

A non-unified account of obligatorily “focused” expressions in Hungarian

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INTRODUCTION In Hungarian, wh-phrases, ‘only’-phrases and downward entailing (DE) expressions must move to the preverbal focus position. Although many aspects of this position were thoroughly investigated in the literature, a detailed analysis of the above constituents and their relation to this position seems to be lacking. At least to my knowledge, only E. Kiss (2002) presented a brief explanation for their behaviour: she argued that these constituents move to the focus position because they all have an inherent [+focus] feature assigned to them in the lexicon. She also pointed out that this feature follows from their relation to exhaustive identification (at least for wh- and ‘only’-phrases), which has been said to be closely linked to the focus position, being part of its truth-conditional semantics (Szabolcsi, 1981, 1994; Kenesei, 1986; E. Kiss, 1998, 2010).

ANALYSIS I argue that this approach is incorrect in more than one aspect: (i) exhaustivity being merely an implicature of Hungarian focus constructions, cannot be the trigger of the movement for the above constituents; (ii) the different distributional behaviours of these expressions suggest that they do not all have the same motivation for movement.

(i) I will first present data from Hungarian showing that the exhaustive interpretation is not a semantic characteristic of this position, and argue that it is merely a conversational implicature, as has been also suggested in the literature (Wedgwood et al., 2006; Onea and Beaver, 2009; Gerőcs et al., 2014, etc.). Even if the above mentioned constituents do indeed have a connection to exhaustivity, this cannot be the reason why they have to move to this position.

(ii) Then, I will show that these constituents do not all have the same motivation for movement. Even though all the three expressions typically move to the preverbal position, in some cases they can be found in other positions and there is variation amongst the different types of constituents in their distributional patterns. Wh-words (almost) always have to move to a preverbal position – only a second wh-word can appear postverbal if the first is already occupying the preverbal position. There can be also more than one preverbal wh-words in a sentence. If there is a wh-word and an only-phrase or a DE expression in a sentence, it is therefore always the wh-word that ends up in the preverbal position – the other two can either precede the wh-word, or appear in a postverbal position. An only-phrase and a DE expression can both stay postverbal if the preverbal position is already filled by something else. The difference between the two is that there can be more than one preverbal only-

phrases but not more than one preverbal DE expressions. The distribution between the two shows a subject-object assymetry, which is surprising, given that in Hungarian, grammatical functions do not typically have an influence on word order. The tables below summarise the possible word orders:

2 wh				wh + only			wh + DE		
	wh	V	wh	wh	V	only	wh	V	DE
	wh	wh	V	only	wh	V	DE	wh	V
	*V	wh	wh	*only	V	wh	*DE	V	wh
*other	V	wh	wh	*wh	only	V	*wh	DE	V

only-subject + DE-object			only-object + DE-subject		
only-S	V	DE-O	*only-O	V	DE-S
DE-O	only-S	V	*DE-S	only-O	V
*DE-O	V	only-S	DE-S	V	only-O
*only-S	DE-O	V	only-O	DE-S	V

2 only				2 DE			
	only	V	only		DE	V	DE
	only	only	V		*DE	DE	V
	*V	only	only		*V	DE	DE
other	V	only	only	other	V	DE	DE

PROPOSAL These distributional patterns show that there is a difference in the distribution of these expressions with respect to their obligatoriness of movement to the preverbal position. We can then establish the following ordering, with wh-words having the strongest necessity to move to the preverbal position:

- (1) WH \gg ONLY \gg DE

The data also suggest that wh-words behave differently than only-phrases and DE expressions. I propose that wh-movement in Hungarian is not an instance of focus movement as was proposed by several authors (Horvath, 1986; Brody, 1990; Puskás, 2000; Lipták, 2002; E. Kiss, 2002). Only-phrases, and also DE expressions do indeed move to the so-called focus position (as it is also underlined by their intonational patterns) but not as a consequence of some [+focus] feature linked to exhaustivity. Rather, they both have a strong connection to negativity – and the fact that in Hungarian the position that gets focal intonation and interpretation attracts *negative* expressions and excludes *positive* expressions, (such as universals, upward entailing expressions, also- and even-phrases) suggests that negativity is probably a key trigger for their movement to the preverbal position.

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