

TAM in Ugric—Ferenc Kiefer

I. TENSE

1. Hungarian

1.1. Modern Hungarian

Past – Nonpast

mond ‘he/she says’ ---- *mond-ott* ‘he/she said’

1.2. Old Hungarian

mond – simple present

mondott – present perfect

monda – simple past

mond vala – past imperfective

mondott vala – past perfect

Present perfect: the speaker focuses on the resultant state of a past event, which is still in effect at the time of the utterance. Corresponds essentially to the English present perfect.

Simple past: it was used to describe past events which are not related to the present. This is the tense of story telling by a non-participant.

Past imperfective: it marked past habitual or it provided the background for another event.

Past perfect: it was used to describe a past event which occurred prior to another past event.

The Old Hungarian system disappeared in Standard Hungarian by the end of the 19th century, but the breaking down of the old system started much earlier. Aspect marking by means of particles can be found in the earliest Hungarian texts. From the 15th century onwards we find more and more particles. Aspect marking by verbal particles replaced the old system.

Similar development in some other languages, e.g. Slavic, Lovāri. In the case of Lovāri it is clearly a contact-induced change.

Why do (some) languages prefer preverb-systems to tense-systems?

2. Vogul

Past – Nonpast

s is the Past Tense, *γ* the Nonpast suffix

Questions: Was there an old system with more past tense forms? If so, Vogul is expected to have dialectal variation with respect to the number of past tense forms.

3. Ostyak

3.1. Old Ostyak

Present – Perfect – Imperfective

The corresponding (reconstructed) suffixes are **l*, *Ø* and **s*

3.2. Dialectal differences

Some have kept the old system, others have lost either the perfect or the imperfect.

Some dialects (V and Vj) have developed two past tense forms, which are used in narrative discourse, one form for relating events which happened in the remote past, the other one is used in dialogues: Perfectum historicum: the suffix is *γäl*; and imperfectum historicum: the suffix is *γäs*.

How can the development of new past tense forms be explained (esp. in view of the fact that they are used in narrative discourse only)?

What happens if the perfect meaning or the imperfective meaning gets lost, how is it expressed? (Four dialects out of nine don't seem to have a perfect, in two dialects there is no imperfect, and in two dialects the imperfect is optional (whatever this means)).

II. ASPECT

1. Hungarian

1.1. Old Hungarian

Aspect marking by means of tense and adverbials. No morphological aktionsarten.

1.2. Modern Hungarian

Aspect marking by verbal particles and compositionally.

The perfective aspect is normally associated with an aktionsart-meaning („actionality”).

At least ten productive aktionsarten can be derived by means of preverbs; the aktionsarten follow by and large the Slavic pattern.

2. Ostyak

Aspect marking by means of preverbs, which can be separated from the base verb but cannot occur postverbally. Most preverbs have a directional meaning: *il-panwel* 'put down' (diacritics omitted).

Some Ostyak aktionsarten: (a) iterative *kär-i* 'turn around repeatedly'; ingressive *koli-m* 'start coughing', diminutive *pose-γ* 'rain in small drops'.

3. Vogul

Aspect marking by means of preverbs, which can be separated from the base verb and can also occur postverbally. Most preverbs have a directional meaning: e.g. *kon-kwāi* 'go out'.

Some Vogul aktionsarten: ingressive *jekwe-lt-i* 'start dancing'; diminutive *uje-l-i* 'swim around a little bit'; iterative *jōηχα-s-i* 'tossing and turning'

In contrast to Hungarian Ostyak and Vogul preverbs are not used to express aktionsarten. Ostyak and Vogul seem to be more like Finnic in this respect. This similarity is reinforced by the fact that in Hungarian it is only possible to derive imperfective aktionsarten by means of suffixation. Ostyak and Vogul have derivational suffixes for both perfective and imperfective aktionsarten in the same way as does Finnish and Estonian.

Common features in Ostyak and Vogul: no verbal prefixation, perfectivization by means of particles, restricted number of aktionsarten expressed by suffixation.

MODALITY

1. Hungarian

Possibility suffix for possibility, an auxiliary for necessity. For epistemic possibility a considerable number of modal adverbs. The difference between subjective ('inferential') and objective epistemic possibility is marked by means of word order and stress: *beteg lehet* 'he/she is perhaps ill' – *lehet beteg* 'it is possible (not excluded) that he/she is ill', *a könyvtárban dolgozhat* 'he/she is perhaps working in the library' – *dolgozhat a könyvtárban* 'it is possible that he/she works in the library'. The latter can also have a deontic reading.

The subjective reading is also possible in the case of necessity: *ilyenkor már otthon kell lennie* 'he/she must be already at home at that time'. No difference in word order in the case of the two readings.

The verb *tud* 'know' can be used to express circumstantial possibility such as in *Bécsben tudsz majd sörözni* 'In Vienna the circumstances will be such that you will be able to drink beer'.

2. Ostyak and Vogul

No possibility suffix.

The verb *mas-* 'must' in Ostyak has no epistemic reading; it has a reading corresponding to 'need' as in 'I need you', and a modal reading as in 'I must go'.

The Hungarian verb *tud* has two equivalents in Ob-Ugric, one for 'know', the other one for 'be able to', no possibility reading.

In Ostyak uncertainty ('perhaps') is expressed by a particle attached to the finite verb, e.g. *mä mēnəm ke* 'perhaps, I'll go'. It is sometimes considered as one of the moods ('potentialis', cf. Honti 1984).

Nikolaeva speaks of an evidential mood (with respect to Northern Ostyak) with the following 'deduceable' meanings: hearsay, resultative, inferential and mirative (Nikolaeva 1999).

Differences between Hungarian and Ob-Ugric: Hungarian more German-like, Ob-Ugric more Finnic like with respect to modality.

Cf. the German equivalents of the Hungarian examples: *Er kann 'krank sein – Er 'kann krank sein, Er kann in der Bibliothek arbeiten, Er muß um diese Zeit zu Hause sein.*