

The rise and fall of Hungarian complex tenses

Katalin É. Kiss

(Linguistics Institute of the Hungarian
Academy of Sciences)

ekiss@nytud.hu

Goal:

- **to reconstruct how and why complex tenses appeared in Hungarian grammar;**
- **to show how and why they disappeared 1000 years later;**
- **to argue for the role of language contacts in syntactic change;**
- **to identify triggers of contact-induced syntactic change**

Complex tenses in Old Hungarian, marking tense & aspect:

(1) V+Aspect+Agr BE+Tense/Mood

Simple Present: V-(Tense)-Agr: *mond-tok*

say-2PL

Simple Past: V-Tense-Agr: *mond-á-tok*

say-PAST-2PL

Present Perfect: V-Asp-Agr: *mond-ta-tok*

say-PRF-2PL

Past Imperfect: V-(Asp)-Agr BE-Tense: *mond-tok val-a*

say-2PL be-PAST

Past Perfect: V-Asp-Agr BE-Tense: *mond-ta-tok val-a*

say-PRF-2PL be-PAST

Prf. Conditional: V-Asp-Agr BE-Cond: *mond-ta-tok vol-na*

say-PRF-2PL be-COND

In the sister languages (Khanty, Mansi) & most other Uralic languages: only Present & Past.

Traditional historical linguistics

(Benkő 1991-1992):

complex tenses were created by translators in the Old Hungarian period to render Latin tenses

Arguments against borrowing from Latin:

- i. Latin has no complex tenses in active voice
- ii. the complex tenses were present prior to large scale translation from Latin:

(2)a. *es odu-tt-a vol-a neki paradisumut hazoa*
and **give-PRF-3SG be-PAST** him Paradise house-for
'and **had given** him Paradise for his house' (1195)

b. *turchucat mige zocozt-ia vol-a*
throat-3PL-ACC PRT **rive-3SG be-PAST**
'it **was riving** their throat' (1195)

Arguments against borrowing from Latin:

- iii. Complex tenses were present in OH private letters;
- iv. they are still present in the most archaic dialects;
- v. the perfect conditional has survived in Modern Hungarian

(3) **mond-ta-tok** **vol-na**
say-PRF-2PL be-COND

New explanation: complex tenses borrowed from West Old Turkic (Ogur/Khazar/Bulgarian)

Erdal's (2004) Old Turkic Grammar:

(4) *öñdün sözlä-di-Ø är-di*
earlier say-PAST-3SG be-PAST
'had said (it) earlier'

(5) *te-di-miz är-sär*
say-PAST-1PL be-COND
'we would have said'

Chuvash (the descendant of WOT): *be+past* cliticized to the V marked for tense and agr.

(6)a. *şyra-tt-ăm-ččě*

work-DURATIVE PAST-1SG-be.PAST

b. *şyr-satt-ăm-ččě*

work-PRETERIT-1SG-be.PAST

When and where did the borrowing happen?

7-8th centuries: Hungarians belong to Turkic tribal alliances **between the Dneper and Dnester;**

9th century: the Hungarian tribal alliance incorporates the Kabars and other Turkic fragments.

Constantine Porphyrogennetos (reigning 913-959)

De administrando imperio:

Hungarians are bilingual, they also speak the language of Khazars.

How did the borrowing take place?

Uralic languages: various participles & gerunds with overt subjects and agreement:

(7) *men-t-em* *val-a-∅*
 go-GERUND-POSS.1SG be-PAST-3SG
 'my going was [took place]'

men-t-ed *val-a-∅*
 go-GERUND-POSS.2SG be-PAST-3SG
 'your going was [took place]'

Reanalysis:

[V + gerund+ poss.agr] + finite copula →
[V + aspect + subj.agr.] + temporal aux.

(8) *mond-t-am val-a-∅* → *mond-t-am val-a*

say-GERUND-POSS.1SG be-PAST-3SG say-PERF-1SG be-

PAST

'my saying took place'

'I had said'

Analogical extension:

(8) *mond-t-am val-a* → *mond-om val-a*
say-PERF-1SG be-PAST say-1SG be-PAST
'I had said' 'I was saying'

Abstraction:

(9) *mond-t-am val-a* → *mond-t-am*
say-PERF-1SG be-PAST say-PERF-1SG
'I had said' 'I have said'

The same process in 4 other Finno-Ugric languages, at a different time and location:

