

Katalin Weber

How to translate what is not?

In memoriam János Lotz

In the summer of 2003 I was translating a contemporary Polish novel, *Hanemann* by Stefan Chwin.¹ As far as I see as a linguist, translation of fiction is not a linguistic analysis. While translating complex and coherent fictional world within the novel represented by the text, I rather focus on the imaginary context constructed by the sequence of sentences and trace all the interwoven relations of meaning that the sentences give clues of. Besides I am expected to reconstruct in Hungarian the individual, characteristic style of the author. However, in case of fairly long sentences rich in various cross-references I may happen to search for grammatical support offered by the text as data analyzable by linguistic means as well. Shortly speaking grammatical structures symbolizing semantic relations in conventionalized way often serve for me as the source of light in the sentence illuminating the semantic level of the translation procedure. The better I am able to discover and form in Hungarian the richness of meaning in the text apparent in various ways, the more I feel what Roland Barthes said to be »the joy of the text«.²

While editing, checking and correcting the first version of the text already translated grammatical control is still present. The coherence of the ongoing scenes appearing in the text, scripts of actions, frames such as historical setting, abstract schemes of dialogues and narratives, the encyclopedic knowledge of the world involved and the author's evident literary intentions interact with the grammatical level in the process and help me, the translator disclose the author's creative forms, the novel set of expressions that I had never encountered before. That is how I may become

¹ Chwin 1995; in Hungarian: Chwin 2004.

² Barthes 1996.

more and more familiar with Chwin's language, so to speak »the Chwin of the language«.

For the translator all these cohesive devices appear primarily as language. Jürgen Habermas who defined universal pragmatics distinguished three fundamental communicative modes of language usage: (1) cognitive–referential to represent the outer world, (2) interactive for rendering interpersonal, social relations, (3) expressive for uncovering the inner, subjective world of the speaker.³ Applying this triadic approach (resembling that of Bühler's model) to the translation procedure, I can find these aspects in my work. During the translation work I had to study and get familiar with the concrete historical background (remnant memories of the former Danzig's German culture in the post-war communist Gdańsk, in linguistic terms such as German proper nouns, geographical place names, newspaper titles etc., understand and form by means of language (2) all the main or episodic figures appearing in dialogues or narrations, from Russian soldiers to Henriette Vogel, Heinrich von Kleist and Ignacy Stanisław Witkiewicz who gained their rebirth intertextually. But the most difficult task of all was to capture (3) »the Chwin of the language«, which at certain parts of the text was an elaborated use of Polish with sentences extremely prolonged by subordinate and coordinate clauses to render a kind of Germanic *usus* of written German culture (in fiction, in philosophy) and this was to be recreated in Hungarian.

On one occasion working with the text it struck my eyes: *A nő az ablaknál állt*. At that moment I immediately heard the alternative sentence: *Egy nő állt az ablaknál*. Which one should I prefer? The scene is the same in both versions, though the main figure in terms of grammar is indefinite in the latter and different word order is applied. The linguistic level of the Polish sentence could not help in the decision, since there is no article in Polish: *Stać wtedy przed oknem*. Only the higher level of textual cohesion being created in the above-sentence layers and the exploration of the narrative aim to locate reference points may help in the decision whether to

³ Habermas 1979.

introduce an entity of the imaginary world as being definite or indefinite in the target text.

No doubt that the material of a well-written, good novel does not miss supplying the reader (as well as the translator) abundantly with micro and macro structural clues how to understand (less how to interpret) what had been written. Even the last sentence of a novel may influence the translator's decision how to translate the first sentence (or the title) of the literary piece. The reader is better understood as an explorer progressing in the text without firm expectations and may go astray, whereas the translator is an experienced hiker (with maps of language, zooming tools, compass), a language expert knowing paths already taken and inviting the readers to the forest (a maze) of the textual world along with the author's recognized intentions. In this conscious reading of the translator linguistic elements are the stepping stones leading to the novel's fictional world.

