The History of Hungarian Complementisers

Julia Bacskaï-Atkari
Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest

The Problem

Four complementisers in Modern Hungarian:
- ha 'if', hogy 'that', mert 'because', mint 'than'

Combinations historically:

1. ha hogy mert mint
2. hogy hogy mert mint
3. hogy hogy mert mint
4. hogy hogy mert mint

Questions:
- certain theoretically possible combinations do not exist (e.g. mert + mint)
- symmetrical pattern: if a combination is possible in the order XY, it is also possible in the order YX

Proposal: the four C heads were in different stages of development in Old Hungarian, which resulted in fixed underlying order → reverse order possible via movement.

The Structure of the Left Periphery

Two C heads (Force and Finiteness)
- Operators: in the lower [Spec: CP] position

Movement: ordinary wh-movement

Constraints:
- in Modern Hungarian, the two C heads cannot be filled at the same time (~ Italian)
- Doubly Filled COMP Filter

Positions in Modern Hungarian (cf. Köteles 2005):
- hogy in Cform
- ha in Cform
- mint in Cform
- mert in Cform

- hogy, mint, and mert cannot be preceded by anything
- ha can be preceded by a Topic

(3) Péter megőről különböző hozzáttam. Peter if arrives sends.R 1st, 3rd.
If Péter arrives, send him to me.

The History of Simplex Complementisers

Development from operators to C heads: reanalysis
- Second stage in reanalysis: from Cform head to Chead head

The relative cycle as a grammaticalization process: an original determiner becomes first a relative operator, and subsequently the relative operator is reanalysed as a C head.

- the same happened to Hungarian complementisers
- hogy and ha: Cform heads already at the beginning of the Old Hungarian period
- mint and mert: becoming first Cform then Chead heads during the Old and Middle Hungarian period
- operator function of mint and mert preserved in Old Hungarian, alongside the new one (C heads)
- operator function of hogy 'how' and ha 'when-what': new: the latter was rare but the former is still possible in Modern Hungarian

(5) Látta, hogy az úszik a dinnnyehét; saw- that-how drifts the melon rind; 'I saw that the melon rinds were drifting.'

Two Complementisers in One Left Periphery

Proposal: hogy and ha developed into C heads earlier → in Old Hungarian, they are Cform heads ↔ mint and mert are later developments and are either in the lower [Spec: CP] or in Cform
- development of hogymint, hamint, and hogy mert:

(6) édesleget érte nagyobb hogy mint annak elírle sweetnes-ACC. fell-ACC. greater than that than-tha. 1-Vis. past-1SG. 1SG. 1SG. 1SG. 1SG.
'she felt sweetness even more than before' (Láskó, 140)

(7) ha mint csak el akadtak volna lelkület istennék meg adák if than only measures slept be-unused. be-const. ad-lest-3SG. be-hung. God-give gave gave-as 'as if they had only fallen asleep, they gave their souls to God' (Sándi, 28)

(8) De hogy mert szeret Ferenc igen szereti vallat új tisztaságért but that because Saint Francis well liked be-think. be-think. him forpurity-3SG. 3.SG. 3.SG. 3.SG. 3.SG.
'but because Saint Francis well liked him for his purity' (JákK, 46)

other Cform×operator combinations in the period with hogy and ha, e.g. hogy ki 'that who', ha mi 'if what'
- hogy and ha had to be Cform heads

Movement and Complex Complementisers

Proposal: the underlying order changes when the Chead moves up to the CPPM, and the original meaning is always the same
- hogy and ha: Cform heads to Chead heads

(9) semmi nagyobb nem mondhatják; mint hogy legyen istennék anyja nothing-greater not say-think. be-COM. Const.3SG. 3.SG. than that because-Hung. God-give. mother=Poss.3SG.
'nothing can be said to be greater than she that is her mother' (THK, 143)

(10)És kimenéve szokásuk szerint mint ha az imádságá menneke and out.went-ACC custom=const.3SG. 3.SG. according than if the prayer-go. go-Const.3SG.
'and they went out according to their custom, as if they were going for prayer' (GyökÉ. 113–114)

(11) Mert hogy bizonnal volthad. Kríszcsuank láthattuk tehátványa because that definitely was-think. be-COM. Const.3SG. 3.SG. because he was a perfect student of Christ' (JákK, 20–21)

(12)Vég orvad elméve vagya. hogyha igyeke nem hallgatja happy face-think. away.went-1SG. Subj.3SG. 1SG. that.js he absolutely not hear-think. 1SG. 1SG. 1SG. Subj.3SG.
'she went away with a happy face, as if she had absolutely not heard' (Virág, 81)

(13) hogy hogy anok leírásban túl nem jároka a kelő rövidségbén if that that=ACC. description=Poss.1SG. 1SG. over not go the appropriate length=Poss.1SG.
'If I do not exceed the appropriate length in the description thereof' (Ferenc Molnár, 1788)

Conclusions

Default word order: hogymínt + ha mint
- gives hogy + mint + mert and ha + mint

Movement: if the Chead head moves up to the Cform head, adjunction will happen in the reverse order (cf. Kayne’s Linear Correspondence hypothesis)
- gives mint + mert + hogy + mert + ha

Movement ultimately leads to complex complementisers that are base-generated as a complex Cform

Advantages:
- the orders XY and YX are just variations of one another – the original meaning is always the same
- explains the diachronic difference: the ones with the reverse word order survive into Modern Hungarian → the ones with the default word order have disappeared from the language
- the change in the constraint: Old and Middle Hungarian allowed the two C heads to be filled simultaneously, Modern Hungarian does not
- configurations having two separate C heads overtly had to disappear → complex C heads could remain
- explains why certain configurations (i.e. mint + mert) are impossible: two Cheads heads not allowed

The case of hogy ‘that’ and ha ‘if’:
- hogyha: hogyha in this case moved from Cform → new operator hogy ‘how-what’ developed into a C head
- hogyha is first used in conditional comparatives, just like mintha ‘than-if’
- hogyha: later (rare) development, when ha changed from Cform to Chead – prohibition on two C heads making movement necessary but not → development into a proper complex C head

References

Kantor, Görgényi (2008a) On Hungarian Relative Operators. The Even Number 8, 1–12.