W. Old Turkic–Udmurt, Mari, Komi, Mordvin contacts: since the 9th century along the Volga.

(10) Udmurt:

a. *m̄ini-śkem* 'I have gone'

go-PRF.1SG

b. *m̄ini-śkem val* 'I had gone'

go-PRF.1SG be.PAST

Same aspect and agreement, different tense:

(11) Mari

a. *tolänam* 'I have come'

b. *tolänam äl'e* 'I had come'

Different aspect, same agreement and tense:

(12) Komi

a. *muna vęli* 'I was going'

b. *munęma vęli* 'I had gone'

Theoretical implication:

If language acquisition happens in a bilingual environment involving L1 and L2,
 XP_{L1} can be assigned the structure of the corresponding XP_{L2} – provided XP_{L1} and XP_{L2} are close enough functionally.

Complex tenses in Old Hungarian:

(13)

uala nemynemew tusciabely vr ... ky czudakert
was some Tuscia-from lord who miracles-for

kyket zent fferenczrewl hallott-uala ...
which St Francis-about **hear-PRF-3SG-be-PAST**

zent ferenczet lattny es hallany ygen kyuannya-uala
St Francis-ACC to.see and to.hear very.much **wish-3SG-be-PAST**

'there **was** some gentleman from Tuscia who, because of the miracles he **had heard** about St Francis, **was wishing** to see and hear him very much' (Jókai C. 1370/14487)

**16th century: attrition of complex tenses: -t
perfectness suffix is supplanting -a/e Past suffix**

(14)

a. *Ki hallo-tt-a vol-t valamikoron ezt ...*
who hear-T-3SG be-T ever that-ACC
'who had ever heard that...'

(Döbrentei C. 1508)

b. *zenth agoston ky thaneyt-ya vol-t ọteth*
St Augustine who teach-3SG be-T him
'Saint Augustine who was teaching him'

(Winkler C. 1506)

Rates of past tenses in testimonies of witnesses in legal documents betw. 1582-84:

(15)

-t: 85,2%;
-a/e: 2,9%;
-t + volt: 9,6%;
∅ + volt: 2,4%.

The reason for the loss of complex tenses: the spreading of verbal particles

In earliest texts: sporadic occurrence of telicizing particles.

(16) Habitual telic actions:

kikèt *akar-uala* *meg-o,l-uala*
who-PL-ACC wants-be.PST PRT-kills-be.PST

kikèt *akar-uala* *meg-uèr-uala* (Vienna C. 1416)
who-PL-ACC wants-be.PST PRT-beats-be.PST

‘whom he would he slew; whom he would he put down’

(17) Abortive telic actions:

meg-foguan *m̄g* *foit’a-uala* *ɔtet*
PRT-grabbing PRT throttles-be.PST him

‘having grabbed, he was throttling him (Munich C. 1416)

**Particles gradually spread to all telic contexts;
to every accomplishment/achievement V.**

Kiefer (2010):

„Aktionsarten derived by preverbs is a Sprachbund phenomenon whose central area is Slavic. It comprises Hungarian, Lithuanian, Yiddish, German and Romani, and excludes Romance.”

Hungarian – Slavic contacts after settling in the Carpathian basin in 896

Slavic minimal pairs:

PRT+V	↔	V
[+ telic]		[-telic]

e.g. Russian 'to read': *pro-chitat'* *chitat'*

'to eat': *po-est'* *est'*

(the same in Old Church Slavonic, Kamphuis 2013)

Reanalysis in Hungarian:

PRT+V -- **V** pairs assigned the features
[+telic] \leftrightarrow [-telic], e.g.:

el-jön \leftrightarrow ***jön***

PRT-come

[+telic]:

'come & arrive'

[-telic]:

'be coming'

Analogical extension:

All telic Vs get supplied with a verbal particle;
all bare V are assigned the feature [-telic].

