

Theses of doctoral (PhD) dissertation

**A CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR
APPROACH TO DEMONSTRATIVES**

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1. The aim and the background of the thesis

This thesis aims to explore and describe the conventionalized uses of Hungarian demonstratives in the usage-based Construction Grammar framework. The comprehensive term *demonstratívum* ‘demonstrative’ covers all the following well-known categories used in Hungarian grammars and dictionaries: *főnévi mutató névmások* ‘demonstrative pronouns’, *melléknévi mutató névmások* ‘demonstrative adjectives’, *határozói mutató névmások/ mutató névmási határozószók* ‘demonstrative proadverbs’, and *határozóragos mutató névmások* ‘demonstrative pronouns, demonstrative adjectives with adverbial suffix’. The linguistic items belonging to these categories share the morphological characteristic of being organized in front-vowel ‘proximal’ vs back vowel ‘distal’ contrastive pairs (*ez/az* ‘this/that’, *ilyen/olyan* ‘of this kind/of that kind’, *így/úgy* ‘in this way/in that way’).

The dissertation focuses on the demonstratives *az/ez* ‘that/this’, the morphologically reinforced *amaz/emez*, *azon/ezen*, and their derived forms *azután, azután*, ‘after that, then’, *azért* ‘because of that’. It describes the constructions these forms are hosted by and reveals the relationships of the constructions under examination with other constructions, using the tools and explanations provided by Construction Grammar.

2. Research method

Following the usage-based model of language, I adopted a corpus-based approach. The starting point of the research was detecting and identifying systematic recurring patterns which I considered constructions. I collected data from Hungarian Historical Corpus (HHC) from which I selected sources from the time period ~1900–2010 (The corpus at present contains texts from 1772 to 2010). Though the recognition of recurring patterns required studying considerable amount of data, I conducted a qualitative investigation. I identified and described prototypical and typical constructions as well as peripheral ones, according to the principle of Construction Grammar that each construction is to be regarded as having equal significance.

3. The structure and the main theses of the dissertation

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the notion of construction and provides a brief summary of the theoretical background of the research by listing the main assumptions of Construction Grammar (henceforth CxG). Among the various constructionist approaches it gives an outline of the usage-based CxG approaches whose findings are in line with my results (Goldberg 1995, 2006, Croft 2001, Croft & van Lier 2012; Diessel 2015, 2017).

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the theoretical issue of deixis, discourse deixis and anaphor. There is agreement among functional linguists

that the basic function of demonstratives is deixis. However, there is no consensus among researchers of deixis regarding the status of anaphor as a deictic or a non-deictic function. Following Halliday & Hasan (1979) exophoric and endophoric deictic functions are distinguished depending on the fact whether the context in which the referent of the deictic expression is accessible is extra textual or intra textual, respectively. Discourse deixis is undoubtedly endophoric deixis, viewed as one of the basic deictic types (among space, time, person /or social deixis) in functional linguistics, covering the expressions referring to the actual discourse or to one of its elements. Anaphora is a kind of coreference: anaphoric demonstratives which are coreferent with a prior linguistic expression (the antecedent) are deictic in nature as are discourse deictic demonstratives, because they refer to something mentioned in the surrounding text, the context.

Taking into account the most cited approaches to deixis and anaphor in the literature (e.g. Levinson 2004, Laczko 2008, 2010, 2021) as well as the observations obtained from my corpus-based investigation, I made the claims that

1. anaphoric expressions are deictic;
2. anaphor and discourse deixis are both endophoric deictic categories; there is no point in distinguishing anaphor and discourse deixis for semantic, syntactic, or pragmatic reasons;

3. regular patterns containing either the distal or the proximal demonstratives can be accounted for by constructional features rather than the discourse deixis vs anaphor distinction.

The results of the investigation of the distribution of the Hungarian proximal and distal demonstrative forms are the following. Within endophoric deixis the choice of the proximal versus distal form of the demonstrative is regulated by the deictic or conceptual distance. The referential point in endophoric reference is the deictic centre. Deixis is made from this deictic centre to the parts of discourse taken proximal in space (or time) by signing locations, positions in space (or time): the front vowel (proximal) form refers to a part located close to the deictic origo.

