

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

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The puzzle

- In Hungarian, there is a set of expressions that have to move to the preverbal focus position:

Wh-phrases

- (1) a. Ki jött **el** tegnap?
who came VM-away yesterday
‘Who came yesterday?’
b. *Ki **el** jött tegnap?
who VM-away came yesterday
c. ***El** jött ki tegnap?
VM-away came who yesterday

only-phrases

- (2) a. Csak Bianka jött **el** tegnap.
only Bianka came VM-away yesterday
‘Only Bianka came yesterday.’
b. *Csak Bianka **el** jött tegnap.
only Bianka VM-away came yesterday
c. ***El** jött csak Bianka tegnap.
VM-away came only Bianka yesterday

Downward entailing (DE) expressions

- (3) a. Kevés diák jött **el** tegnap.
few student came VM-away yesterday
‘Few students came yesterday.’
b. *Kevés diák **el** jött tegnap.
few student VM-away came yesterday
c. ***El** jött kevés diák tegnap.
VM-away came few student yesterday

- To my knowledge, only E. Kiss (2002) proposed a short analysis (see section 2) but a more thorough analysis seems to be lacking in the literature.

– Outline of the talk –

1. Hungarian left-periphery
2. E. Kiss (2002)’s account and focus exhaustivity
3. The co-occurrence of the “focused” expressions
4. (More) problems raised by the data and proposal

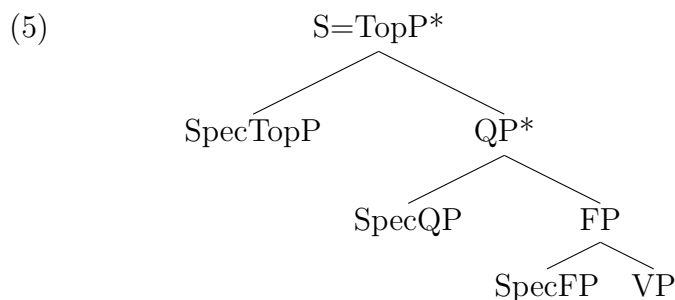
1 Introduction

1.1 The Hungarian preverbal domain

- In Hungarian, grammatical functions don’t seem to play an important role in word ordering, i.e. a subject, a verb and its object can appear in any logically possible word order.

- (4)
- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. Jucus almát eszik.
Jucus apple.ACC is-eating
‘Jucus is eating an apple.’</p> <p>b. Jucus eszik almát.</p> | <p>c. Eszik Jucus almát.
d. Eszik almát Jucus.
e. Almát Jucus eszik.
f. Almát eszik Jucus.</p> |
|---|--|

- In the preverbal field however, different sentence positions are associated with informational functions: topics, quantified expressions and foci have their designated positions there (Szabolcsi, 1981, 1997; Brody, 1990; Puskás, 2000; E. Kiss, 2002, etc.), cf. the structure in (5) below.



1.2 The focus position

- The focus position in Hungarian is the immediately preverbal one.

- This is shown clearly by the position verbal modifiers (VM), which have also the immediately preverbal position as their default position. Compare (6) and (7):

- (6) Bianka **el** jött tegnap.
Bianka VM-away came yesterday
‘Bianka came yesterday.’
- (7) BIANKA jött **el** tegnap.
Bianka came VM-away yesterday.
‘BIANKA came yesterday.’

1.2.1 Focus movement

- **Purely syntactic approaches:**

- Focus movement is due to a formal focus feature triggering the movement into the preverbal SpecFP position (Horvath, 1986; Bródy, 1990; E. Kiss, 1994; E. Kiss, 1998, etc.)

- **Szendrői (2001)’s prosodic approach:**

- Stress-Focus correspondance (Reinhart, 1995): focal interpretation is always assigned to the constituent containing the main stress in an intonational phrase
 - In Hungarian it is always the leftmost element in an iP that bears main stress
 - Instead of relocating main stress, like in English, the focused constituent moves into the position with main stress (Topics and Quantifiers being external to the main iP)
- No need for a formal focus feature

2 E. Kiss (2002)’s account for inherent focus

- At least to my knowledge, only E. Kiss (2002) gave a somewhat unified account to explain the movement of wh-phrases, *only*-phrases and DE-expressions to the focus position.

→ She claims that these expressions all move to the preverbal focus position because they all have an inherent [+focus] feature assigned to them in the lexicon.

