

Virovec Viktória: More Than Just Future

On the non-temporal functions of future morphemes in Hungarian

Abstract

The main goal of the dissertation is to add to the growing body of researches that establish a connection between markers of epistemicity/inferentiality and futurity, and to show that future-referring morphemes can indeed have various functions that make them similar to epistemic inferential modals. Throughout the dissertation, we collected evidence for the existence of these functions by studying the use of various Hungarian future-referring morphemes. The main focus is on three morphemes: *fog* ‘will’, *majd* ‘later’, and *kellesz* ‘must.fut’ (that is used to express future necessity in certain dialects of Hungarian). Besides that, the dissertation also presents works on the Hungarian futurate, and the proximity marker use of *most* ‘now’. The use of these structures is relatively underresearched, and none of them has got substantial attention in the literature before. This statement is especially true for the stigmatised, dialectal future-referring morpheme, *kellesz*.

Besides presenting introspective data, the dissertation also includes the results of a pilot questionnaire study on the use of *fog* and the Hungarian futurate, the results of a corpus study on the diachronic use of *majd*, a corpus and a questionnaire study on the use/acceptability of *kellesz* with various temporal perspective and orientation combinations, and a production study with follow-up interviews on the use of *kellesz* preceded by an additional corpus study.

It is shown that the Hungarian future morpheme *fog* is a modal with a non-restricted modal base and ordering source. Regarding the use of the Hungarian futurate and *fog*, empirical data is presented and the following claims are made. First, the use of the futurate is marginal if the speaker infers the truth of the proposition from contextually known facts, while *fog* is natural and acceptable. Second, *fog* can be used to express a genuine prediction, while the futurate is marginal in this use. Third, whenever speakers have strong and direct evidence that entails the truth of the proposition (the truth of the proposition is settled/decided) and the sentence is temporally unambiguous, the futurate is strongly preferred to *fog*, since the use of *fog* in such sentences might imply that *P* is inferred, which they want to avoid. To account for these claims, we argue that the Hungarian futurate posits a null necessity modal, which is so strong that it does not have an ordering source. Therefore, it can only be used if the truth of the proposition is settled either objectively, or subjectively (against the speaker’s beliefs). If we do not restrict the modal base of *fog* and assume that it has an ordering source, it can easily be

explained why *fog* is preferred in various contexts, regardless of any other properties of the sentence (the predicate type, the use of temporal frame adverbs).

Based on the results of the corpus study on the diachronic development of *majd*, it is argued that *majd* became an adverbial particle having various pragmatic functions from an adverb referring to the proximal future. A key component of this process was that it lost its proximal meaning component which gradually turned into a distal one. As a result, the use of *majd* in preverbal position has a delaying effect, it expresses uncertainty and a lesser degree of speaker's commitment. Most of these functions are very closely related to the functions of epistemic-inferential modals. One other interesting connection that is shown in the dissertation is that, in Hungarian, inferential-epistemic adverbs like *talán* 'perhaps' or *esetleg* 'possibly' and *majd* 'later' or *kellesz* 'must.FUT' are all used to mitigate the force of a request, and make it politer.

In the dissertation, we summarize the methodology and discuss the results of our studies on *kellesz*. Based on the results of these studies, we can conclude that – besides indicating future necessity – the use of the structure is frequently associated with uncertainty, postponed necessity, and a lack of speaker's commitment. In the dissertation, it is argued that there are two meaning aspects of *kellesz*. First, it emphasizes that *the scope proposition is not necessary at present*, it will (only) be necessary in the future, or it emphasizes that *the speaker does not know for sure that P is necessary*, because its necessity has been inferred from indirect evidence / the S has second thoughts.

The connection between markers of futurity and epistemicity should be further researched, but as it is shown in this dissertation, besides the similarities in their semantics, their pragmatic features also provide an interesting area for future studies.

Key words: future-time reference, future auxiliaries, epistemic modality, politeness, Hungarian