This is the default endophoric deixis, which is the metaphorical extension of exophoric spatial deixis.

However, there are discourse circumstances which override this default setting and motivate the use of the distal form. In endophoric deixis the distal form marks either spatial (/ time) distance in the discourse space (/ process), or conceptual distance.

An entity in the discourse is conceptually distal if:

- i) the speaker's attitude is negative to it. In this case, the distal form expresses contempt, aversion, or refusal.
- ii) it happened in the past. In this case, opting for the back-vowel form reflects the effect of time deixis in endophoric deixis as well.

iii) it has not happened (yet), or cannot be taken for granted at the time of the utterance, but is assumed or imagined;

iv) it is the utterance or the assumption of the other interlocutor(s);

v) it is a discourse participant (other than the speaker and the hearer) newly introduced in the discourse, and consequently not being in the (syntactic and pragmatic) position of the discourse topic (at this first occurrence), and not being the most accessible entity at the time of the utterance.

There is no ranking in these discourse pragmatic factors. If they conflict, the preference of a demonstrative form is not predictable. This unpredictability accounts for the fact that both demonstrative forms are acceptable under very similar, or even identical grammatical and pragmatic discourse conditions which is a crucial observation of the investigation.

Chapter 3 is a comprehensive description of the adnominal construction of the demonstrative *az/ez*. in which the demonstrative morphologically agrees with the nominal expression and the definite article *a(z)* is obligatorily placed immediately after the demonstrative ($[ez/az_{Agr} > a(z) > NP_{Agr}]$ e.g. *az(oka)t a könyve(ke)t* ‘that book’/‘those books’). This structure is discussed from various aspects in many studies on the Hungarian nominal phrase, so the different approaches could be compared here. Traditionally, the pragma-semantic role of the demonstrative in this construction is called *kijelölő jelző* ‘selecting attributive’. This term indicates that

there is a set of alternatives, from which the demonstrative determiner distinguishes one or more items. However, studying data in their larger context lead to the claim that the selecting function is associated to the demonstrative determiner only under certain structural and usage conditions, as an addition to their basic deictic ‘demonstrating’ meaning. What these formal and functional conditions share is the contrasting meaning, which is inherited by the adnominal demonstrative construction. I explored and listed the contrasting constructions which are compatible with the adnominal demonstrative.

Therefore, selecting is not a semantic feature of the ($[ez/az_{Agr} > a(z) > NP_{Agr}]$ construction, but an inherited property of some contrasting context as a result of multiple inheritance which allows for a specific construction to inherit from more than one superordinate construction. As a conclusion, I proposed the term adnominal instead of „*kijelölő*” for the demonstrative modifier (cf. Diessel 1999).

Then I identified the non-compositional subconstructions of the adnominal demonstrative construction. These are the recognitional construction $[az_{Agr} > a(z) > NP_{Agr}]$ (e.g. *Mi a helyzet azzal a disszertációval?* ‘How are things going with that dissertation?’); and the $[Az t > a(z) > NP_{(j)á/ét} !]$ (e.g. *Azt a mindenit!* lit. ‘that.acc the everything.acc’ ~ ‘Oh, my gosh!’) exclamation construction.

Moreover, the chapter presents a partial constructional network of the adnominal demonstratives. The $[az/ez_{Agr} > a(z) > NP_{Agr}]$

construction is represented on the one hand as a subordinate construction of the general, more schematic adnominal construction, and on the other hand as a superordinate construction of every construct of its form. Besides this kind of hierarchical inheritance links, I also found overlapping and complementary patterns. The most obvious non-vertical relationship is that the $[az/ez_{Agr} > a(z) > NP_{Agr}]$ construction is in a complementary horizontal relation with the other adnominal demonstrative constructions, which host other nominal demonstrative forms $[emez/amaz_{Agr} > a(z) > NP_{Agr}]$, among which in three constructions the morphological agreement is missing: $[ezen/azon > NP]$, $[eme(z)/ama(z) > NP]$, $[e(z)/a(z) > NP]$. The investigation thus confirmed the network principle of CxG, which states that grammar consists of a repertoire of constructions, which are organized in networks of inheritance and horizontal relationships.