- This feature is due to their relation to exhaustive identification, which some authors have claimed to be the most important semantic effect of the focus position (cf. Kenesei, 1986; Szabolcsi, 1981, 1994; E. Kiss, 1998, 2010, etc.):

- wh-phrases → request an exhaustive answer
- only-phrases → are overt exhaustivity markers
- for DE-expressions this relation is *less clear*...

- But is exhaustivity really part of the semantics of the focus position?

2.1 Exhaustivity of focus is not truth-conditional

- Several authors (Wedgwood et al., 2006; Wedgwood, 2007; Onea and Beaver, 2009; Balogh, 2012; Gerőcs et al., 2014, etc.) argued already that the exhaustive reading of the Hungarian preverbal focus is not part of the truth-conditional content and is in fact merely a pragmatic inference.

- (8) is one example (but there are many) that supports the pragmatic approaches and contradicts the purely semantic ones:

- (8) Legalább négyen sérültek **meg** a balesetben.
at-least four.EN injured VM-PERF the accident-in
‘At least four people were injured in the accident.’

- The interpretation of a lower bound modified numeral is clearly in contradiction with exhaustivity.

→ (8) suggests that E. Kiss's account is incorrect in the sense that the movement to the focus position cannot be derived from exhaustivity, since it is merely a pragmatic effect.

3 Co-occurrence of the expressions

- When we look at sentences where these expressions co-occur, we can see that they do not show the same distributional patterns, which also contradicts E. Kiss's (2002) account:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. wh-phrase + <i>only</i> -phrase | 4. 2 wh-phrases |
| 2. wh-phrase + DE expression | 5. 2 <i>only</i> -phrases |
| 3. <i>only</i> -phrase + DE expression | 6. 2 DE expressions |

3.1 Wh-phrase + *only*-phrase

- When there is a wh-phrase and an *only*-phrase in a sentence it is always the wh-phrase that has to be immediately preverbal – the *only*-phrase can either appear in a postverbal position, as in (9-a) or precede the wh-phrase as in (9-b.):

- (9) a. Ki hozott csak salátát?
who brought only salad.ACC
'Who brought only salad?'
b. Csak salátát ki hozott?
only salad.ACC who brought
c. *Csak salátát hozott ki?
only salad.ACC brought who
d. *Ki csak salátát hozott?
who only salad.ACC brought

3.2 Wh-phrase + DE expression

- When there is a wh-phrase and a DE expression in a sentence it is also always the wh-phrase that has to be immediately preverbal – the DE expression can either appear in a postverbal position, as in (10-a) or precede the wh-phrase, as in (10-b.):

- (10) a. Ki hozott kevés könyvet?
who brought few book.ACC
'Who brought few books?'
b. Kevés könyvet ki hozott?
few book.ACC who brought
c. *Kevés könyvet hozott ki?
few book.ACC brought who
d. *Ki kevés könyvet hozott?
who few book.ACC brought

3.3 *only*-phrase + DE expression

- For *only*-phrases and DE expressions, interestingly, the distribution depends on their grammatical functions, namely that the subject of the sentence has to be in the preverbal position and the object can either appear in a postverbal position, or precede the subject:¹

- (11) a. Csak Lajos hozott kevés könyvet.
only Lajos brought few book.ACC
'Only Lajos brought few books.'
- b. Kevés könyvet csak Lajos hozott.
few book.ACC only Lajos brought
- c. *Kevés könyvet hozott csak Lajos.
few book.ACC brought only Lajos
- d. *Csak Lajos kevés könyvet hozott.
only Lajos few book.ACC brought
- (12) a. *Csak könyvet hozott kevés ember.
only book.ACC brought few people
- b. *Kevés ember csak könyvet hozott.
few people only book.ACC brought
- c. Kevés ember hozott csak könyvet.
few people brought only book.ACC
'Few people brought only books.'
- d. Csak könyvet kevés ember hozott.
only book.ACC few people brought

- This is surprising data, because it has been argued (see E. Kiss 1987) that subject-object asymmetries are absent from Hungarian grammar.

3.4 Two *wh*-phrases

- When there are two *wh*-phrases in one question, one of them has to move to the preverbal position, the other one can either appear in a postverbal position, as in (13-a), or they can both appear in front of the main verb, as in (13-b). (13-c), where both *wh*-phrases are postverbal, is ungrammatical, even if the focus position is already filled (13-d):

- (13) a. Ki hozott mit?
who brought what.ACC
'Who brought what?'
- b. Ki mit hozott?
who what.ACC who brought what.ACC
- c. *Hozott ki mit?
brought who what.ACC
- d. *BIANKÁNAK hozott ki mit?
Bianka.DAT brought who what.ACC
int: 'Who brought what to BIANKA?'

