

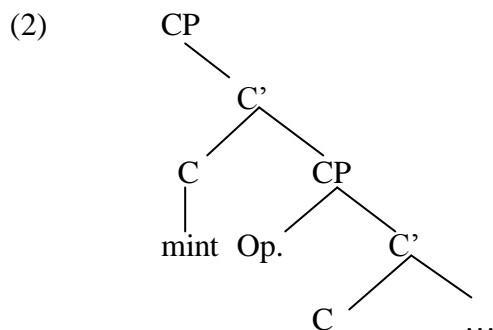
Reanalysis in Hungarian Comparative Subclauses

The aim of my talk is to present a diachronic study of the Left Periphery of Hungarian comparative subclauses, primarily focussing on the development of the complementisers and the operator. Adopting the Principles and Parameters framework, I will show that there were two main interrelated processes contributing to the development of the syntax of Present-day Hungarian subclauses: the reanalysis of the complementiser *mint* ‘than’ and the appearance of an overt comparative operator due to a change in the parametric setting with respect to the deletion of the operator.

In Present-day Hungarian, the configuration is that the C head introducing the comparative subclause (*mint*) can be followed by an overt comparative operator:

- (1) Anna magasabb, mint **amennyire**_i Miki _____i.
 Ann taller than x-much Mike
 ‘Ann is taller than Mike.’

The comparative operator – *amennyire* ‘x-much’ in (1) – is a QP, which moves from its base position to a [Spec; CP] position in the Left Periphery of the subclause via operator movement (see Kennedy-Merchant 2000). Adopting the analysis of Rizzi (1997) for the Left Periphery, this is possible because *mint* is generated in the higher C head position (responsible for Force) and the operator moves to the lower [Spec; CP], as shown in (2):



In Old Hungarian, however, comparative subclauses were typically introduced by *hogy* ‘that’ and the clause also contained a negative element (*nem* ‘not’ or *sem* ‘nor’), required by comparative Force; the operator remained covert, as shown by (3):

- (3) Mert iob hog megfog’dofuā algukmég’ vrat **hog né** mēghal’lōc
 because better that caught-Past.Part. bless-3.Pl.Subj. Lord-Acc. that not die-3.Pl.Subj.
 ‘because it is better that we should bless the Lord caught than die’
 (BécsiK. 25, from btw. 1416 and 1450)

Later on, *mint* ‘than’ could also appear in the subclause:

- (4) az mentől alsobýkban is tob angýal uagon **honnem mýnth** az napnak feneben
 the more down-Ine. also more angel is that.not than the sun-Dat. light-Poss.
 ‘there are more angels in the basest one of them than in the sun’s light’
 (SándK. 1v; from around 1518)

I assume that the history of *mint* can best be described with the notion of the relative cycle, as established by Roberts–Roussou (2003: 119) and van Gelderen (2009). The development of the Old English *that* is an instance of this: initially a relative operator moving to the lower [Spec; CP], it was reanalysed as the head of that CP, and finally as the head of the higher CP (van Gelderen 2009: 107).

Similarly, in the case of *mint* I will show that it first appeared as the comparative operator located in the lower [Spec; CP], while the higher CP was still headed by *hogy*. This configuration appeared as early as the late Old Hungarian period but became characteristic of Middle Hungarian, when the string *hogy* + operator was also present in ordinary relative clauses. Later, *mint* was reanalysed as the head of the lower CP, rendering a configuration with both C heads filled by overt elements; this also meant that the operator was covert, otherwise there would have been a Doubly Filled Complementiser Filter violation. The change in the status of *mint* is also supported by the fact that, unlike other relative operators, it did not start either to have diverse forms according to the matrix pronominal element or to show its relative operator status in overt morphology. In the last stage of its development, *mint* was reanalysed as the higher C head responsible for Force, in parallel with the disappearance of *hogy* from the construction.

As for the operator, the behaviour of *mint* shows that initially the deletion of the operator was obligatory in Old Hungarian: just as in other such languages (e.g. the marginal acceptability of English *what* following *than*), the operator *mint* was a proform standing for the entire QP or DP moving to [Spec; CP]. That is, it did not allow the co-presence of a lexical AP or NP, as Present-day Hungarian does, e.g. in *amilyen magas* ‘x-much tall’ or *amekkora macska* ‘x-much big cat’. However, as *mint* became a complementiser generated in the upper C head, new overt operators could appear in the lower [Spec; CP], which can both remain overt and tolerate a lexical AP or NP. Thus for the present-day setting the obligatory deletion parameter is already removed from the language.

Keywords: comparatives, complementiser, operator, parametric change, reanalysis

References

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