Lord's Prayer in the Munich Codex (1416/1466): **no particle**

Munich record (late 15th c.): **no particle** in the copy of the written prayer; **3 particles** in the recording of the oral version:
(18)

és **meg-bozässät** mi vëtkenkët.

and PRT-forgive.IMP.2SG our sins

mikëpen és mi **mag-boczätunk** vëtëtëknek ...

as also we PRT-forgive sinners-DAT

de **säbädicz-mk** mikët a gonostwl

but free-PRT us the evil-from

·and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors...
but deliver us from evil·

Lord's prayer in the Károli Bible from 1590:
7 particles (4 more)

(19)

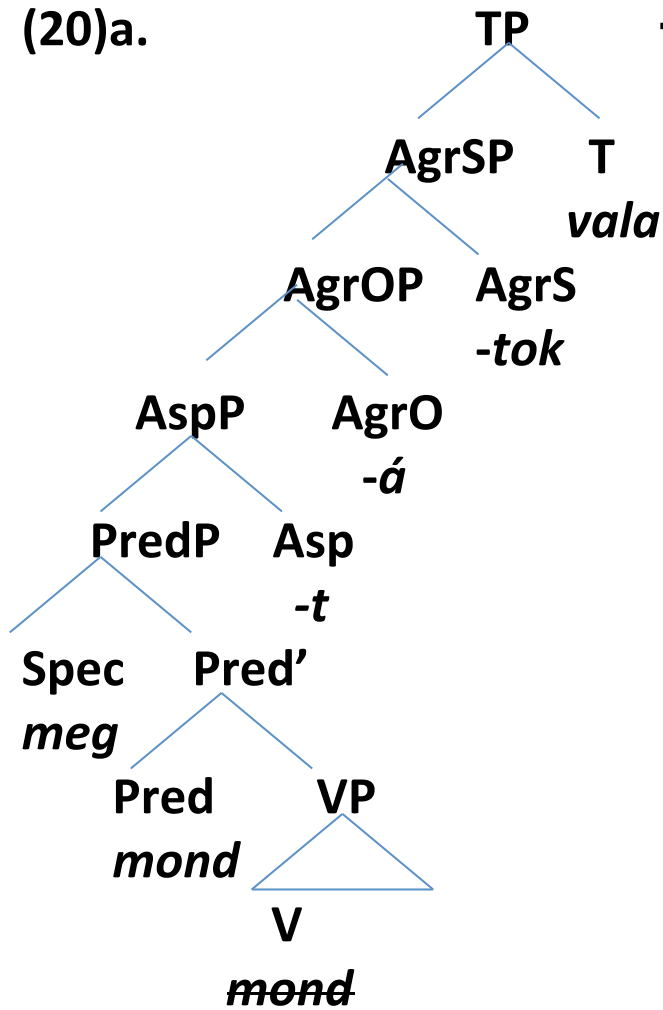
szenteltesséc meg ... löijön el ...
hallowed-be PRT come PRT

Légyen meg ... add meg
be PRT give PRT

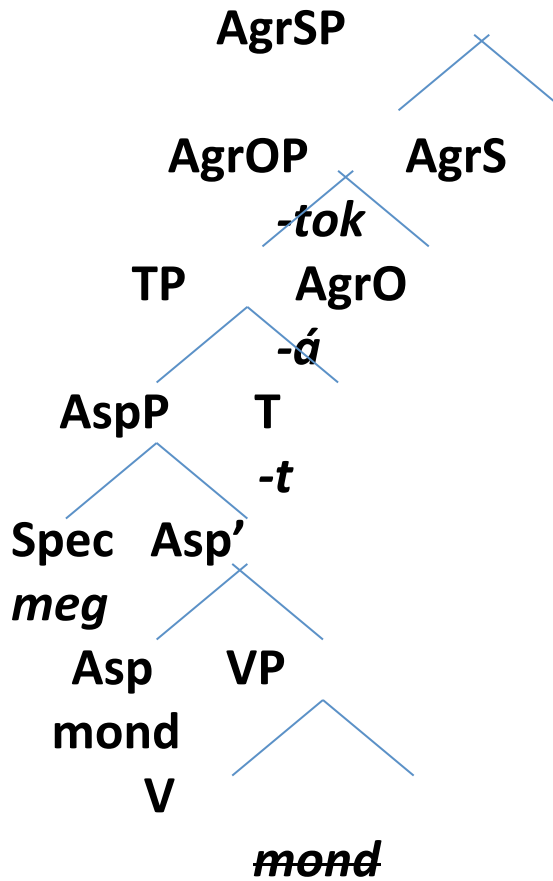
'Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come,
your will be done... Give us this day our daily
bread'

Reanalysis:

(20)a.



→ b.



→ *megmondták*

(meg)mondták vala

**Grammaticalized viewpoint aspect marking
replaced by grammaticalized situation aspect
marking.**

**The same process in the Slavic languages
except for Bulgarian (Meillet 1934).**

Conclusion:

Syntax acquired in bilingual environment is prone to contact-induced reanalysis.

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