Wo they are going to kill me for the hop.' year: 1729

- 2 to talk about a event that is proximal/imminent to the utterance time:

(11) a fürdoit meg készítette hogy majd meg
 the bath.poss.3sg.acc prt make.pst.3sg that MAJD prt
 fürözti,
 bathe.3sg
 'She made his bath in order to give him a bath (soon).' year: 1754

- 3 to make promises: by promising the speaker commits to a future action

(12) Hiszen jőjön kend be, majd adok egy kevest,
so come.imp.3sg you prt MAJD give.1sg a little.acc
'So come in, I will give you a little.'
year: 1754

- 4 *majd* and *hamar* 'soon' were synonymous.

(13) ...maid ki fog jönni, a mint hogy az után csak hamar
MAJD prt will come.inf the like that the then only soon
ki jött az úczára Thomeszné.
pst come.pst.3sg the street.to mrs.thomesz
'...she's going to come out, and that was true as Mrs. Thomas very
soon came out to the street.'
year: 1714

- 5 meaning later in the future:

(14) Majd magunk posztójával ruházzuk, csak várj
MAJD our baize.poss.1pl.inst dress.1pl only wait
kiczinjt Sziven.
a.little.acc heart.poss.1sg
'We are going to dress him with our baize, just wait a little, my
darling.'
year: 1722

■ Summary:

- The approximator use was dominant, (up to 51% of all examples, temporal-use 18%)
- the temporal use was different, very often referred to the proximal future
- *Majd* was used
 - in the context of asking for help,
 - to refer to the proximal future,
 - to make a promise,
 - as a synonym of *hamar* 'soon',
 - together with *éppen* 'just' forming '*éppen majd*' 'just now'
- The 'later'-meaning occurs in some utterances, but *majd* more frequently meant 'soon'.
- In most cases, the delaying function was absent, *majd* referred to the proximal future, → *majd p*: certain, proximal.

■ Early Modern Hungarian (1772-1920):

- Methodology: 200 random hits were categorized from the Hungarian Historical Corpus (HHC).
- Temporal uses:

1 Double *majd* meaning; first/now *p*, then/later *q*, frequency of this use: 6%

(15) *majd egyike, majd másika a vendégeknek*
 MAJD this.one MAJD the.other.one the guest.dat
kidûl a sorbul
 prt.collaps the line.from

'at first (now) one of the guests, then (later) another guest will collapse'
 year: 1853

2 different variants appeared, the most frequent one:

(16) *Most itt, majd amott viszik a beteget a*
 now here MAJD there bring.npst.3sg the patient.pl.acc the
babonás kuruzsoló asszonyhoz,
 superstitious charlatan woman.to

'They bring the patients now here then (later) there to the superstitious charlatan woman.'
 year: 1886

Other variations: *előbb....majd....* 'earlier..., then (later)...'

3 Meaning later in the future/some time in the future:

- (17) Mindegy, majd, majd jön valami; fő az,
no.matter MAJD MAJD come.3sg something important that
hogy el bírtam jönni most!
that prt can.pst.1sg come.inf now
'I doesn't matter, later, once I'll figure it out, the most important
thing is that I could leave it now.' year: 1912—1913

4 Together with *később* 'later' and *egyszer* 'once', or *idővel* 'in time':

- (18) a. ...mikor eszembe jutott, hogy majd én is
when mind.to get.pst.3sg that MAJD i too
megnősülök egyszer!
prt.get.married.1sg once
'When it came to my mind that I, too, would get married
once.' year: 1920

- At the end of the period, the delaying function became dominant, and the PROXIMAL component seemed to be absent.

■ Summary:

- The 'later in the future' meaning became prominent. → The data suggest that *majd* started to lose the PROXIMAL meaning component which process was complete at the end of the period.
- The approximator use became less frequent.
- The *majd...., majd 'now/at first...,then....'* use was relatively frequent, and variation appeared, most frequently *most...., majd.....* (In these structures, the two events are ordered, the event time of the first precedes the event time of the second.)
- At the end of the period, the speakers started to use *majd* in requests to make them more distal and less direct.

(19) Majd gondolj vissza kinek volt igaza!- Pál!!
 MAJD think.imp.2sg back who.dat be.pst.3sg right pá!l
 'Please think back who was right, Pál.' year: 1919

- At the end of the period, the PROXIMAL component was lost, the pragmatic functions (uncertainty, delay) appeared, and speakers started to use *majd* to mitigate the illocutionary force of a request.

