

The Hungarian definite article across time: an account of its spreading

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1 Introduction

Aims:

- ◆ to describe how the marking of definiteness changed diachronically in Hungarian
- ◆ to show that the spreading of the definite article was not balanced in all environments (to provide an explanation for this unevenness)
- ◆ to answer the following questions:
 - ⇒ Why do certain contexts change more quickly in this respect?
 - ⇒ Can we trace universal principles or tendencies behind the functional spreading of the Hungarian definite article?

Table 1. Historical language stages of Hungarian and types of sources

Proto-Hungarian		1000 BC – 896 AD	No written documents
Old Hungarian	Early Old Hungarian	896 – 1370	Sporadic records, glosses, a few short texts, e. g. <i>Funeral Sermon and Prayer</i> (ca.1195)
	Late Old Hungarian	1370 – 1526	Mainly codices; translations of Latin religious literature + original Hungarian compositions
Middle Hungarian		1526 – 1772	Book printing; increase in quantity; New secular genres

Methodological limits in diachronic studies:

- ◆ we cannot ask, we can only query corpora
- ◆ we cannot say that something does not exist, we can only say it is not attested
- ◆ no grammatical judgements, only frequency and proportions

2 Background and previous research

2.1 The early uses of the definite article

Grammaticalization: distal demonstrative modifier > definite article

Formal and positional equivalence, functional overlap ⇒ ambiguous readings:

az asztal = 'the table' or 'that table' ?

The use of article in *associative-anaphoric* contexts!

(Himmelman 2001: 833-834 see also Egedi 2013:372 for further examples).

[For the basic functions of the definite article (or any other grammatical strategy that encodes definiteness), see *inter alia* Lyons 1999, Abbott 2004)]

- (1) masod napon mykoron azon frater ewlne **az** aztalnal
 second day-SUP when that/same frater sit-COND.3SG **the** table-ADE
 neze zent ferencznek kepere
 look-PST-3SG Saint Francis-DAT picture-POSS-SUP
 ‘on the second day, when the same frater was sitting at the table, he had a look at the picture
 of Saint Francis’ (Jókai C. 66)

The early article had a more restricted use: it only appeared when referential identification was not encoded otherwise (Egedi 2013, 2014) ⇒ *pragmatic* definiteness/uniqueeness is marked

Absence of article in definite contexts:

- with proper names and with inherently unique nouns (2)
- noun phrases with generic reading
- with demonstratives (4)
- with an overt possessor expression (6) (8)

OLD HUNGARIAN	MODERN HUNGARIAN
<p>(2) A nap-ot ke· es az idő-t that day-ACC CONJ and that time-ACC fēnki nē tugga nobody not knows fem ∅ mē-n^c angal-i nor heaven-DAT angel-POSS.PL fem ∅ fiu hanēčac ∅ at’a nor son but.only father (Munich C. 30rb)</p> <p>‘But nobody knows the day and the time, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. (Matt 24:36)</p>	<p>(3) Azt a napot viszont, vagy azt az órát senki nem tudja: sem az ég angyalai, sem a Fiú, hanem csak az Atya.</p>
<p>(4) ez kenyek-re this bread-PL-SUB ‘onto these breads’ (Jókai C. 76)</p>	<p>(5) ez-ek-re a kenyek-re this-PL-SUB the bread-PL-SUB ‘onto these breads’</p>
<p>(6) èn keñer-i-m-èt I bread-POSS.PL-1SG-ACC ‘my breads’ (Vienna C. 182)</p>	<p>(7) az én kenyere-i-m-et the I bread-POSS-PL-1SG-ACC ‘my breads’</p>
<p>(8) az élet-n^c keñer-è the life-DAT bread-POSS ‘the bread of life’ (Munich C. 91ra)</p>	<p>(9) az élet-nek a kenyere the life-DAT the bread-POSS ‘the bread of life’</p>

2.2 The spreading of the definite article

The use of the article proportionally increased already within the Old Hungarian period (Egedi & Simon 2012):

Table 2. The proportion of definite determiners (a/az) in five Old Hungarian codices

Codex	Date	Tokens	a/az	%
Jókai Codex	after 1370/c.1448	22733	573	2,52
Vienna Codex	after 1416/c.1450	54423	2233	4,10
Guary Codex	before 1495	21714	1390	6,40
Könyvecse	1521	8745	623	7,12
Kazinczy Codex	1526-1541	20027	1437	7,17

Spreading of article in different contexts: (Egedi 2013, 2014)

- no article can be attested with demonstratives and nominal possessors (the definite article appears in these contexts from Middle Hungarian Period)
- inconsistent use with inherently unique nouns and increasing use with generics
- steady increase with pronominal possessors!

