

The syntax and diachronic development of grammaticalized result phrases in Hungarian

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In this talk I present my analysis of the synchronic syntax, as well as of the diachronic development of some result phrases (RPs) in Hungarian that have developed a grammaticalized, adverbial meaning. I focus on three RPs, *rommá* ‘to ruin’, *porrá* ‘to dust’ and *halálra* ‘to death’, which have a dual function in contemporary Hungarian. They can function as RPs that transparently denote the result state of an event, but they may also function as adverbial, intensifier-like elements, expressing either that an excessive amount of an activity was carried out or that an event continued until an excessive result state was reached.

Synchronically, I capture these two interpretations in the syntax with an analysis inspired by Hegedűs (2020) and Kardos & Farkas (2022). Hegedűs discusses Hungarian postpositions that have developed an additional function as verbal particles, while Kardos & Farkas propose a syntactic analysis of canonical RPs and verbal particles in Hungarian. When RPs like *rommá* ‘to ruin’, *porrá* ‘to dust’ and *halálra* ‘to death’ function as transparent result-denoting elements, they may remain in their base-generation position, in [Comp, VP]. On their intensifier use, however, they undergo obligatory movement from [Comp, VP] to [Spec, AspP] between vP and VP, in order to check the [excessive] feature of the Asp head. This analysis is also in line with the assumptions of Roberts (2021), who analyzes all diachronic syntactic change as parameter change, represented in the syntax by a change in the featural make-up of a functional head. Importantly though, this syntactic distinction contradicts that of Szávó (2026), where the different functions of these RPs are derived from different base-generation sites.

Regarding their diachronic development, historical and contemporary corpus data suggest that these RPs seem to be at different stages of grammaticalization. *Rommá* ‘to ruin’ and *halálra* ‘to death’ seem to be at a relatively higher level of grammaticalization as opposed to *porrá* ‘to dust’, which is evident from the difference in their productivity as intensifiers and the kinds of argument structures that they can license. In this regard, the diachronic development of these elements seems to parallel the development of Hungarian postpositions into verbal particles (Hegedűs 2020), as well as that of some result phrases that are now fully grammaticalized aspectual elements in Hungarian, such as *agyon* ‘over/to death’ (Forgács 2004).

References

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