Radically Truncated Clauses: Revisiting the Structure of VP in Hungarian and Beyond
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1. Introduction

It has proved difficult to determine the shape and headedness of the minimal VP, owing to the fact that much or even all of the material originating in it routinely moves out of it in the course of the derivation of a clause. In this talk, novel data from Hungarian will be offered to present a clause type radically pared down to the minimal VP, making it possible to observe the VP by itself. The syntax of such radically truncated clauses (RTCs) will show that the Hungarian VP is, in fact, head-final. I will also claim that RTCs in Hungarian provide prima facie evidence against the universality of head-complement branching order (Kayne 1994), and strong support to the conception of OV as a basic, non-derived word order (Haider 2000). Finally, I will show that RTC data lend further support to the adjunction analysis of both topicalization (Lasnik and Saito 1992) and quantification (Fox 1995, Reinhart 1995, Chomsky 1995).

2. Radically truncated clauses: the main facts

RTCs are typically used in informal spoken and written registers to describe a succession of sub-events (or a single subevent) within a well-defined containing event or situation.

(1) *[Namármost amikor   én   alud-t-am   ott,   úgy   kezd-t-em,   hogy]*
    well   when   I   slept-PST-1SG there so   start-PST-1SG   that
    'So when I was sleeping there, the way I started was
    szemét   le-visz,   szoba   rendbe-rak, fürdőszoba el-pakol...
    rubbish VM[1]-carry   room   VM-put   bathroom   VM-pack
    I took out the rubbish, I cleared the room, I cleared the bathroom.'

Importantly, this succession of RTCs is not a syntax-free to-do-list: in fact, RTCs have a much stricter syntax than real to-do-lists. To-do-lists in Hungarian typically involve an infinitival construction with relatively free word order, with objects obligatorily carrying accusative case and with the objects optionally having the definite article.

As opposed to this, the radically truncated clauses are subject to a number of constraints. First of all, RTCs lack all phi-feature agreement (subject agreement as well as object agreement).

(2) a. *sör   meg-isz*   b. **sör   meg-isz-ik*
       beer VM-drink   beer VM-drink-3SG
       'I/you/she/he/we/you-pl/they drink/drank the beer.'

They also lack all tense, aspect and mood features and they are felicitious only if this missing information can be inferred from the context.

In RTCs, the object is obligatorily in the morphologically unmarked case form (a form otherwise reserved for nominative subjects and possessors), which is highly unusual since objects in Hungarian obligatorily carry accusative case:

(3) a. **sör-t   meg-isz*   b. *sör   meg-isz*
       beer-ACC   VM-drink   beer VM-drink
       'I/you/she/etc. drink/drank the beer.

While word order in neutral full sentences in Hungarian is V-initial, RTCs are strictly O VM V:

(4) a. *tévé   be-kapcsol*   b. **be-kapcsol   tévé*
       television VM-switch   VM-switch   television
       'I/you/she/etc. switch(ed) on the TV and open(ed) the beer.'

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1 Verbal modifiers (VMs) express the result state or location of the theme argument, and are base-generated as complements of V (É. Kiss 2006).

In RTCs, the object cannot have a definite article (even when it denotes a contextually salient, unique entity). Importantly, the object is a nominal phrase (not a mere N), it can be a NumP, a PossP, a QP or even a CP, and can be pluralized.

In RTCs, no subject is allowed in transitive or unergative sentences (5), however, the subject is allowed in unaccusatives (6):

(5) a. *(*én)* *tévé* *be-kapcsol* b. *(*én)* *fut*
        I   television   VM-switch   I   run
        'I switch(ed) on the television.'   'I start/started.'
(6)   *én át-öltöz*
        I   VM-dress
        'I change(d). (meaning: I change(d) my clothes).'

3. Analysis

I will claim based on these observations and other evidence that RTCs in Hungarian are VPs which lack all higher projections including vP, the inflectional domain (from ModP to AgrSP) and the higher functional domain (PredP to CP), with the possible exception of NegP:

(7)   [CP [NegP [FocP [NegP [PredP [AgrSP [AgrOP [MoodP [TenseP [ModP [vP ext. arg. [VP int. arg. [V' VM V]]]]]]]]]]]]]
        (cf. Bartos 1999 and É. Kiss 2006 among others)

While focusing is completely out and negation is only marginally attested, topicalization and Q-raising are freely available in RTCs, which I will take as supportive of the approaches which analyze these latter two as adjunction. The lack of a vP layer explains both why external arguments are excluded from RTCs and also the lack of accusative case on the internal argument. The strict and verb-final surface order is due to the fact that in these minimal structures, the V is trapped within VP. Note that under the standard analysis of the Hungarian sentence, even in fully neutral sentences, the V is taken to move to a position outside vP, resulting in a V-initial word order in neutral sentences and free word order postverbally (É. Kiss 2006). This movement fails to happen in RTCs, and as a consequence, the word order reflects the underlying structure of the VP in Hungarian, which is otherwise unobservable in non-truncated sentences due to obligatory V-movement. The proposed structure is the following: the internal argument is generated in SpecVP, and, crucially, the VM is a complement to the left of V.

(8)   [VP internal arg. [V' VM V]]

Note that even though neutral full sentences in Hungarian are verb-initial, the language has long been known to have many features typical of head-final languages (the lexical layer of the NP is head-final, the PP is head-final, the possessor precedes the possessum, participial relatives precede the nominal that they modify, predicative nominals precede the copula), which means that this new finding of a head-final VP shows that Hungarian is more typologically well-behaved than previously thought. Finally, I will discuss how RTCs in Hungarian can be related to a somewhat similar construction in German called the Inflektiv (Bücking and Rau 2013) and to truncated clauses (or root infinitives) studied in child language (Guasti and Rizzi 2002).

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