3 An account of the spreading – in two parts

3.1 From pragmatic to semantic uniqueness

Spreading of article before inherently unique nouns and generics

- (10) Eleg Ø taneituān-nac hog legen mikent ϕ mēfter-e,
 enough disciple-DAT that be-SBJV like s/he master-POSS.3SG
 es Ø zolga-nac hog legen mikent ϕ vr-a.
 and servant-DAT that be-SBJV like s/he lord-POSS.3SG
 ‘It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master’
 (Munich C. 16va)
- (11) Eleg **az** tanoytwan-nak hogy csak ollyan mynt hw mēfter-ee,
 enough the disciple-DAT that only such like s/he master-POSS.3SG
 es **az** zolga mynt hw vr-a
 and the servant like s/he lord-POSS.3SG
 ‘It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master’
 (Jordánszky C. 383)
- Matt 10:25 ➤ Munich Codex 1466 (composed between 1416 and 1441)
 ➤ Jordánszky Codex 1516 – 1519

Table 3. Basic conceptual lexical types of nouns (Löbner 2011)

	-U	+U
-R	sortal nouns <e,t> <i>stone, book, adjective, water</i>	individual nouns <e> <i>moon, weather, date, Maria</i>
+R	relational nouns <e,<e,t> <i>sister, leg, part, attribute</i>	functional nouns <e,e> <i>father, head, age, subject</i>

Löbner (2011): semantic and pragmatic uniqueness; congruent vs. incongruent definiteness
 Marking congruent determination is semantically redundant

An asymmetry may develop in the grammatical encoding of semantic and pragmatic uniqueness.

Two sets of articles in German dialects:

- Himmelmann (1997: 54-55): Rhineland dialects, North Frisian dialect
- Studler (2011) Swiss German
- Simonenko (*forthcoming*) Austro-Bavarian (an Upper German dialect)
- Schroeder (2006): Low German dialects next to the North Sea
 → opposition within PP expressions

New articles in some Slavic language varieties typically appear to encode pragmatic definiteness:

“New” articles in Slavic dialects to encode pragmatic uniqueness:

- Czardybon (2012): Upper Silesian dialect of Polish
- Breu (2004) and Scholze (2012): Colloquial Upper Sorbian (Slavic dialect)

Why? → analogical pressure to make nominal syntax uniform (Löbner 2011: 313)

Syntactically:

- a previous N-to-D movement replaced by the direct merge of an article?
- a previously licit null-head was not preferred any more and D had to be made "visible"

3.2 Articles with pronominal possessors: a syntactic puzzle

If a language acquires the syntactic category of definiteness and a DP structure develops, inalienable possessive constructions are more readily interpreted as definite, with the possessor treated as occupying a structural position related to definiteness. This structure usually extends to other, non-alienable constructions (cf. Lyons 1999: 280-281 and 323-324).

Lexical possessor expressions in Old Hungarian → in SpecDP.

- No demonstrative is attested when a possessor is present
- No article between the possessor and the possessed noun

NB. dative-marked possessors can always be external, or be extracted (cf. the overt *resumptive pronoun strategy*)

I. PRONOMINAL POSSESSORS CO-OCCUR WITH THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

Old Hungarian Corpus (<http://omagyarkorpusz.nytud.hu>, Simon 2014)

Technical notes:

- only first and second person singular and plural possessors were considered in the query (cf. Barker 2000 about the definiteness of NPs with 1. and 2. person possessors)
- vocative uses as well as possessive predicates have been excluded
- modifiers are allowed directly before the head noun

Table 4. Pronominal possessors in three Old Hungarian codices

Manuscript	Date	N.Px 'könyvem'	ProN + N.Px 'én könyvem'	Art + ProN + N.Px 'az én könyvem'	Art + N.Px 'a könyvem'
Jókai Codex	after 1370/c.1448	56	149	0	0
Guary Codex	before 1495	23	71	36	3
Booklet	1521	47	26	48	1

II. PRONOMINAL POSSESSORS ARE CLEARLY NOT RESTRICTED TO MARK CONTRAST OR EMPHASIS

- (12) Emèl'l'etecfel tv zemè-i-tek-et
 lift-IMP-2PL up you-PL eye-POSS-PL-2PL-ACC
 'Cast up your eyes' (Munich C. 88rb)

III. PRONOMINAL POSSESSORS ARE OPTIONAL

IV. THE RELATIVE ORDER OF PRONOMINAL POSSESSORS + *menden* 'EVERY'

Cf. Bende-Farkas Ágnes (2014: 99-100)

- (13) es **te** **menden** èllènség-i-d èluèznèc
 and you every enemy-POSS.PL-2SG parish-3PL
 'and all your enemies parish' (Vienna C. 2)

- (14) kÿ leen **mÿndõn** **te** bodogsag-od-nak kencze
 who be-PST every you happiness-POSS.2SG-DAT treasure-POSS
 'who was the treasure of all your happiness' (Czech C 99)

Consistent use: PR_{proN} *menden* N only in the first codices
 menden PR_{proN} N in all the later codices

