

# Reflexive pronouns in Hungarian PPs: synchronic variation and diachronic change

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## 1 Introduction

- There is variation in the distribution of anaphors and pronouns in Modern Hungarian that can be explained better by looking at grammaticalization processes in the history of the language.
- Claim: even the oldest recorded stages of Hungarian have a reflexive pronoun that is used anaphorically, but its distribution is different from the way it is used today because of a difference in the structure of Postpositional Phrases (PPs) in the two stages of the language.
- In Old Hungarian most postpositions preserved some of their nominal properties, they were not yet postpositions, but were no longer nouns either, they are an in-between category (AxialPart) Possessives behave differently with respect to binding and this determines the more restricted distribution of anaphors.

## 2 Variation in Modern Hungarian

- Variation in Modern Hungarian: there is a (dialectal) variation in the possibility to use oblique case marked personal pronouns when the standard would only allow anaphors (Rákosi 2011).

- standard

- (1) a. Vedd magadra ezt a pulóvert!  
take.IMP.2SG yourself.onto this.ACC the sweater.ACC  
'Put on this sweater.'
- b. Vigyél magaddal pénzt!  
take.IMP.2SG yourself.with money.ACC  
'Take some money with you.'

- dialectal variant (Rákosi 2011: (1)-(2))

- (2) a. Vedd rád ezt a pulóvert!  
take.IMP.2SG onto.2sg this.ACC the sweater.ACC  
'Put on this sweater.'

- b. Vigyél veled pénzt!  
take.IMP.2SG with.2SG money.ACC  
'Take some money with you.'
- We find the same variation with morphologically independent postpositional elements (Rákosi 2010: (24))
    - (3) a. Láttam egy kígyót mellettem.  
saw.1SG one snake.ACC beside.1SG  
'I saw a snake beside me.'
    - b. Láttam egy kígyót magam mellett.  
saw.1SG one snake.ACC myself beside  
'I saw a snake beside myself.'
  - Modern English also uses pronouns in some PPs. Sometimes there is variation in English as well:
    - (4) a. Bill found a snake [PP near him].  
b. We have a whole week [PP before us].  
c. John has left his family [PP behind him].
    - (5) John<sub>i</sub> saw a snake near him<sub>i</sub> /himself<sub>i</sub>.
  - Old Hungarian: the use of anaphors is more restricted; personal pronouns are more frequently used with oblique cases and independent postpositions. (I regard all of these as PPs.)
    - (6) a. És ne akarjatok mondanotok tünnönbennetek  
and not want.2PL say.INF.2PL you.in.2PL  
(Munich Codex, 1416/1466, Matthew 3:9)
    - b. es ne akaryatok mondany thy-magatokban  
and not want.2PL say.INF you-yourselfes.in  
(Jordánszky Codex, 1516-1519, Matthew 3:9)
    - c. És ne gondoljátok, hogy azt mondhatjátok magatokban  
and not think.2PL that that.ACC say.can.2PL yourselves.in  
(Modern Hungarian translation, Matthew 3:9)  
'And think not to say within yourselves'
  - Binding Theory in Generative Grammar: Binding Principles governing the distribution and coreference relations of anaphors (reflexive and reciprocal pronouns), (personal) pronouns and referential expressions (Chomsky 1981: 188). Local domains are defined for binding: clauses, some phrases, predicates with all their arguments.
  - Rákosi (2010): the varying Modern Hungarian Ps have a possessive structure, which forms a binding domain; the binding configuration is non-local, hence pronouns are licensed.

## 2 Anaphors and pronouns in Old Hungarian

### 2.1 The origin and function of the reflexive element *maga*

- The reflexive pronoun *maga* exists already in the earliest Old Hungarian documents.<sup>1</sup> Its use is more restricted than today, but it is used anaphorically as well.
  - (i) anaphoric (reflexive) use;
  - (ii) emphatic role, next to pronouns bearing emphasis;
  - (iii) with the meaning ‘alone’ (appearing on its own then)
  - (iv) in Old Hungarian it is used as part of a complex conjunction: *de maga* (=but self) ‘but’
- I will mainly discuss the anaphor *maga* here.
- The etymology of the word:
  - According to the historical-etymological dictionary, its development is arguable, but the most probable etymology originates it from the noun *mag* ‘body’ with a possessive suffix. Its original function is hypothesized to be the reflexive use, which then gave way to an emphatic and an adverbial use (Benkő 1970: 812).
  - Bárczi (1982): the reflexive pronoun developed from the Finno-Ugric word referring to ‘body’.
  - Benkő (1983) also claims the possessive origin to be the right one.
- Sipos (1991: 377-380):
  - it developed in Hungarian independently from the closest related languages (closest relatives use personal pronouns as anaphors);
  - semantic change: body > own body > own person/self;
  - its change to become a pronoun may have been helped by its appearance in reflexive use
- G. Varga (1992): the original role of the reflexive pronoun was probably expressing reflexivity (and not emphasis)
- Our written sources do not help us decide which was the first use of the grammaticalized *maga*. The oldest records already show its presence in all uses listed above.
- Typologically the emphatic use seems more probable as the original one: the development from an emphatic element (referring to body or body part, esp. head) to a reflexive pronoun is a frequent one (cf. Schladt 1999). Reflexive pronouns often develop late in the history of a language.
- English reflexives developed during the written history of the language. The English reflexive also goes back to an intensifier element (Van Gelderen 1999; König & Siemund 2000 a.o.).