In the case cited beforehand it was just a momentary hesitation of mine whether to introduce the main figure in the scene with definite or indefinite article. The pre-context of the sentence was of help. In the narrated scenes of the previous paragraphs the main character, Hanemann was looking at burnt photographs presumably of *a* woman, since the undamaged details of the photo were fragments of *a* woman's garment: *Kraniec koronkowej sukni. Biała dłoń trzymająca parasolkę z rogową rączką. Rondo ciemnego kapelusza otoczone wiankiem róż utkanych z gazy. (Egy csipkés ruha szegélye. Szarufogantyús napernyőt tartó fehér kéz. Sötét kalap karimája, rajta tüllrózsákból füzér.)* It is a sequence of indefinite references because the photograph was the source of a vague recollection for Hanemann who began to identify her later : *To ona? (Ó lenne?)* Apart from the question form this poetic question is fairly definite in using a personal pronoun. The active reader may answer this poetic question (Yes. It is her.), that is why the next scene is to present *a certain* woman, *her* (**the** lost lover), fulfilling the former expectations about a definitely identifiable lady to crop up soon: *A nő az ablaknál állt.*

In Slavonic languages verbs have two aspectual forms: one with no reference to the completion of the action (imperfective), the

other one is perfective (which specifies the action as completed) having only past and future form. In the sentence about the standing woman the verbal predicate (*A nő az ablaknál állt.*) is formed from an imperfective verb and agreed to the unemphasized and thus missing female subject identifiable from the previous context. But a free adverb of time (*then/wtedy*) inserted to the sentence provides a concrete reference point of time in the past. The gender agreement and the imperfective form together with the time adverb conveys a concrete action (state) of the past. In Polish it is the case system that governs the syntax but due to the existence of genders and declinations extended to adjectives, numerals, personal and possessive pronouns, the thematic roles can be transparently identified in much more complex sentences than this one.

In contrasting the two languages, Polish and Hungarian, we may see from the comparison of these short extracts that articles, one of the most frequent and salient definiteness markers have no equivalence in this Slavonic language. Nevertheless Polish speakers quite well get on learning languages such as English or German, languages that use both definite and indefinite articles, and the lack of them does not make impossible to create a Polish novel in German⁴ or in English. When Hungarian and Polish are compared as for having simple or complex definites as Christopher Lyons calls them,⁵ the expressions of definiteness seem to be a so called minus structure in Polish. But how is then translation possible? How might definite reference be achieved in foreign texts and how is learning of Hungarian possible? Linguistic minus structures support the Humboldtian view expressed about the defining role of grammatical phrases played in the speakers' conceptualization of the world. It is the very same Humboldt though whose ideas about the nature of languages reconciled the universal and language specific traits. Following his lines one may assume that languages are equally enabled to convey meanings that they have no grammaticalized forms of in the same way, as seen in the quoted extract, the Polish sentence could carry out a concrete reference to a past scene

⁴ In German Chwin 1997.

⁵ Lyons 1999.

without a definite article using other grammatical devices. Despite the lack of certain sophisticated grammatical structures languages are alike; they can elaborate and operate with other linguistic potentials to achieve precisely the elements of the communicative goals.

Apart from my experiences as a translator I have another plausible reason for trying to contrast these two languages. Hungarian as a foreign language is usually contrasted with Indo-European languages as was traditionally compared with the learned Latin and for some historical reasons with German. But thinking of the everyday communication of the past there must have been a hidden Slavonic-Hungarian comparison in speakers' mind, the traces of which one may find in metalinguistic considerations: the Hungarian word *beszéd* goes back to Slavonic *beseda*, in the same way as *tolmács* which is in Polish: *tłumacz*. I am going to argue for the assumption that not only our word *beszéd* and *tolmács* but the Hungarian word *fordít* (e. g. *translate*) sums up subconscious metalinguistic knowledge about speakers' everyday experience of Slavonic-Hungarian communication in the old days. As a matter of fact Hungarian has existed and survived for centuries surrounded by various Slavonic languages: Slovak, Czech, Polish, Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Russian if we take them as independent languages of our days. So within the Middle-European population it is a majority of Slavonic speakers whom the Hungarians had to face their mother tongue with.

Let me just pick up and list a few of those phenomena which appear somehow and need different composition of the Hungarian sentences. This different way of ordering appears as *the other way round*, that is, *fordítva*, for foreign learners of Hungarian as well as for a translator (*fordító*). In his everyday practice the translator (*fordító*) when planting (*Übersetzung*) sentences one by one from one language to another makes a lot of backward patterning (*fordítás*).