■ Modern Hungarian (1920-1990):

- Methodology: 200 random hits were categorized from the Hungarian Historical Corpus (HHC).
- The temporal uses:
 - 1 Distal in time, delaying function:

(20) Miért ne?- Majd... egyszer...- mondta izgatottan.
 why not MAJD once say.pst.3sg excitedly
 'Why not?- Later.... once.....- said excitedly.' year: 1923

■ Other uses:

- 1 used to make a statement/request less direct:

(21) Majd itt lesz a levélke...
 MAJD here be.fut the letter
 intended meaning: 'There is the letter.' year: 1941

- 2 used as an approximator, but much less frequently (middle-Hungarian 51%, modern-Hungarian 7%), BUT certain fixed-expressions.

(22) majd szétveti a düh
 MAJD bust.3sg the anger
 'He almost busts with anger.'

HNC: 46 *majd* / 4 *majdnem*

■ Summary:

- In this period, the use of *majdnem* 'almost' became much more frequent than the approximator use of *majd* 'almost'. (18%-7%)
- The delaying effect became more prominent, and the PROXIMAL component from the "original" (Middle Hungarian) meaning of *majd* disappeared and became just the opposite.
- From this DISTAL (in time) component other pragmatic functions developed. If something is distal in time (delayed), you would expect that to be uncertain.

(23) A: Mikor mégy férjhez?
'When will you get married?'
B: Majd.
'some time in the future/never'

(23) can mean anything from '*some time in the future, but not now*' to '*never*' (also mentioned by Kiefer (2012))

- There are utterances where the DISTAL/DELAYED component is inactive as far as the evaluation of the event is concerned, the use of *majd* is there to indicate indirectness, be politer.

The analysis

- Middle-Hungarian analysis: Halm (to appear):
 - *majdp*:
 - *asserts*: w_0 is our world and there is a w_1 which is an alternative world of ours that is temporally close to w_0 in which p is true
 - *implies*: p is not true in our world as of now
 - talks about possible worlds, epistemic alternatives
- The change thought the periods (from Middle to Modern Hungarian):
 - 1 By the end of the early-modern Hungarian period, the descriptive/truth-conditional meaning of *majd* changed to 'some time in the future but NOT NOW' → NOT IN THE PROXIMAL FUTURE
 - 2 If something is delayed, it means that it happens only some time in the uncertain future/might not happen at all.
 - 3 The uncertainty that the use of *majd* indicates → The speakers started to use *majd* to make an utterance less direct (similarly to possibility adverbs) by the end of the early-modern period.

(24) *majd* 'some time in the future but not now':

TEMPORAL: w_1 is a continuation of w_0 , and w_0 is not close temporally to w_1 ASSERTED

DISTAL: $\forall w_1 \in S_{ALT}(w). \neg close_s(w_1, w_0) \vee \neg p_{w_1}$, ENTAILED

POLAR: $\neg p_{w_0}$, SCALAR IMPLICATURE

- The distal component: for every world (w_1) that is an alternative world of ours, that world is either distal (in time) from our world or p is not true in it. \rightarrow It means that p is either true in a distal temporal continuation of our world or not true at all.
- The entailment is denied: In the case of *majd*, descriptive negation is not possible, it can only be negated when it is contrasted to a proximity marker (not *majd* can never mean 'not in the future'). The DISTAL and PROXIMAL components are logical negations of each other.

- (25) a. Nem most megyek. \rightarrow Majd megyek.
not PROX go.npst.1sg \rightarrow MAJD go.npst.1sg
'It won't be soon when I will go.' \rightarrow 'I will go some time in the future.'
- b. Nem MAJD megyek. \rightarrow Most megyek.
not MAJD go.npst.1sg \rightarrow PROX go.npst.1sg
'I won't go some time in the future, but now.' \rightarrow 'I will go now.'

- BROWN AND LEVINSON (1987), consists of two specific kinds of desires ('face-wants') attributed by interactants to one another:
 - the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (*negative face*),
 - and the desire to be approved of (*positive face*).
- some acts intrinsically threaten face: a request is said to threaten negative face
- Politeness arises through *strategies that minimise the threat to face*.
- Sifianou (1999): Peripheral modification devices (requests):
 - the core request, head act: has the function of requesting, stand by itself
 - peripheral elements: do not change the propositional content of the head act, serve to mitigate or aggravate its force
- Peripheral elements
 - internal modification: Sifianou (1999): Could you possibly lend me your car to get to the airport?
 - *types*: openers, softeners, intensifiers, fillers
 - softeners: serve to soften and mitigate the force of the request,
 - downtoners: include a series of adverbs, which according to Sifianou (1999:172), used to "tentativize what speakers say, thus allowing them not to fully commit themselves to what they are saying".
- Purpose: to vary the politeness degree involved, to decrease the degree of imposition of the request