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<sup>1</sup>There are also different elements containing *maga* other than the anaphor in the inflected paradigm: (i) *ön-maga* ‘self-(him)self in the whole paradigm; (ii) *saját maga* ‘his own self’ in the whole paradigm; (iii) the emphatic pronoun: *ő maga* (difference between: (*ő*) *magát* ‘(he) self.ACC’ vs *őt magát* ‘he.ACC himself.ACC’)

## 2.2 The distribution of anaphors in the oldest Hungarian texts

- First use could be interpreted either as anaphoric or emphatic use.  
(7) Num heon muga nec. ge mend w foianec halalut evec  
not only self to but all he kind.DAT death.ACC ate  
'He ate not only the death of him/himself but also that of his whole kind'  
(Funeral Speech, c. 1195)
- The next one is an emphatic use of *maga*, there is no coreferent nominal in the sentence.  
(8) ne leg kegulm mogom-nak  
not be mercy self- DAT  
'Let there be no mercy for me'  
(The Old Hungarian Lament of Mary, 13th c.)
- The first longer Hungarian text with a larger number of examples: Jókai Codex (after 1372/c. 1448); altogether 144 examples of some form of *maga*, there are examples where it is an intensifier but most are anaphors.
  - nominative: all of them are emphatic uses or ones meaning 'alone', none are anaphoric

(9) a. zent fferenc ewnnewn maga marada  
saint Francis self.EMPH self.3SG stayed  
'Saint Francis was left alone' (Jókai Codex, 19/24)

b. ky neprewl ystennek fya ewn maga m[o]da ewangeliumban  
who folk.from god.DAT son.3SG he self.3SG said gospel.in  
'about which folk God's son himself said in the gospel' (Jókai Codex, 89/08)

  - accusative examples:

(10) a. Es zent kereztnek yegyuel magat yegezuen  
and saint cross.dat sign.with self.ACC mark.part  
'Having marked himself with the mark of the saint cross'  
(Jókai Codex, 06/16)

b.. Es ez alazatos frater magat alojtya uala leny mendentewl kewssebnak  
and this humble brother self.ACC believe past be.INF all.from smaller.DAT  
'And this humble brother believed himself to be smaller than everything.'  
(Jókai Codex, 73/03)

  - dative case marked examples:

(11) a. Ew valazta maganak frater Masseur tarsa  
he chose self.3SG.DAT brother Masseur.ACC partner.to  
'He chose Brother Masseur for himself as his partner' (Jókai Codex, 129/10)

b. mert en mondom magamnak  
because I say.1SG self.1SG.DAT  
'Because I say to myself' (Jókai Codex 32/20)

- These do not answer the question, which use of *maga* was present first; both the emphatic and the anaphoric are possible.
- But they show that the anaphoric use is available, what is more, with accusative and dative cases, the reflexive is one used to express coreference with a higher argument.
- So, *maga* is definitely an anaphor in Old Hungarian.
- In this early period, there are very few examples where the reflexive pronoun appears with oblique case or with postpositions, personal pronouns are more frequent (see below).

(12) es evnen maga vezen vala magan disciplinat  
 and she.EMPH self.3SG take.3SG was self.3SG.on discipline.ACC  
 ‘and she she herself disciplined herself’ (Legend of Margit, 1510)

- During the Old Hungarian period anaphors start to appear in more and more contexts, replacing the personal pronouns with most Ps

### 2.3 Personal pronouns as locally bound elements?

- Personal pronouns are used in seemingly local contexts with oblique cases and postpositions (though we would expect anaphors here based on Modern Hungarian).

(13) a. zent ferenc mene zent Jacabot meglatny: vyuen vele egynehan tarsokot  
 Saint Francis went Saint Jacob.ACC see.INF taking with.3SG some partners  
 ‘St. Francis went to visit St. Jacob taking some partners with him(self).’  
 (Jókai Codex, 13/07)

b. mert vgy uala ewn belewle kywl  
 because such was him.EMPH out.of.3SG outside  
 ‘because he was like that beside himself’  
 (Jókai Codex, 10/17)

c. Tytkonnan hyua az fratert velle (JókK 92/06)  
 secretly asked.3SG the brother.ACC with.3SG  
 ‘He secretly asked the brother to go with him’

- This still remains so in later texts to some extent:

(14) Az eleuen zent kereztfat myndenkoron ev nala vgy ev mellette targya vala  
 the live saint cross.ACC always she at.3SG or she beside.3SG keep.3SG was  
 ‘She was always keeping the saint cross at or beside herself.’  
 (Legend of Margit, 1510)

(15) ky elhagyottat hozya vezen, tórwent thór  
 who left.ACC to.3SG take law.ACC break.3SG  
 ‘and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery’  
 (Jordánszky Codex, Matthew 5:32)

