Diachronic Evidence and the Relation between Interrogative Markers and Focus

0. The problem

Interrogative marker: -e

Often claimed to be a Focus head (e.g. van Craenenbroeck & Lipták 2008)

But: independent from the notion of focus

- optional in main clause yes-no questions
- occurs even if there is no focus

Position: clause-internal; on the vP-periphery, usually attached to the verb

- Diachronically: -e appeared in a clause-final position
- Non-standard dialects, or ellipsis: -e does not always attach to the verb

Proposal: -e is a [+wh] marker head at the functional vP-periphery; foci located at the vP-periphery for different reasons
1. The Modern Hungarian pattern

Embedded interrogatives: no distinctive intonation (↔ main clause interrogatives)

Subordinator: optional C head *hogy* ‘that’

- yes-no interrogatives: *-e* obligatory

(1) *Nem tudom, *(hogy) megérkezett-*e Mari.
not know-1SG that PRT-arrived.3SG-Q Mary
‘I don’t know if Mary has arrived.’

- *wh*-interrogatives: overt *wh*-element

(2) *Nem tudom, *(hogy) ki érkezett meg.*
not know-1SG that who arrived.3SG PRT
‘I don’t know who has arrived.’

Main clause questions: distinctive intonation

- *wh*-interrogatives: *wh*-element present

- yes-no interrogatives: *-e* is optional

2. The Old and Middle Hungarian patterns

Historical periods:

- Old Hungarian (ca. 896–1526)

- Middle Hungarian (ca. 1526–1772)

- Modern Hungarian (ca. 1772–)
3

Old Hungarian embedded yes-no interrogatives: complementiser *ha* ‘if’:

(3) mōgadũg někõnc *ha* te vag x̂ istěn̂n̂ fia  
tell-IMP.2SG-PRT we.DAT if you are Christ God-DAT son  
‘tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God’ (Munich Codex, from 1466)

Middle Hungarian embedded yes-no interrogatives: complementiser *ha* ‘if’ + -e:

(4) mondd meg nekünk, *ha* te vagy-e Krisztus, az Isten Fia  
tell-IMP.2SG-PRT we.DAT if you are-Q Christ the God son  
‘tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God’ (Káldi’s translation, from 1626)

Old (and Middle) Hungarian embedded *wh*-interrogatives: optional complementiser *hogy* ‘that’ + *wh*-element:

(5) kèrdesẽkduẽ / *hog* mi volna micor halottaibol felkèlend  
asking that what be-COND.3SG when dead-ELA up-rises  
‘questioning what the rising from the dead should mean’ (Munich Codex, from 1466)

3. More on the evolution of the interrogative marker

Interrogative marker -e: appeared in Old Hungarian main clause yes-no interrogatives  
(optionally):

(6) nēde tū incab nagobbac vattoc aʒoçnal ê  
Q you rather greater-PL are.3PL those-DAT Q  
‘Are ye not much better than they?’ (Munich Codex, from 1466)

Position: clause-finally, later clause-internally

Optional clause-initial particle (e.g. *nemde* ‘isn’t it’, *minemde* ‘isn’t it’)

Optionality of -e: distinctive intonation marks [+wh]

- if -e were a Focus head, then it should be obligatory in main clause interrogatives (exhaustivity)

- optional in Old/Middle Hungarian and in Modern Hungarian (cf. É. Kiss 2002) too

- clause-final position not linked to any designated focus position

4. More on clause-typing and functional left peripheries

Clause-typing: traditionally associated with the CP-periphery (cf. Rizzi 1997)

Marking of subordination: in embedded clauses – also associated with the CP-periphery (cf. Rizzi 1997)

- Single encoding: one element responsible for the overt marking the type of the clause and subordination

  e.g. ob ‘if’ in German

(7) Ich weiß nicht, ob er kommt.
    I know.1SG not if he comes
    ‘I don’t know if he is coming.’