¹The sentence in (11-c.) is grammatical with a special intonation, 'only' having 'few books' in its scope instead of 'Lajos'

3.5 Two *only*-phrases

- When there are two (or more) *only*-phrases in a sentence, they can either be both preverbal (14-b), or one preverbal one postverbal as in (14-a), or even both postverbal if the preverbal position is already occupied as in (14-c):

- (14) a. Csak Zita hozott csak labdát.
 only Zita brought only ball.ACC
 ‘Only Zita brought only a ball.’
 b. Csak Zita csak labdát hozott.
 only Zita only ball.ACC brought
 c. Ki hozott csak Zitának csak labdát?
 who brought only Zita.DAT only ball.ACC
 ‘Who brought only to Zita only a ball?’

3.6 Two DE expressions

- When there are two DE expressions in one sentence, only one of them can move to the preverbal position, the other has to be postverbal. If the preverbal position is already taken, they can both be postverbal:

- (15) a. Kevés lány hozott legfeljebb 4 epet.
 few girl brought at-most 4 strawberry.ACC
 ‘Few girls brought at most 4 strawberries.’
 b. Legfeljebb 4 epet hozott kevés lány.
 at-most 4 strawberry.ACC brought few girl
 c. *Kevés lány legfeljebb 4 epet hozott.
 few girl at-most 4 strawberry.ACC brought
 d. *Hozott kevés lány legfeljebb 4 epet.
 brought few girl at-most 4 strawberry.ACC
 e. Mikor hozott kevés lány legfeljebb 4 epet?
 when brought few girl at-most 4 strawberry.ACC
 ‘When did few girls bring at most four strawberries?’

3.7 Interim summary

1. wh + <i>only</i>		
wh	V	only
only	wh	V
*only	V	wh
*wh	only	V

2. wh + DE		
wh	V	DE
DE	wh	V
*DE	V	wh
*wh	DE	V

3. <i>only</i> -subject + DE-object		
only-S	V	DE-O
DE-O	only-S	V
*DE-O	V	only-S
*only-S	DE-O	V

3.’ <i>only</i> -object + DE-subject		
*only-O	V	DE-S
*DE-S	only-O	V
DE-S	V	only-O
only-O	DE-S	V

4. 2 wh			
	wh	V	wh
	wh	wh	V
	*V	wh	wh
*other	V	wh	wh

5. 2 only			
	only	V	only
	only	only	V
	*V	only	only
other	V	only	only

6. 2 DE			
	DE	V	DE
	*DE	DE	V
	*V	DE	DE
other	V	DE	DE

4 The problems

- There are two main problems that the above data raise:

1. The **non-iterativity of the focus position** seems to be challenged by sentences in which there are more than one *obligatorily focused* expressions in front of the verb
2. It seems that there is a **difference in the distribution** of these expressions with respect to their *obligatoriness* of movement

4.1 The iterativity problem – everything in focus?

- The focus position is said to be non-iterative, meaning that it can host only one constituent. However, we've seen examples (repeated below in (16)) where there are two expressions in preverbal positions:

- (16)
- a. Csak salátát ki hozott?
only salad.ACC who brought
 - b. Kevés könyvet ki hozott?
few book.ACC who brought
 - c. Kevés könyvet csak Lajos hozott.
few book.ACC only Lajos brought
 - d. Csak könyvet kevés ember hozott.
only book.ACC few people brought
 - e. Ki mit hozott?
who what.ACC brought
 - f. Csak Zita csak labdát hozott.
only Zita only ball.ACC brought

- I propose that the first elements in the above sentences are contrastive topics, given that they are only acceptable when pronounced with a typical rise-and-fall intonation (cf. Gyuris 2002).

- The only exception is (16-e), where the first wh-phrase *Ki* does not have the same rise-and-fall intonation.

- (16) e. Ki mit hozott?
 who what.ACC brought

- This shows that *wh*-phrases behave differently than *only*-phrases and DE expressions.

4.1.1 Wh-movement = focus movement?

- I propose that *wh*-movement in Hungarian is not an instance of focus movement as has been proposed by several authors (Horvath, 1986; Bródy, 1990; Lipták, 2002; E. Kiss, 2002, etc.).

