On the synchrony and diachrony of grammaticalized result phrases in Hungarian

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Introduction: Resultative constructions have been of interest to linguists for decades both for their syntactic and semantic properties, and their grammatical behavior as well as (un)availability have been studied in various languages including Hungarian (e.g., É. Kiss 2008, Hegedűs 2019, Kardos & Szávó 2024). Consider the examples from English and Hungarian in (1) and (2), respectively.

(1) a. John hammered the metal flat.
b. Kate broke the vase into pieces.

(2) a. János lapos-ra kalapálta a vasat.
János flat-SUBL hammered the metal.ACC
'János hammered the metal flat.'
b. Kati darabok-ra törte a vázát.
Kati pieces-SUBL broke the vase.ACC
'Kati broke the vase into pieces.'

The interpretation of these four sentences is that there was a causing activity which is described by the primary verbal predicates - *hammered the metal*, *broke the vase*, *kalapálta a vasat*, *törte a vázát*. This activity caused the object referent to obtain a new result state, as specified by the result phrase (RP) – *flat*, *into pieces*, *laposra*, *darabokra*. A difference between how the two languages form resultative constructions is that English RPs appear postverbally, and they can be both APs (*flat* in (1a)) and PPs (*into pieces* in (1b)). The syntactic position of English RPs is usually assumed to be a complement position (see e.g. Harley 2005 for a small clause analysis and MacDonald 2008 for a functional projection analysis). In Hungarian, however, the RP *laposra* 'lit. onto flat' appears preverbally and it is composed of the adjective *lapos* 'flat' and the sublative *-ra/-re* case marker (literally meaning *onto*), standardly analyzed as a prepositional phrase (Hegedűs 2019). There are no AP resultatives in Hungarian (Hegedűs 2019), similarly to Slavic languages such as Russian (Gehrke 2008). According to a recent analysis put forth by Kardos & Farkas (2022), Hungarian result phrases of the type illustrated in (2) occupy the specifier position of an inner aspectual functional projection, AspP, above VP in the preverbal section of the sentence. On this analysis, which I also follow in this work, result phrases are argued to move to [Spec, AspP] from the complement of VP to check the [+telic] and [+maximal] features of the Asp head.

Data: Besides the more canonical resultative constructions demonstrated above, Hungarian also has a further subclass that usually features RPs that are nouns marked for translative case with the *-vá/-vé* suffix. What is also noteworthy regarding these translative-marked RPs is that they often have two different interpretations. See (3) and (4).

(3) a. Kati por-rá zúzta a tojáshéjat.
Kati dust-TRANS crushed the eggshell.ACC
'Kati crushed the eggshells to dust.'
b. A katonák rom-má bombázták a házakat.
the soldiers dust-TRANS bombed the houses.ACC
'The soldiers bombed the houses to ruins.'

(4) a. Kati por-rá alázta Jánost.
Kati dust-TRANS humiliated János.ACC
'Kati completely humiliated János.'
b. Mari pacal-lá ázott az esőben.
Mari tripe-TRANS soaked the rain.INE
'Mari got completely soaked in the rain.'
c. Obamáék rom-má díszítették a Fehér Házat.
Obama.APL ruin-TRANS decorated the White House.ACC
'The Obamas decorated the White House from top to bottom.'

In (3), the RPs *porrá* 'to dust' and *rommá* 'to ruin' are interpreted in their literal sense, meaning that as a result of Kati's crushing, the eggshells turned into dust and as a result of the soldiers' bombing, the houses turned into ruins. In (4), however, the RPs *porrá* 'to dust', *rommá* 'to ruin' and *pacallá* 'to tripe' are interpreted as adverbial, intensifying elements. In other words, their function is to express that the results of the events denoted by the VPs were excessive.

Aims and claims: My goal is to argue that these two interpretations are a consequence of two different syntactic configurations associated with the sentences in (3) and (4). As I show based on various syntactic and semantic diagnostics, their grammatical behavior as well as their interpretational difference seem to warrant a syntactic distinction. The grammatical behavior of the RPs in (3) parallels that of canonical, largely sublative-marked adjectival RPs from the previous literature, so I treat them on par with those. I consider the RPs in (4) to be grammaticalized elements, lacking the lexical content observable in the RPs in (3). In my syntactic analysis, in addition to building on the analysis of Kardos & Farkas (2022), I also aim to draw a parallel between the syntax of lexical and superlexical prefixes in Slavic languages as argued for in Svenonius (2004) and the RPs illustrated in (3) and (4), which – inspired by this terminology – I also call lexical and superlexical RPs. I assume that lexical translative-marked RPs are also base-generated in [Comp,VP] and move to [Spec,AspP] to exert their aspectual function, while superlexical RPs are base-generated in [Spec,AspP].

Synchronic analysis: There are two similarities between lexical and superlexical RPs. They both make telic interpretations available in preverbal position, which is evidenced by the fact that they are compatible with the *in x time* and not the *for x time* adverbial. They also both appear postverbally under negation and in focus constructions. Besides these two similarities, we find various differences between them: 1) lexical RPs can co-occur with verbal particles, another result-encoding element in Hungarian, while superlexical RPs cannot, 2) lexical RPs can be modified by adjectives, while superlexical RPs cannot, 3) on a *sequence-of-identical-events* interpretation superlexical RPs can co-occur with the *for x time* adverbial, while lexical RPs cannot, 4) superlexical RPs are not compatible with further intensifying elements such as *nagyon* 'very' since they already encode the same kind of intensifying meaning. Modification by intensifiers such as *very* is a test in the literature on scalarity that diagnoses scalar elements (Kennedy & McNally 2005, 2010, Bochnak 2010, 2013, *i.a.*)). Lexical and canonical RPs are modifiable by such elements. The fact that superlexical RPs are also scalar elements is evidenced by their compatibility with degree modifiers such as *félig* 'half.TERM.'

Diachrony: In addition to proposing a synchronic analysis of superlexical result phrases, I also wish to reflect on the diachronic development of these elements. This part of my study is inspired by previous research on the grammaticalization of result phrases and verbal particles in Hungarian. Forgács (2004), for example, demonstrates the grammaticalization of *agyon-* 'to death/over' in Hungarian. The case-marked RP-like nature of the phrase is still detectable today, as it can be decomposed into *agy* 'brain' or originally 'skull' and *-on* which is the superessive case suffix, meaning 'on/onto.' By around the 19th/20th century, it has lost this transparent, lexical 'on the head' content and has grammaticalized into an element whose function is to lexicalize excessiveness. In Hungarian, verbal particles also went through a grammaticalization process from adverbial/postpositional elements into aspectual elements (see, e.g., D. Mátai 1989, Hegedűs 2014, Hegedűs 2020). One of them, *meg-,* has completely lost its lexical content, but some other ones still retain their spatial meanings to a certain degree. My current hypothesis is that the superlexical RPs that I have cited above are becoming grammaticalized in a similar fashion, just like *agyon-* and verbal particles, and it appears to be the case that they are at an intermediate stage of grammaticalization, where they still have lexical content but are able to function as fully grammaticalized elements in certain contexts.

Conclusion: Based on the synchronic diagnostics, there appears to be a need for a syntactic distinction between lexical and superlexical result phrases in Hungarian. It seems that superlexical RPs are grammaticalized, adverbial elements while lexical result phrases retain their referential content. The results of this research suggest that the typology of result phrases in Hungarian is more varied than previously thought.

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