What is the other way round for foreigners in Hungarian and for us also in other Slavonic languages? A translator knows by experience that modifying elements usually precede the modified phrase in the Hungarian sentence as a result of which the left hand

side of the sentence is frequently »open« and offers space for compliments (to place information to the left in order to set free the right end of the sentence for other, let us say, above-sentence textual purposes). This is exactly the case especially with the clause-substitute participles which may function as attributes: *The woman standing in front of the window is my mother.* In Hungarian: *Az ablak előtt álló nő az anyám.* *Ta kobieta stojąca przed oknem jest moja matka.* The Polish structure goes in hand with that of English. Except for the nominal predicate (which does also contain a backward micro patterning) the semantic elements are sequenced the other way round. This backward sequence is noticeable on syntactical level as well in the configuration of morphemes. A *ház ablak-a* is *okno dom-u* (*the window of the house*), *moja matka* (*my mother*) is *anyám-m*. If we combine the two sentences (*The woman standing in front of the window of the house is my mother*, that is, *A ház ablaka előtt álló nő az anyám.*), the backward patterning is made longer on the left hand side of the sentence conceivable as chunks of strings. The possession is expressed in Indo-European languages by personal adjectives that precede the possessed thing: *my book*, *moja książka*. Its Hungarian equivalent is: *könyv-em*. The morpheme encoding the 1st person possessor is affixed to the stem. According to Hans-Henning Paetzke, a German translator of contemporary Hungarian literature, Hungarian agglutination, the sequencing of the suffixes inserted one after another placed behind the stem sounds as if one spoke the other way round.⁶ Slavonic and other Indo-European languages extensively use *prepositions* for spatial, temporal and other abstract relations, while Hungarian has suffixes or *post-positions* for similar purposes: *I went to the building.* *Poszłam do budynku.* vs. *Odamentem az épülethez* (*az épület mögé*). If we combine the latter prepositional structure with possessive pronouns: *in my book* (*w mojej książce*), the whole becomes in Hungarian: *könyv-em-ben*. The declined possessive adjective and the female noun are agreed in the locative case of the Polish phrase, but it is the mere sequential arrangement of the stem, possessive and locative suffix and at last but not least the

⁶ Paetzke 1995.

vowel harmony what firmly assembles the Hungarian morphological word. (For us, native Hungarians the harmonized vowels and the first syllable stress direct our perception to recognize even such absurdly long over-agglutinated strings as *meg-szent-ség-telen-ít-het-etlen-ség-es-ked-és-e-i-tek-ért*). As seen here, the backward (*fordított*) configuration of phrases operating on a holistic (sentence) level in Indo-European languages is processed in Hungarian on a rather local, morphological level. More precisely on morphosyntactical level, since in accordance with Baker's mirror principle the morphosyntactical derivation reflects the syntactical derivation of the sentence. In Hungarian the end morphemes of agglutinated words represent the syntactical relations such as case markings. For instance the Hungarian aggregation plural *-k* may be an end morpheme only in nominativus (the same stands for the possessive suffixes), otherwise it is followed by case markers. In inflecting languages (such as Polish, German) the endings change as a whole, whereas in the agglutinating Hungarian morphemes usually remain in the sequence (unchanged or modified) but their position might be shifted.

This backward patterning, of course, could be explained by the phrase structures modeled in generative grammar, but the linear arrangement is always fundamental for a translator. The translator respects the text and as a faithful interpreter (also *tolmács*, *fordító*) is expected to see beyond this sort of limits of basic grammatical linearity within the sentence and also keep in mind the discourse (also style) effects that come from the simplest ways how clauses or sentences are juxtaposed (not to mention coping with whole paragraphs and macro structures) what belongs to the linearity of the text. For learners of Hungarian with Indo-European mother tongue the idea of »word order« mentioned in the classroom by the teacher might be confusing, too abstract and ungraspable because of the negative transfer illustrated in the forgoing passages.

It takes time for the learner to get accustomed to the backward morphological (and frequently phrasal) patterning and way of thinking. Instead of the word order the central function of the verb should be emphasized (presented by speech) from the early language learning for several reasons. On the one hand it is the verb

(provided we have a verbal predicate) that defines the bigger chunks of the sentence (the syntactical frame of the utterance). On the other hand if the verb is taken as the starting point of the predicate (non-verbal predicates are considerably different), the role of the focus, the pre-verbal position of the sentence might be better understood and accented segments better perceived by the learner-hearer (*'Anyám házának az ablaka tört ki. Anyám 'házának az ablaka tört ki. Anyám házának az 'ablaka tört ki.*) Thirdly in vocabulary building the semantic fields, the arguments of the verb ought to be taken into account at first. Why? The reason for this is the incorporated or implied object built into the Hungarian conjugations. It leads us back to the issue of definiteness expressed in our mother tongue redundantly not only by various »definiteness operators«⁷ but by the two Hungarian conjugations.