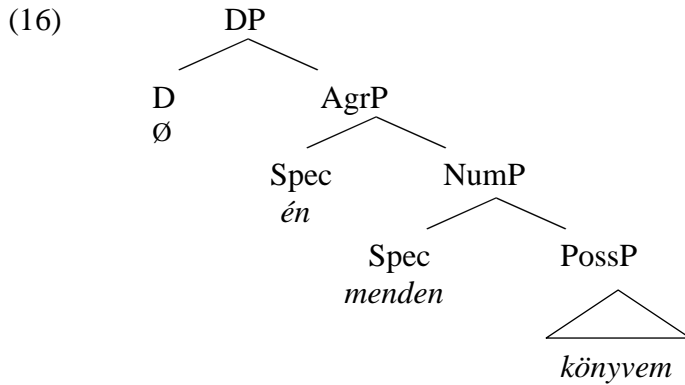
Proposal:

STAGE 1 Early codices: Jókai C, Vienna C. Munich C.
 First half of the Late Old Hungarian period

- ◆ the article encodes pragmatic definiteness
- ◆ no article appears before pronominal possessors: Ø (*én*) *könyvem*
- ◆ demonstratives can appear before pronominal possessors: *ez én könyvem*
- ◆ plural agreement with a NOM/caseless possessor can be attested (15) ⇒ PR_{NOM} in Spec,AgrP?

- (15) èmber-ec kèz-ek-nèc mùuèlkedèti
 man-PL hand-POSS.3PL-DAT action-POSS.PL
 'The acts of people's hands' (Vienna C. 114)

- ◆ PR_{proN} *menden* N order

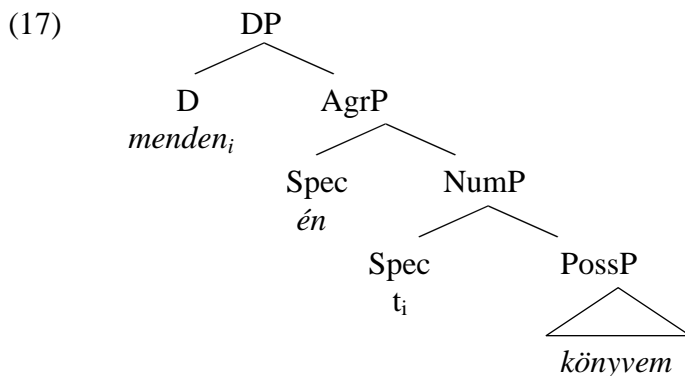


Based on DP structure proposed for ModH (Bartos 2000: 673)

- There is a DP layer in definite NPs, but D may be phonologically null
 “DP structure is necessary for a language to have an article” (Lyons 1999: 323)
- PR_{proN} in AgrP or in DP?

STAGE 2 Second half of the Late Old Hungarian period

- ◆ gradual spreading of article into semantically unique contexts
- ◆ the article *may* appear before pronominal possessors: (az) *én könyvem*
- ◆ plural agreement with NOM/caseless possessors has been lost
 (no AgrP with nominal possessors, as suggested for Modern Hungarian in Bartos (2000))
- ◆ *menden* PR_{proN} N order



- "Visibility" of D: either the specifier, or the head of the DP must be spelled out (cf. Alexiadou 2004 for English syntactic changes)
 - the use of the article increases before inherently unique nouns and generics
 - demonstratives and lexical possessors > Spec,DP
 - if there is a determiner-like element in the phrase > Spec,DP
 - the definite article is the default filler of the D-head

PR_{NOM} *menden* ‘every’ is not attested, only PR_{DAT} *menden* ‘every’ (18)
 ⇒ *menden* ‘every’ is in Spec,DP; only dative-marked possessors can be external/adjoined

(18) Es te zwwedbel wesd kÿ ez vÿlagh-**nak** mÿnden kewansagath
 and you heart-POSS.2SG.ELA throw-IMP out this world-DAT every wish-POSS-ACC
 ‘Throw all the wishes of this world out of your heart’ (Érsekújvári C. 161r)

NB. The change is gradual!

A final question: Why did not PR_{proN} > determiner, as in "determiner genitive" languages (in terms of Lyons 1999: 130-134)?

- ◆ Pronominal possessors do not need to be overt, because of the redundant double marking (pronoun + Px). → In Stage 2: PR_{proN} in AgrP rather than in DP

Conclusions

- ◆ After the definite article emerged in Hungarian, its spreading appears to be uneven in different contexts during the Old Hungarian period
- ◆ The directions of spreading reflect the change from marking pragmatic uniqueness to a more grammaticalized system in which semantic uniqueness is also encoded syntactically (this seems to be a universal tendency)
- ◆ An asymmetry has been revealed within possessives, where the more robust presence of definite articles in one type of constructions can be due to a transitional stage when the syntactic position of pronominal possessor expressions is ambiguous
- ◆ All these related phenomena point to the assumption that the overt realization of the DP layer started to be preferred from the Late Old Hungarian period

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