

On the base-position of Hungarian verbal particles

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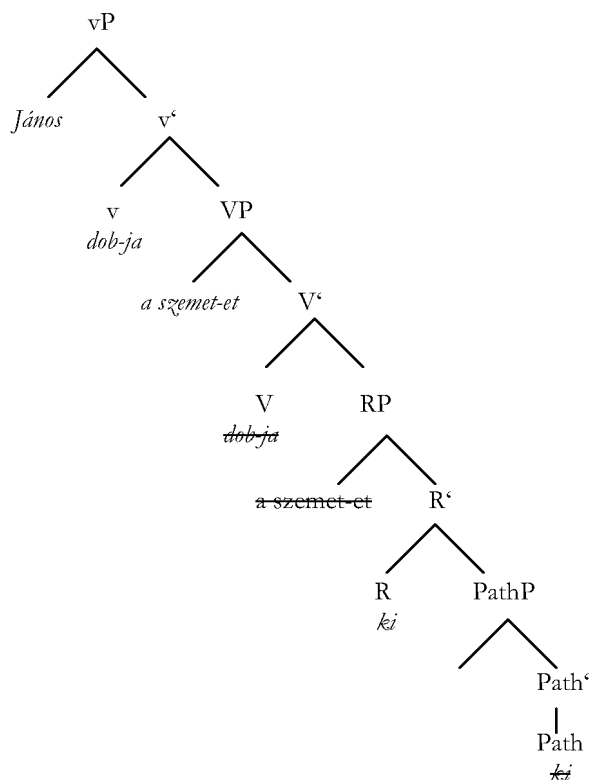
The position in which Hungarian verbal particles are merged into the structure has been subject to debate for decades. While the vast majority of researchers agree that verbal particles come from within the vP, there is no consensus on exactly where they originate from. Szendrői (2001) and Ackema (2004) argue that particles are left-adjoined to the verbal head and so their base position precedes that of the verb, while É. Kiss (2002 and 2006) propose that particles are postverbal AdvP complements of the verb. In this paper I argue that the various functions of verbal particles call for a non-unified treatment: some particles are merged in the vP below the verb indeed, but others originate outside the first phase.

I propose that particles originate in the vP in three cases. The first case is when they have a directional + terminative meaning (eg. *ki-dob* ‘out-throw’). In (1) *ki* encodes both the direction of throwing and the resulting position of the object.

- (1) *János ki-dob-ja a szemet-et.*
 John.NOM out-throw-3SG the garbage-ACC
 ‘John throws away the garbage.’

Building on Ramchand (2004 and 2008), I argue that these particles are merged in an extended PP structure in the head of Path Phrase where they receive the directional component of their interpretation. Particles then move to the head of Result Phrase (the complement of VP), where they receive the resultative component of their interpretation. The object originates in [spec, RP] as the ‘subject of the result’.

(2)

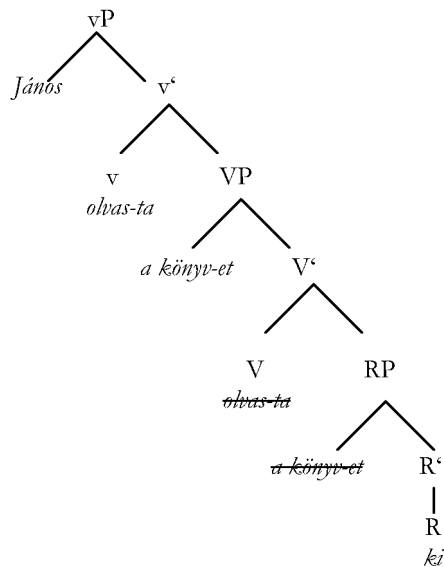


All directional particles alternate with pure resultative readings (eg. *ki-olvas* ‘out-read’ meaning ‘read through (a book)’).

- (3) *János ki-olvas-ta a könyv-et.*
 John.NOM out-read-past.3SG the book-ACC
 ‘John has read through the book.’

These particles often cause a change in the argument structure of the verb (eg. the object is optional with *olvas* ‘read’ but obligatory with *ki-olvas* ‘read through’). Since the argument structure is completed at the level of the vP, these particles must come from inside the vP. They differ from directional + terminative particles in that they are inserted directly into the Result head and so lose the directional component of their meaning.

(4)



Given that the phase is the domain of idiom formation (Marantz 1997), particles are also merged in the vP when the particle + verb unit has a non-compositional meaning (eg. *ki-fekszik*, literally ‘out-lie’, meaning ‘be surprised’). In this case the structure is the same as in (4).

Verbal particles, however, are merged outside the vP when they carry a non-directional, systematic temporal or quantising meaning, since such information is represented in the IP and not the vP-domain (eg. in its quantising use *be* ‘in’ means ‘do something to the whole surface’: *be-ken* ‘in-smear’ means ‘smear the whole surface’). I argue that particles with a temporal meaning are merged in Asp and particles with a quantising meaning are merged even higher. The analysis predicts that given their high position, these particles cannot change the argument structure or form idioms. This prediction is borne out.

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