Indefinite *wh*-pronouns and the Modal Existential *Wh*-Construction in Hungarian

1. Background   Modal Existential *Wh*-Constructions (MEC), illustrated in (1), are attested in a variety of languages including Slavic, Semitic, Balkan languages and Romance. MEC is characterized by *wh*-fronting to a position after an existential verb (V_{exist}) (the set of V_{exist}-s that languages select from to form MEC is Szabolcsi's (1986) predicates). The embedded non-indicative (infinitival or subjunctive) clause necessarily includes a semantic modal operator with possibility/ability force.

The two major competing accounts are represented by Izvorski (1998) and by Grosu and Landman (1998) and Grosu (2004). Both accounts assume that the *wh*-items involved are fronted within the embedded CP, and both take the embedded clause to be an exceptional CP: for Grosu (et al.) they are special 'bare' relatives without a CP-external 'pivot' (different from free relatives), and for Izvorski they are underspecified interrogatives. These accounts do not treat Rappaport's (1986) Russian examples with *wh*-items in the matrix clause, cf. (2). Rappaport suggests that the *wh*-item is external to the embedded CP, and it is taken by the existential verb as an argument.

2. The proposal   As I show in the present paper, Hungarian exhibits MECs (MEC_H) with a structure akin to that involved in (1). I propose that MEC_H with a single *wh*-item (single-*wh*-MEC_H) is to be analysed as involving the fronted *wh*-item construed as a bare (heimian) indefinite moved to the matrix clause Spec,PredP or Spec,DistP position, where they get quantified existentially and universally, respectively.

3. Single-*wh*-MEC_H   The *wh*-item is in a fronted position, however, that position is not identical with the focus (or, equivalently in Hungarian, the *wh*-)position of the embedded clause: (i) the *wh*-item may be separated from the embedded verb by topics and quantifiers, cf. (1) (while the focus position is immediately followed by the verb), (ii) particle–verb inversion is disallowed, cf. (3) (while it is allowed with focus in non-indicatives), (iii) a quantifier following the fronted *wh*-item can be interpreted as part of the matrix clause, cf. (4), (iv) the whole embedded clause can be raised to matrix focus position, but the *wh*-item must be left behind, cf. (5). Similarly to 'verbal modifiers'/particles of the lowest verb in serial verb constructions, the *wh*-item has to raise to the vicinity of the highest verb. Two quantifiers to the left of the fronted *wh*-item only exhibit direct scope (cf. (6)), suggesting that what is to the left of the *wh*-item is already outside of matrix VP (inside VP either direct or inverse scope is attested normally, cf. É.Kiss 1994). Within the matrix clause, the fronted *wh*-item is apparently below focus position, cf (7). I propose to identify this relatively low position with the 'verbal modifier' (VM) position, Spec,PredP, following É.Kiss (2003), assuming that the Pred head has a [wh] feature (just as it does in *wh*-interrogatives). The *wh*-item does not support anaphora in a continuation of discourse; it takes narrow scope w.r.t. all main clause quantificational elements; it cannot be realized by *which*-phrases. These properties are accounted for by the assumption that the *wh*-item is a heimian bare indefinite (cf. Lipták 2001) in the VM position, a position occupied by non-referential incorporated nominals, secondary predicates etc. The free variable of the *wh*-indefinite is unselectively bound by the existential quantifier (implicit) in the existential predicate.

The existential verb bears emphatic accent and the following main stress is deleted: characteristics of focus prosody; and the assertion itself is interpreted as emphatic. Based on that, I assume the existential verb to have raised to a high position (which, for concreteness, I identify with Foc). As for the field between FocP and PredP, it is clear that various XP elements (including lexical DPs and universal quantifiers) can appear there in MEC_H, exactly as in garden-variety examples with a preverbal focus (+ the verb) followed by analogous elements still to the left of 'verbal modifiers'. Assuming post-focus 'verbal modifiers' to sit in Spec,PredP calls for a movement analysis of these XPs (they get to their surface position by movement out of VP). Adopting É.Kiss's (1998) and Brody and Szabolcsi's (2002) assumption of functional projection series containing RefP and DistP, I take this field to (potentially) contain RefP and DistP projections. When a Spec,DistP is filled in this field, the existential verb has to reconstruct from Foc at least to Dist, but not as low as Pred, cf. (8). This is due to

the Ban on Vacuous Quantification (BVQ) in natural language (e.g. Kratzer 1995): if V_{exist} did not reconstruct, or if it reconstructed to Pred, i.e. to below the *wh*-item, its existential quantifier would quantify vacuously (NB. unselective binding is characterized by a closeness effect: the intervening universal would bind the *wh*-indefinite). (To illustrate head-reconstruction, modal reconstruction is exemplified from English.)