According to the descriptive explanation of grammar, the selection of the appropriate conjugation operates as an agreement in the Hungarian (as in other Uralic languages, but also in some Bantu languages): definite objects trigger definite conjugation, indefinite ones the indefinite conjugation. It must be added that this agreement (or whatsoever since it is only a partial agreement)⁸ should be processed by the speaker even impossibly where no explicit (overt) object is present in the utterance or in the textual context. What is more, it is exactly the chosen conjugation that may refer to an explicitly omitted (covert) object. How can an object which is not present in the text trigger a conjugation? Furthermore the verbal morpheme referring to the conjugation type might encode the person of the subject, but in the indefinite conjugation in a way far from being transparent it also may signify the possible (first, second or third) persons of objects either present in the sentence or implied. The morphemes of the definitely conjugated verbs always imply third person objects.) As a result it is hard to grasp for foreigners what our conjugations revolve around but the idea of the agreement of the verb with the type of the object is just half of the truth. Regardless to the type of it, the object has an

⁷ Dik 1989, 16.

⁸ Sherwood 2000.

underlying importance in the Hungarian verbal utterances as well as in the morphological composition of the verb because either implied or incorporated in the conjugated verb *the object is constantly present by its slot (empty or filled) in the string*. Thus apart from the various communicative goals the meaning of the used verb in constructing an utterance works as a starting point in forming the verbal core of the sentence.

In a nutshell I may say that even the shortest Hungarian verbal predicates (*Kérsz? Várunk.*) – both transitive and intransitive verbs – incorporate a whole sentence with reference to the subject (usually pronominally present) and reference to the (possible) object(s) – if there are any – as well.⁹ Because of this hidden central role of the Hungarian verbal paradigms foreign learners of Hungarian cannot get by in our language without the firm understanding the semantics of the definite and indefinite conjugation.

But their task is enormous. Even within Hungarian linguistic works the description of our conjugations seems to be improper and unsolved. It has been a long story how our grammarians have made an attempt to characterize the two sets of objects most frequently by their [±] property of being either definite or indefinite. The main problem lies in the fact that examining the usage of the verbal paradigms by native speakers the objects appear in fuzzy sets that cannot be given by definition (intentionally), but one only may provide a list of them (extensionally). The objects enlisted in grammar books constitute morphologically and semantically heterogeneous groups of entities in case of both paradigms: they have various grammatical markers and semantic properties within each group as being definite or indefinite. To give just short examples of the problem of these fuzzy sets of Hungarian objects, let me introduce some contradictory issues that Hungarian grammars have come up with: 1. the »indefinite« conjugation is triggered by fairly definite objects, such as *me, you* and *us, you all*; 2. the terminological designations of the conjugations (as a sign of their essence) have been debated over centuries (*általános, alanyi, tárgyatlan, határozatlan igeragozás* vs. *direct, határozott, tárgyas,*

⁹ Cf. the lesson title in Peter Sherwood's textbook: »... why many Hungarian sentences may consist solely of a single verb form.« (Sherwood 1996, 33)

határozott tárgyas ragozás); 3. the status of a special form used in case of a first person subject and second person object (e. g., *Látlak.*), called implicativus by János Lotz,¹⁰ is not stable: in certain grammars it belongs to the first, in others to the second conjugation; 4. due to the intensive agglutination there is a wide range of Hungarian affixed words which – as objects – being compounds may be considered to be both definite and indefinite and trigger both conjugations: *Látott mindnyájunkat. Látta mindnyájunkat.* The nominal object phrases with an indefinite or definite article (and as such they are always explicit) are more typical instantiations of an indefinite or definite entity, but there are numerous objects appearing as worse instances of the same class being more distant from the central use with less prototypical value.