- Higher degree of probability tend to strengthen the illocutionary force, those located in the middle or express lower degree of probability tend to weaken it. BUT WHAT ABOUT FUTURE REFERRING MORPHEMES?
 - What are the similarities between *most* and *talán*?
 - distal in time → possibly happens, but not necessarily
 - uncertainty
 - lack of speaker's commitment
 - This pragmatic functions came about from the DISTAL component via partial pragmatic fission.
 - Davis & Gutzmann (2015):
 - Pragmatic fission can target only one part of the truth conditional content. → *partial pragmatic fission*
 - (26) Partial pragmatic fission:

$$(A\&B) > (A\&B) \diamond B_{ex} > \begin{cases} (A\&B) \\ A \diamond B_{ex} \end{cases}$$

- Kiefer (2012) argues that using *majd* is not a conventionalized way of making an utterance politer, because *it can only be used if the prejacent event does not have to be carried out immediately*.
- The reason: the temporal (future) component is still active, so that only the DISTAL → *uncertain* component of the meaning of *majd* is inactive semantically.

- (27) *Context*: *B* is eating the last bites and is going to finish his lunch in a few minutes. *A* cannot stay and wait. *A* wants *B* to wash up after he finishes lunch (but not necessarily right after). *A* say to *B*:

Mosogass majd el!
wash.up.imp.2sg MAJD prt

'Wash up the dishes.'

(27): The event does not happen immediately / there is a certain temporal distance between the utterance-time and the (expected) event-time.

- (28) ■ *Context*: A little boy has just collapsed, *A* is trying to revive him. *A* says to *B*:

#Hívd majd fel a mentőket!
call.imp.2sg MAJD prt the ambulance.ACC

'Call the ambulance.'

(28): The event must be carried out immediately, *B* cannot wait too much, *A* knows that and wants to emphasize that. *Majd* is INFELICITOUS here.

■ VIROVEC (2022): EMPIRICAL SUPPORT:

- **Speakers associate the use of *kellesz* 'must.FUT' (dialectal Hungarian) with weaker necessity, softer, kinder statements and therefore, politeness.**
- Task: to evaluate sentences at a scale ranging from -3 to +3 (-3: the sentence is an incredibly impolite utterance in the given context, +3: it was very polite).

(29) *Context*: You are buying some goods at a store. The shop assistant asks you to place the goods on the conveyor belt. The shop assistant says to you:

Fel kell/ kellesz/ kell majd tenni az árut a szalagra.
prt must/ must.fut/ must later put.inf the good.acc the belt.to

'You must put the goods on the conveyor belt.'

- **Politeness**: *kellesz* (mean: 2) > *kell majd* (mean: 1.4) > *kell* (mean: -0.25).
- A Fridman test: The test revealed that the difference between the three alternatives is statistically significant ($X_r^2(2, N = 20) = 20.425, p < 0.05$).
- Pairwise Wilcoxon sign-rank tests: *Kellesz* and *kell majd* proved to be a significantly politer choice than *kell* ($Z(19) = -3.0785, p < 0.05, Z(19) = -3.1993, p < 0.05$). THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *kellesz* AND *kell majd* WAS NOT STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT ($Z(19) = -1.8205, p > 0.05$).

■ CONCLUSION AND FUTURE AIMS:

- *Majd* became an *adverbial particle* having a various pragmatic functions from an adverb referring to the proximal future. A key component of this process was that *it lost its proximal meaning component and gradually it turned into a distal one*.
- There were a period (very late middle-Hungarian, early-modern Hungarian) when the double *majd* (*majd p majd q*) was used to mean 'now *p* and then/later *q*'.
- In modern-Hungarian, *majd* can never refer to the proximal future, a very important component of its truth-conditional/descriptive meaning 'some time in the future, but NOT KNOW'.
- It is shown: when it is negated, it is contrasted to an adverb referring to the proximal future. BUT only to the FUTURE, because *the future component is always semantically active in its meaning*.
- If something is distal in time, it is *uncertain* (it might happen, might not), and just like adverbs indicating possibility, future-referring morphemes can be used to *mitigate the illocutionary force of a request or suggestion*.
- It is crucial to work on *the non-temporal functions of future-referring morphemes* in order to fully understand the *asymmetry between the future and the past*.

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Thank you for your attention!