4. Multiple-*wh*-MEC$_H$ MEC$_H$ can also involve multiple *wh*-elements, which scenario I argue to correspond to two kinds of syntactic structures. Specifically, multiple-*wh* MEC$_H$ (i) either involves multiple movements to (multiple Specs of) PredP (attracted by [wh] on Pred), or (ii) it involves movement of some *wh*-elements to DistP, where they get universal force from Dist (cf. Lipták 2001 for other constructions realizing this option). (At least one *wh*-item must be moved to PredP due to BVQ). The two kinds of structures of ex. (9) correspond to two types of interpretations: (a) existential for both *wh*-items, and (b) universal for the first and existential for the second, modulo V-reconstruction. Negated existential verbs (cf. (10)) are also examined, demonstrating that available alternative readings are generated by a choice between reconstruction of the [Neg+V] complex head, or the V alone.

(1) Van   mit   Péterrel megosztani   'I have something/things
    be-3sg   what-acc   P.-with prt-share-inf   to share with Peter.'

(2) Nam   ne o čem   budet   dumat'   [Russian]   'There will be nothing
    we.dat   Neg about what will.be.3Sg think.inf   for us to think about.'

(3) *Van   mit   osztani   meg
    be-3SG what-ACC   share-INF   PRT

(4) Volt   mit   többször is   az autón   megjavítanom
    be-PAST-3SG   what-ACC   several.times the car-on   PRT-repair-INF-1SG
    'It was the case that I had something to repair several times in the car'
    ?'Several times it was the case that I had something to repair in the car'

(5) [(*kivel) többször   UGYANAZT elhitetni]$_i$ nem volt   kivel t$_i$
    who-with several times the.same-ACC PRT-believe-CAUS-INF not be-PAST-3SG who-with
    'There wasn't anyone to convince of the same thing several times'

(6) Nem volt   többször is   mindkét diákot   hol   levizsgáztatnom
    not be-PAST-3SG several.times both students-ACC   where   PRT-examine-INF-1SG
    'I didn't have a place to examine both students several times.'
    a.   not > several times > both students   b.   *not > both students > several times

(7) JÁNOSNAK   volt   mit   enni
    J.-DAT   be-PAST-3SG   what-ACC   eat-INF   'It's John who had something to eat.'

(8) a.   (Jánosnak) van   mindenkinek mit   adnia
         J.-DAT   be-3SG everyone-DAT what-ACC give-INF-3SG
         $\forall y$ (PERSON(y) $\rightarrow$ $\exists x$ (EXIST(x) & THING(x) & $\Diamond$GIVE(j,y,x)))
    b.   [$_{FocP}$ [$_{Foc}$ ~~van$_i$~~] …[$_{DistP}$ mindenkinek [$_{Dist}$ van$_i$] [$_{PredP}$ mit [$_{Pred}$ ~~van$_i$~~] …

(9) (Végre) (Jánosnak) van   kinek   mit   adnia
    Finally J.-DAT   be-3SG who-DAT   what-ACC give-INF-3SG
    'Finally John has something to give to everyone / John has things to give to people'
    a. $\exists xy$ (EXIST(x) & PERSON(y) & THING(x) & $\Diamond$GIVE(j,y,x)
    b. $\forall y$ (PERSON(y) $\rightarrow$ $\exists x$ (EXIST(x) & THING(x) & $\Diamond$GIVE(j,y,x)))
    c. *$\forall xy$ ((PERSON(y) & THING(x)) $\rightarrow$ $\exists x$ (EXIST(x) & $\Diamond$GIVE(j,y,x)))   (violates BVQ)
    a'.   [$_{FocP}$ [$_{Foc}$ van] … [$_{PredP}$ kinek [$_{PredP}$ mit [$_{Pred'}$ [$_{Pred}$ ~~van~~] … adnia
    b'.   [$_{FocP}$ [$_{Foc}$ ~~van~~] … [$_{DistP}$ kinek [$_{Dist'}$ [$_{Dist}$ van] [$_{PredP}$ mit [$_{Pred'}$ [$_{Pred}$ ~~van~~] … adnia.
    c'.   *[$_{FocP}$ [$_{Foc}$ ~~van~~] … [$_{DistP}$ kinek [$_{Dist'}$ [$_{Dist}$ ~~van~~] [$_{PredP}$ mit [$_{Pred'}$ [$_{Pred}$ van] … adnia.

(10) (Jánosnak)   még nem volt   kinek   mit   adnia
     J.-DAT   yet not be-PAST-3SG   who-DAT   what-ACC   give-INF-3SG