It is worth examining how the seemingly fuzzy semantic sets of Hungarian object phrases are treated by the generative grammar that operates with dual [\pm] distinctions in the explanation of the syntactic derivation of the sentence. It is the DP or NUMP projection of the object what triggers the verb paradigm and thus the verb form is agreed with the syntactic category of the object it is connected to: determinant or numeral phrase. (The technical terms of the phrases give hints about the origin of the Hungarian articles: the definite article was historically derived from the demonstrative (determinative) *az* and the indefinite article was derived from the singular cardinal *egy.*) In accordance with the empirical data the nominal phrase of the object may appear either under the category of determinants or numerals. Ambiguous usage (object NP-s that can be derived from both NUMP and DP) and the split within the pronominal objects (1st and 2nd person pronominal objects are always treated as indefinite NUMP-s and 3rd person pronominal objects are always DP-s) is not clearly explained in this model.

But how is a DP conceivable for a speaker, for instance for a Polish learner of Hungarian, whose mother tongue has no article? Past experience showed that immense amount of Greek texts were translated into Latin, from a language provided with articles into another having no articles. Cross-linguistic examination confirmed

¹⁰ Lotz 1976; Lotz 1939.

the theoretical assumption that there must be a broader, if not universal, sense of definiteness. Christopher Lyons in his investigation about definiteness claims that »definiteness may be thought of as one of a number of categories which serve to guide the hearer in working out how the discourse is structured and how entities referred to it.«¹¹ At the core of definiteness identifiability is grammaticalized, and despite the fact that definiteness does not exist in all languages, all of them may apply other means to identify the entities. It is worth mentioning that according to Lyons' final conclusion it is the category of person, which is universally incompatible with indefiniteness. In languages having no article definiteness might be carried out by »person-definiteness« and that is why instead of DP there is a good reason for assuming a wide-span category: DefP (definiteness phrase) under K (case) in the top hierarchy of the syntactic structure. This is the preliminary way the speaker without the simplest definite (articles) may give a definite interpretation to certain elements of the discourse (with pronouns, pronominal possessive adjectives in Polish), but also with demonstratives, other forms of possessives, proper nouns, specificity markers (*de dicto*) and through means of more complex definites such as object-verb agreement.

What is new in replacing DP by DefP (definiteness phrase) under case is that definiteness is viewed in a broader sense closer to a choice up to the speaker: if he intends to guide the hearer's attention to arrive at an entity identifiable, provides a definite interpretation of it with such basic means as grammatical persons that grammaticalize the speech situation. Third person indefinite appears as personless needing more precise interpretation: languages usually have several distinctions in the third person (e. g. gender, demonstratives) the ones they never need for the first and second person speech act participant or for the deictic *ő*: **ez én*, **egy ő*, **az ő*. DP and NUMP are only subcategories under DefP. Hopefully ambiguous uses, the availability of both conjugations with certain objects in Hungarian will be better explicable within the DefP theory as well as the indefiniteness of the first and second

¹¹ See Lyons 1999, 48.

person pronominal objects. Definite or indefinite form of the verb is not »triggered« automatically any longer, but the interlocutors should be aware of the conventional limits of the intralinguistic variety of optional definite interpretation (DefP) and its constraints given in a language. The expression of definiteness and indefiniteness is shifted from the morphosyntactical level to the discourse level. The concept of person-definiteness especially in case of the Hungarian might contribute to the decomposition of the traditional paradigmatic constraint in Hungarian which covers the governing principle of persons throughout the two conjugations.

It is a border line in the usage of Hungarian verbs what *meaning* they have, especially of their being either transitive or intransitive, and that also what kind of arguments they might take in the sentence. Foreign speakers cannot escape being aware of the possible arguments of the verb. It is as if the meaning of the Hungarian verb ruled over the syntax. As opposed to the formal selection of the paradigms (the type of verb stem that should be considered at first in Polish verbal inflection), it is the meaning of the Hungarian verb that governs the predicate. Thus the foreign speaker needs to have a fairly different notion of conjugation. The question in Polish is which suffix alternation a certain verb falls to: *pisześ*, **pisaś*, **piszyś*. The same Hungarian verb, *ír* has a prototypically human subject (null-subject if the subject is not accented) but also raises the question how the position after the verbal stem is fulfilled: whether the utterance in terms of the object is about '(ő) *ír* [something]' or '(ő) *írja* [that identifiable thing as object]'. The meaning of this verb apart from peripheral uses excludes human objects: *ír* [**engem*, **téged*], *írja* [**őt*].¹² This crucial semantic specificity makes verbs different: *kér* is prototypically used with human subjects and objects [*engem*, *téged*,] *kéri* [*őt*].¹³ No matter whether the verb needed in the utterance for a certain communicative purpose is transitive or intransitive, the speaker has to face with its typical argument

¹² The unusual meaning as referred peripheral (not prototypical) is often created by verbal prefixes (coverbs): *Teljesen leírták* [*őt*].