The last section of Chapter 3 proves the constructional approach to be applicable in historical linguistics as well. When discussing the development of the $([az/ez_{Agr} > a(z) > NP_{Agr}])$ demonstrative construction, I had recourse to previous diachronic studies (Dömötör 2008; Egedi 2014, 2015; I. Gallasy 1991, 1992), but completed their results with a constructional approach applied in grammaticalization theory (Bergs & Diewald 2008; Traugott 2003; Traugott & Trousdale 2013). The connection of the grammaticalization of the nominal phrase modified by the demonstrative pronoun with the nominal phrase modified by the definite article is detected in many languages. In the Hungarian process I observed most of the changes

attested universally in the grammaticalization of demonstratives (Diessel 1999: 115–159): disappearance of the exophoric function and of the deictic contrast, syntactic binding, becoming obligatory to form a grammatical construction, loss in ability to inflect, phonological reduction, becoming restricted to either the distal or the proximal form.

From investigating the evolution of the adnominal demonstrative construction involving a definite article and morphological agreement it was concluded that it was a gradual process, and can be represented as a chain of transitions between constructions.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 discover the functional spectrum of *aztán*, and of *azért*, respectively. The analyses of the corpus data provided empirical evidence for the conceptual basis of the dissertation, namely that the multifunctionality, i.e. the different functions of demonstratives can be explained and described in terms of the different structural and pragmatic environments which define recurring patterns. These recurring patterns are considered constructions based on the fundamental claim of CxG about linguistic structure, namely, that the defining properties of a grammatical pattern form a conventional pairing of form and function.

Both *aztán* and *azért* are parts of transparent (compositional) constructions due to their pronominal deictic origin ('az' + 'után', 'az' + '-ért') as well as of non-compositional constructions in which

they have discourse pragmatic functions. In the case of *aztán*, compositional uses are related to the order meaning ('following that' either in time, sequence, or priority). In these functions *aztán* is interchangeable with *azután*, and even with *utána*. Regarding the non-compositional uses I identified four sentence constructions, in which *aztán* is pragmaticalized to various degrees. Among these I gave a thorough description of the construction [[(contrastive) topic] > *aztán* > [[focus] predicate]], which is a specific [topic > predicate] sentence construction associated with a subjective degree marking interpretation, and in particular of its special subconstruction, the exclamative construction [*Ez/Az aztán a(z) > NP!*] (e.g.. *Ez aztán a férfi!*).

The starting point of the analysis in Chapter 5 is that the functional spectrum of *azért* is strikingly similar to that of *aztán*. Their multifunctionality is in line with a general tendency for items to move from the propositional through the textual, to the expressive level of discourse (Traugott 1982, 1995). The propositional meaning in the case of *azért* is related to causality and/or contrast, and corresponds to adverbial position. When it has taken up textual and/or expressive functions, *azért* satisfies some or all of the criteria of discourse markers (DMs) (Dér 2010; Furkó 2007, 2020). In accordance with the model proposed in Furkó (2007), which takes the functional class of DMs as a graded category, and individual members of this class being on different stages of pragmaticalization, I outlined the sequence of constructions of *azért* as a process of

pragmaticalization whereby it moves along the propositional < textual < expressive cline.

Chapter 6 summarizes the results of the research, and gives a brief overview of the remaining questions that are open for future research.

This dissertation fills a gap in the description of demonstratives, both from a theoretical and from a practical point of view. Its practical contribution to the description of Hungarian language are the analyses of the constructions hosting the demonstrative *az/ez* and their derived forms. Its theoretical contribution on the one hand is the constructionist approach, which so far has not been applied systematically when describing the functional and formal properties of the class of demonstratives. On the other hand, supported by corpus data, the thesis aimed to delineate more subtly the relationship between deixis, anaphor, and discourse deixis. Lastly, from a methodological point of view it confirms the appropriateness of the corpus-based investigation in identifying recurring patterns, because in most cases contextual (structural and situational) information is needed to define a grammatical pattern, i.e. a construction.

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