

Péter Rebrus

Research Institute for Linguistics,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences (RIL HAS)

Theoretical Linguistics Programme,
ELTE – HAS

Address: Budapest
Benczúr u. 33.
H-1068 Hungary

Miklós Törkenczy

Research Institute for Linguistics,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences (RIL HAS)

English Linguistics Department,
Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE)

Theoretical Linguistics Programme,
ELTE – HAS

Paradigmatic contrast effects and morphological variation in Hungarian

The structure of Hungarian words mostly follows an agglutinative pattern, i.e. most of the complex forms can be analysed as concatenations of stems and affixes. Morpheme alternations are usually described as results of morphological and phonological regularities applied to these concatenations. However, there are cases where ‘lexical allomorphs’ occur, i. e. the suffix allomorphs do not have a generalisable underlying form. Traditionally (in standard derivational and OT analyses), they were considered to be morphological exceptions, i.e. to fall outside phonology proper. However, these forms do display regularities that are not independent of the phonological pattern of the language. Recent analyses have shown that some of these ‘irregularities’ can be explained with reference to output-output correspondence between surface forms which express *paradigmatic uniformity* and *contrast* requirements.

This phenomenon is especially interesting in the case of Hungarian for two reasons. On the one hand, it is necessary to assume that separate uniformity/contrast constraints apply within the different morphosyntactic dimensions of the paradigm and that these constraints (and certain markedness constraints) conflict. On the other hand, dialectal, substandard or informal variants of verbal suffixes mostly occur at those points of the paradigm where the lexical/irregular allomorphs occur. In this talk we claim that these two phenomena are not independent: both the occurrence of irregular allomorphs and the occurrence of suffix variants are the results of an *optimisation* between paradigmatic contrast constraints and morphological/phonological markedness constraints. *Variation* takes place in the paradigm if contrast constraints are violated, i. e. when (potential) *homophony* occurs between different morphological forms. Consider the data below (these suffix variations are pervasive and occur in populous and open classes of verbal stems).

forms with regular suffixes (no variation)

standard forms with 'irregular' suffixes, variants

esz-em 'I eat **it**'

fess-ük 'that we paint it (**subjunctive**)'

akar-ná-k 'they would want **it**'

akar-ná-nk 'we would want **sg.**'

akar-j-a 'that s/he wants it (**subjunctive**)'

teker-j-e 'that s/he turns it (**subjunctive**)'

%esz-em %esz-ek 'I eat (**something**)'

fest-jük %fess-ük 'we paint it (**indicative**)'

akar-nék %akar-ná-k 'I would want **sg.**'

akar-ná-nk %akar-nók %akar-ná-juk 'we would want **it**'

akar-ja %akar-i 's/he wants it (**indicative**)'

teker-i, %teker-je 's/he turns it (**indicative**)'

In the proposed analysis we show that these alternations are explicable with reference to the requirement of paradigmatic uniformity and contrast: irregular alternation is due to a strategy to avoid homophony. This avoidance strategy has universal and arbitrary aspects. Variants within one language show arbitrariness. Universal tendencies result from the universal markedness hierarchy

PERSON/NUMBER > > TENSE/MOOD > > DEFINITENESS

which is the ranking of the paradigmatic contrast constraints relativised to the relevant morphological dimensions.