¹³ Cf. M. Korchmáros 1977.

structure while defining which verbal paradigm could be used (if any) in simple sentences and what kind of clausal structure is applicable in complex sentences (especially in subordinations).

Ancient Hungarian grammarians of the 16th and 17th century distinguished and treated the verbal and non-verbal predicates discerned in a trivial way: in listing the Hungarian conjugations they always considered the paradigm of *van* (along with the passive paradigm which is nearly died out from our everyday communication) to be an independent conjugation. Even our days it is really useful for practical reasons to treat separately predicates made by the multifunctional *van* or its missing counterpart (no copula). All the rest Hungarian verbs (either transitive or intransitive) raise the problem of the conjugation selection but in use both conjugations are strongly attached to semantic considerations and discourse strategies: the issue of the definiteness of the object.

Intransitive verbs (e. g. the ones with *-ik* ending in terms of morphology, motion verbs in terms of semantics) can be conjugated only according to the indefinite conjugation but their usual adverbial argument structure could be turned into transitive (in its strict sense) by the use of verbal prefixes. The typical arguments of predicates with indefinite verbs: subject; beside the subject: none, adverbs, implied human objects (1st and 2nd person), overt 3rd person indefinite human and non-human objects.

What is astonishingly unusual for foreign speakers that Hungarian transitive verbs can be conjugated according to both conjugations; as old grammarians put it, transitive verbs have an *absolute* and a *non-absolute* (transitive) use. It is a logical paradox that $A = A$ but sometimes $A = B$. In verbal predicates where the transitive verb is conjugated by the indefinite paradigm (e. g. *nézek*) the typical argument structure is solely the subject. In verbal predicates where the transitive verb is conjugated by the definite paradigm the typical arguments are the following: subject and overt or covert 3rd person definite objects. As seen the Hungarian verbal paradigms are incommensurable semantically. No wonder that all the grammatical explanations defining them by dual categories miss the point. What is also unusual and weird is the fact that 1st and 2nd person objects appear as indefinite ones.

At the core of the definite conjugation the definiteness (identifiability) of the 3rd person object is grammaticalized. But in the Hungarian language there is a wider range of means to express definiteness. Except for Bulgarian that uses a suffixed article, Slavonic languages do not have even definiteness operators. Hungarian expresses the notion of definiteness/indefiniteness not only by inherently definite pronouns, definite, indefinite articles, zero article, demonstratives, a set of person affixes, suffixes (e. g. *-ik*) but most of all specifically by »object-definiteness«. The optionally definite object became grammaticalized at a very central place of the Hungarian predicate: in the verbal morphology by means of the two conjugations (*határozatlan* vs. *határozott ragozás*).

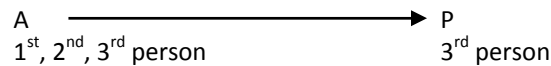
Hungarian conjugations are usually said to be hard to study for foreigners. I have so far made an attempt to demonstrate this difficulty which as I see is far from being a formal problem. Neither morphosyntactic analysis, nor clear-cut dual semantic categories can separate and define the two Hungarian conjugations. The two conjugations of course obey morphophonological rules and transitivity and intransitivity play an important role in their use. But their major goal is to refer to (i.) *potential* and (ii.) *exclusively 3rd person objects*, and it does not matter that the 1st and 2nd person speech act participants may also become objects they are 3rd person objects.