- There are at least a couple other differences in *wh* and focus behaviour:

- In embedded clauses, a focused constituent can precede a *wh*-phrase (Brody and Szendrői, 2010, following Varga 1982), but it cannot precede an *only*-phrase or a DE expression:

- (17) Azt szeretném tudni, hogy MARIT ki hívta **fel**.
 that.ACC would.like know.INF that Mari.ACC who called VM-up
 ‘I would like to know who called MARI.’

- (18) *Azt mondtam, hogy MARIT csak Bianka hívta **fel**.
 that.ACC said-I that Mari.ACC only Bianka called VM-up
 int: ‘I said that MARI was only called by Bianka.’

- (19) *Azt mondtam, hogy MARIT kevés lány hívta **fel**.
 that.ACC said-I that Mari.ACC few girl called VM-up
 int: ‘I said that MARI was only called by few girls.’

- In (17), *Mari* is clearly the focus and not a contrastive topic, but (18) and (19) can only be saved by putting a contrastive topic intonation on *Mari*.

- Universals, and other expressions that would normally go to SpecQP (which precedes the focus position), such as *also*- and *even*-phrases, can precede foci, *only*-phrases and DE expressions, but not *wh*-phrases (Lipták, 2002):

- (20) Mindenki csak Jánost hívta meg.
 everyone only János.ACC invited VM-away
 ‘Everyone invited only János.’

- (21) Mindenki kevés lányt hívott meg.
 everyone few girl.ACC invited VM-away
 ‘Everyone invited few girls.’

- (22) *Mindenki kit hívott meg?
 everyone who.ACC invited VM-away
 int: ‘Everyone invited who?’

- The data in this section suggests that *wh*-phrases and foci are not in complementary distribution.

- I propose that *wh*-phrases indeed move because of the WH-criterion (Rizzi, 1996) to a preverbal position, but not because of a [+focus] feature and possibly not to SpecFP.

4.2 Distributional differences

- There is also a difference regarding the strength of the need of the discussed constituents to move to the preverbal position:

- wh-phrases always have to move to a preverbal position
 - only a second wh-phrase can appear postverbal
 - there can be more than one preverbal wh-phrase
- *only*-phrases move to a preverbal position
 - but can stay postverbal if the preverbal position is filled
 - there can be more than one preverbal *only*-phrases
- DE expressions move to a preverbal position
 - but can stay postverbal if the preverbal position is filled
 - there cannot be more than one preverbal DE expressions

- So we can establish the following ordering, with wh-phrases having the strongest necessity to move to the preverbal position:

(23) wh \gg only \gg DE

4.2.1 *only* and DE

- One easy solution for *only*-phrases could be to say that since *only* is a focus sensitive adverb, it has to associate with focus.

→ but *even* and *also* are said to be focus sensitive adverbs too, yet they are excluded from the focus position:

- (24) a. Még Bianka is **el** jött.
yet Bianka too VM-away came
'Even Bianka came.'
b. *Még Bianka is jött **el**.

- (25) a. Bianka is **el** jött.
Bianka too VM-away came
'Bianka also came.'
b. *Bianka is jött **el**.

- But *only*-phrases, and also DE expressions are in some broad sense negative:

- they license NPIs
- they introduce an upper bound to the context

- It could be a possible solution to extend Szendrői (2001)'s approach to negative constituents and say that they also need to bear main stress in a sentence, so they move to the leftmost position in an iP.

- Indeed, crosslinguistically, both focus and negation present non-default, marked syntactic and/or prosodic structures.

- Also the fact that in Hungarian the position that gets focal intonation and interpretation not only attracts *negative* expressions but also excludes *positive* ones, (such as universals, upward entailing expressions, also- and even-phrases) further underlines this strong link between focus and negativity.

5 Concluding remarks

- In this talk I presented a puzzle, namely that wh-phrases, *only*-phrases and DE-expressions move to a preverbal position.

- I showed that:

1. the focus position in Hungarian is not linked to semantic exhaustivity, thus it is not likely to be the trigger for movement to this position
2. wh-phrases behave differently than *only*-phrases and DE expressions regarding their movement into a preverbal position

→ wh-movement is not focus movement in Hungarian

3. *only*-phrases and DE expressions do indeed move to the focus position because of some inherent negativity

→ there is a strong relation between focus and negativity

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