- Towards the end of the Old Hungarian period pronouns disappear from more and more contexts and anaphors replace them:

- (16) a. *És ne akarjatok mondanotok tünnönbennetek*  
and not want.2PL say.INF.2PL you.in.2PL  
(Munich Codex (1416/1466), Matthew 3:9)
- b. *es ne akaryatok mondany thy-magatokban*  
and not want.2PL say.INF you-yourselfes.in  
(Jordánszky Codex (1516-1519), Matthew 3:9)  
'And think not to say within yourselves'

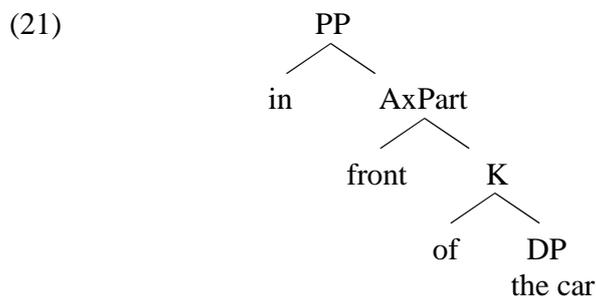
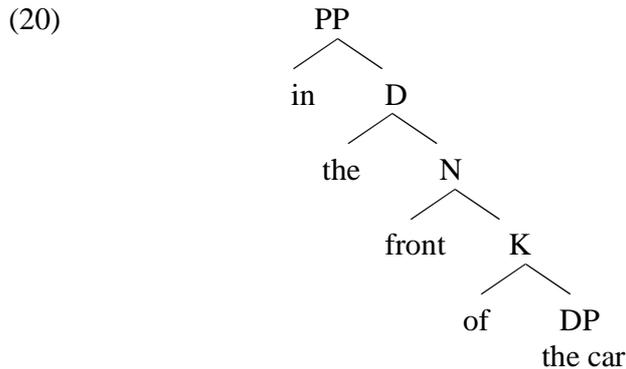
### 3 Binding and the structure of the PP

- Postpositions (and local suffixes) grammaticalized from locative case marked possessive constructions (house back-at > house back.at) (cf. Hegedűs 2011 for the structure).
- These elements preserved more of their possessive nominal origin in Old Hungarian than they do in standard Modern Hungarian.
- PPs show their nominal origin in other ways as well: they appear in possessive-like constructions, where both the (original) possessor is marked for dative case and the (original) possessee bears an agreement marker.

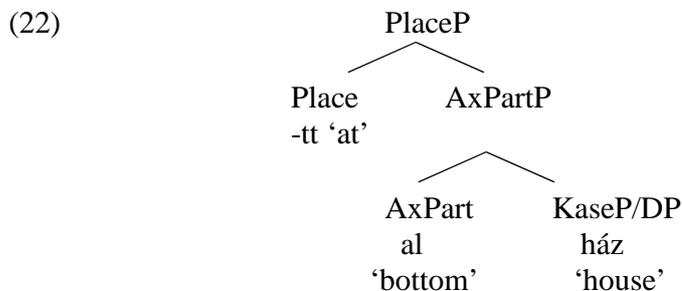
- (17) a. *Sokak felet*  
many.PL above  
'above many' (Jókai Codex 114/20)
- b. *mendenek felette*  
everything.DAT above.3SG  
'above everything' (Jókai Codex 79/24)
- (18) a. *keues bezed vtan*  
few speech after  
'after (a) few speeches' (Jókai Codex 122/14)
- b. *ez bezedeknec vtana*  
this speech.DA after.3SG  
'after these speeches' (Jókai Codex 025/23-24)

- Hegedűs (2011): These constructions are possible because the elements are in an intermediate stage of grammaticalization, becoming a postposition from a noun. Claim: categorically they are Axial Parts (cf. Svenonius 2006), an in-between category that is not a noun but not a fully grammaticalizes P either.
- Svenonius (2006): Axial Parts, part of the PP structure, discussing the difference between *in front of* vs. *in the front of* in English

- (19) a. There was a kangaroo in front of the car.  
b. There was a kangaroo in the front of the car.



- Old Hungarian: many of the old nominal constructions still have enough nominal properties to be used in a possessive-like way (but: they cannot appear with determiners or modifiers etc, so they are not really nouns anymore) (Hegedűs 2011).



- Assuming that they keep their possessive origins to some extent, we can say that they form their own binding domain at this stage. (Possessives are often supposed to have a local subject that makes it plausible to assume them to be binding domains.)
- With some of them becoming suffixal and others becoming half-independent morphemes, they are no longer nominal, or at least not in the standard dialect of Modern Hungarian.
- In other dialects (and arguably in some cases in standard Hungarian as well), we find some variation, and it appears in exactly the expected ways: in dative-possessive constructions and with the use of anaphors/pronouns.

## 5. Conclusions

- We can understand the synchronic variation in the language better with the help of the historical data.
- What was the more frequent variant at an earlier stage of grammaticalization is a dialectal variant today.
- Some of the variation remained present in all dialects due to the slow process of grammaticalization.

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