(i.) The degree of the reference to a potential object in terms of identifiability is completely different in the two conjugations. The potential object(s) may happen to appear in the situation or in the common mental space of the interlocutors, participants in the verbal communication but may also be missing from it. It is the degree of the object's identifiability by the hearer as well as the speaker what plays a crucial role in the selection of the conjugations. Essentially nothing except for the discourse strategy (what the speaker is aimed at and what the speaker assumes about the hearer) defines which conjugation to choose in a certain discourse situation. Sitting at a table both *Kérsz?* and *Kéred?* can be correct grammatically as well as in terms of communicative appropriateness. The prototypical use of the conjugations does not operate as an agreement but it is fairly optional. Fundamentally the selection is

defined by the speaker's intentions to what extent he wants himself and the hearer to identify the object (if there is any needed). If the speaker applies the conjugations for non-prototypical cases, then the less typical the object is, the more redundant the conjugation becomes because of the doubled definite/indefinite reference done by the simultaneous use of the conjugations and the overt indefinite and definite object marking. Non-redundant (prototypical), that is economical use of them has an important role in the discourse.¹⁴

(ii.) The two conjugations make a split within the grammatical category of the 3rd person (3rd person definite and personless indefinite), and if the 1st and 2nd person speech act participants become objects, they can be both indefinite (via conjugation implications) and definite (inherently). How is it possible? How speech act participants (the speaker and the hearer) can be conceived once as indefinite as objects and at another time definite? To understand this issue one needs again a *backward* thinking, backward conceptualization of the action represented by the Hungarian predicate.

To cut a long story short I claim the way a transitive action is conceptualized in our language can never be reflexive, but *the other way round*, is always irreflexive.



Conceiving the transitive action as an energy or information transfer between the Agent and the Patient, the Agent can never act on *me* or *you*, *mnie* or *ciebie*. In the Hungarian language the Patient acted on is always *him* or *her*, *(je)go* or *jq* (a 3rd person entity). Even in cases (when the speech act participants themselves undergo the action as objects), that is, when the action is reflexive and the Agent is acting on *himself*, *herself* or *siebie*, in Hungarian the Patient who is acted on conceived as a 3rd person entity who is never the same as *me* and *you*:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>en</i> -[g]- <i>em</i> [≠ <i>én</i> - <i>t</i>], <i>te</i> -[g]- <i>ed</i> [≠ <i>te</i> - <i>t</i>] | <i>(én)</i> <i>mag-am</i> [≠ <i>én</i> - <i>t</i>], <i>(te)</i> <i>mag-ad</i> [≠ <i>te</i> - <i>t</i>] |
|---|---|

¹⁴ Cf. Hegedűs 2005.

As illustrated here the 1st and 2nd person pronominal objects are conceptualized as possessed nominals morphologically because what is possessed and thus alienated, made distal, semantically is always a 3rd person entity. They appear without the accusative marker *-t* (*en-[g]-em*) as opposed to the inherently distal 3rd person *ő-t* and the nominals marked with the accusative *-t*: *almá-t*. In the Hungarian way of the conceptualization of the transitive clauses the energy transfer always arrives at 3rd person entities. Transitivity in Hungarian has a special direction to 3rd person objects.

This is a fixed way of order a./ how entities are marked for accusative case in Hungarian and a fixed way b./ how transitive action is conceptualized. *The morphological composition is a topological mapping of the way how nominal or pronominal referents are conceptualized in the process of agglutination: empty slots of the morpheme string have a meaning.*

The basic and trivial rules are as follows: a./ no suffix added to the right end of the pronominal or nominal morpheme string is allowed to change the person of the 3rd person stem. (That is why Lotz called the nominals marked for possession as ›relative nominal base‹.¹⁵) Likewise the same stands for the verbal stem as well: b./ the first suffix that can be added to the right end of the verbal morpheme string always marks an identifiable object (if there is an object).

The speaker is the agglutinator who progressing forward, following a temporal linearity of time onward (in terms of the written topology spatially to the right) but needs a constant *feedback* to the stem's meaning to process backward all the semantic modifications the agglutinations convey. That is why Hungarian speech is a speech backward: *fordítva*.

Translation is like finding the proper path in the woods lit by grammar. It is preferable to take such a path in the source and the target language which are naturally offered. The translator is expected to explore and find grammatical habits and ways of the target language structures in order to convey the original meaning for the substitution of the minus structures in the source language.

¹⁵ Lotz 1976.

Translation is almost as if being in two forests at the same time. The translation of Hungarian definite constructions that appear as minus structures in other languages reveals that translation is never mere transformation of structures to another, but it is rather identification and translation of compact thoughts with firm intentions. Each language constrains its speakers to say things in certain ways. If it is said *the other way round*, *fordítva*, it must be said so. The motive for translation is a strong belief that the identity and the mother tongue of the speaker might be *somehow* shared.

Pécsi Tudományegyetem
weber@art.pte.hu

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