Diachronic Evidence and the Relation between Interrogative Markers and Focus

Julia Bacska Ai-tkari
University of Potsdam, Germany

The Problem

- Intervagitive marker -e:
  - Often claimed to be a Focus head (e.g. van Craenendonck & 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 ellipses: -e does not always attach to the verb

- Proposal: -e is [-mark] marker head at the functional VP-periphery, faci located at the VP-periphery for different reasons

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, not know−1sg.
         hogy) megérkezett-e Mari.
         that PRE−arrived.3sg−Q Mary
         ‘I don’t know if Mary has arrived.’
      2. (Nem tudom, not know−1sg.
         hogy) ki érkezett meg.
         who arrived−3sg.
         ‘I don’t know who has arrived.’

- Main clause questions: distinctive intonation
  - wh-interrogatives: wh-element present
  - yes-no interrogatives: -e is optional

The Old and Middle Hungarian Patterns

- Historical periods:
  - Old Hungarian (ca. 896−1526)
  - Middle Hungarian (ca. 1526−1772)
  - Modern Hungarian (ca. 1772−)
  - Old Hungarian yes-no interrogatives: complementiser ha ’if’:
    3. (mögödő nem kon főszóló
       tel−MP−ZSG−PRF WE.DAT
       ha te vagy−1sg.
       ha te vagy−1sg.
       hogy) az isten fia
       if you are Christ God’s son
       ‘tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God’ (Munich Codex, from 1466)
  - Middle Hungarian embed yes-no interrogatives: complementiser ha ’if’:
    4. (mondta meg netűnek
       tel−MP−ZSG−PRF WE.DAT
       ha te vagy−1sg.
       Kriszta, az István fia
       if you are Christ God’s son
       ‘tell us whether you tell us whether you are Christ, the Son of God’ (Káldi’s translation, from 1626)
  - Old (and Middle) Hungarian embedded wh-interrogatives: optional complementiser hogy ’that’ + wh-element:
    5. (kérdezőkérdés) hogy míg világa
       asking that what be−COND.3SG
       mikor halálabb lakott
       when dead−1sg.
       up-arises
       ‘questioning what the rising from the dead should mean’ (Munich Codex, from 1466)

More on the Evolution of the Interrogative Marker

- Intervagitive marker -e:
  - appeared in Old Hungarian main clause yes-no interrogatives (optionally):
    6. néde tu’ incab nagyobb vallat: xgonal−e
       Q you rather greater−r is, are.3pl.
       ‘Are you 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

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.1sd. if he comes.
    - 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 wh-interrogatives in certain German dialects (cf. Weiß 2013: 777−778)
      8. (Ich weiß, auch nicht, wer dass da gewesen ist.
         I know.1sd. too who that there been is
         ‘I don’t know who was there either.’ (based on Weiß 2013: 778, ex. 15a)
    - Wh-movement: targets the CP in English, German — Hungarian: targets the v-domain
      - general subordinator + a wh-element: no Doubly Filled COMP Filter violation in Hungarian
      - certain German dialects, Middle English
    - Hungarian embedded interrogatives:
      - double encoding in wh-interrogatives in all periods (optional C head hogy ’that’ + wh-element)
      - double encoding in yes-no interrogatives in Modern Hungarian (optional C hogy hogy ’that’ + -e)
      - single encoding in yes-no interrogatives in Old Hungarian (C head ha ’if’ − German ob)
    - Middle Hungarian: intermediate stage in the transition from single encoding to double encoding
    - Functional left peripheries in Hungarian embedded interrogatives:
      - subordination: CP-periphery
        marking of [+wh] in CP-periphery — evolution of functional VP-periphery during Old/Middle Hungarian
        initially: [+wh] marked by ha ’if’ in the CP-domain, clause-final:-e head of a head-final CP

Ellipsis, Non-standard Varieties and the Intervagitive 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 ember, de nem tudom, hogy Mare−3sg−ET
       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 non-standard dialects: no movement of the verb to the least functional head if there is a negative element or a particle in the specifier of that v
        I don’t know if Mary has arrived.
    Standard Hungarian: -e as a bound morpheme attracts the verb (except in ellipsis patterns)

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)
  - SOV (Proto-Hungarian)
    → “Top Foc V X” (Old Hungarian)
  - 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’) — cf. Bacska Ai-tkari (2013)
  - grammaticalisation of [+wh] at the v-periphery

- Changes in the expression of focus:
  - SOV → “Top Foc V X”
    - preverbal focus — sentential stress
    - 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 (Bacska Ai-tkari 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 predictable 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