- Double encoding: the element responsible for overtly marking subordination is different from the element overtly marking the type of the clause

subordination marker typically a general subordinator, e.g. that

element overtly marking the type of the clause: may also be an operator (wh, relative operators)
e.g. embedded \textit{wh}-interrogatives in certain German dialects (cf. Weiß 2013: 777–778)

(8) Ich weiß auch nicht, \textbf{wer dass} da gewesen ist.
I know.1SG too not who that there been is
‘I don’t know who was there either.’ (based on Weiß 2013: 778, ex. 15a)

\textit{Wh}-movement: targets the CP in English, German \leftrightarrow Hungarian: it targets the vP-domain

\rightarrow general subordinator + a \textit{wh}-element: no Doubly Filled COMP Filter violation in Hungarian

\leftrightarrow certain German dialects, Middle English

Hungarian embedded interrogatives:

\begin{itemize}
  \item double encoding in \textit{wh}-interrogatives in all periods
    \hspace{0.5cm} (optional C head \textit{hogy} ‘that’ + \textit{wh}-element)
  \item double encoding in yes-no interrogatives in Modern Hungarian
    \hspace{0.5cm} (optional C head \textit{hogy} ‘that’ + -\textit{e})
  \item single encoding in yes-no interrogatives in Old Hungarian
    \hspace{0.5cm} (C head \textit{ha} ‘if’ \sim German \textit{ob})
\end{itemize}

Middle Hungarian: intermediate stage in the transition from single encoding to double encoding

Functional left peripheries in Hungarian embedded interrogatives:

\begin{itemize}
  \item subordination: CP-periphery
  \item marking of [\textit{+wh}]: vP-periphery – evolution of functional vP-periphery during
    Old/(Middle) Hungarian
    \hspace{0.5cm} initially: [\textit{+wh}] marked by \textit{ha} ‘if’ at the CP-domain; clause-final -\textit{e}: head of a head-final CP
\end{itemize}
5. Ellipsis, non-standard varieties and the interrogative marker

Position of -e: a functional v head – but also a clitic, usually attached to the verb

Elliptical constructions: verb absent → -e attaches to a preceding element

(9) Valaki elment, de nem tudom, hogy Mari-e ment-el.
   someone off-went.3SG but not know-1SG that Mary-Q went off
   ‘Someone left but I don’t know whether it was Mary.’

Certain nonstandard dialects: no movement of the verb to the leftmost functional v head if there is a negative element or a particle in the specifier of that vP

(10) Nem tudom, (hogy) meg-e érkezett Mari.
    not know-1SG that PRT-Q arrived.3SG Mary
    ‘I don’t know if Mary has arrived.’

Standard Hungarian: -e as a bound morpheme attracts the verb (except in ellipsis patterns)

6. Conclusions

Co-occurrence of -e and focus: result of more general diachronic processes

Diachronic evidence: the presence/absence of -e is indeed in correlation with certain typological settings – the changes thereof predict the changes in the status of -e

Typological change in word order:

cf. É. Kiss (2013)

\[
\begin{array}{cc}
SOV & \text{(Proto-Hungarian)} \\
\downarrow & \\
\text{“Top Foc V X”} & \text{(Old Hungarian)}
\end{array}
\]

change can be observed in Old Hungarian too
→ change from predominantly head-final to predominantly head-initial projections

→ preference of finite over non-finite subordination

→ evolution and reinforcement of functional left peripheries (CP, vP)

- increased role of the general finite subordinator (*hogy* ‘that’)

- grammaticalisation of [+wh] at the vP-periphery

Changes in the expression of focus:

SOV → “Top Foc V X”

- preverbal focus ← sentential stress
  cf. Szendrői (2001)

- highest [Spec,vP] position occupied also by other elements – negative, verbal particle
  cf. É. Kiss (2008)

Verb movement to highest v head: only with -e

- default: verb stays in the VP (cf. É. Kiss 2008)

- -e as a bound morpheme is a trigger

  ↔ no such trigger in comparative subclauses

  → degrading (Bacskai-Atkari 2013)
• in non-standard dialects: -e does not trigger verb movement if the [Spec,vP] is filled by a verbal particle or a negative

↔ truly predicative XPs

• verb movement not necessary for -e – can attach to preceding constituent as a clitic

→ development of -e independent from focus

→ -e is an interrogative marker functional head

References


