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The Place of the Hungarian Language in the World of Linguistics

Abstract

The Hungarian language has played a decisive role in the history of Uralic language studies. Nevertheless, it is in many respects an untypical Uralic language, displaying a unique combination of genetically and areally conditioned structural features. In this paper, some examples of these features are analysed, in order to illustrate the often misunderstood complexity of historical and areal factors.

Keywords: Hungarian language, linguistic typology, European languages, Standard Average European, Uralic languages.

1. Pre-scientific views on Hungarian

In Hungary, as in many other European countries, the romantic nation-state project rested heavily (and partly still rests) on early relativism and what has since then been called the ethnolinguistic assumption: the idea that ethnicity is an organic whole in which language, culture, mentality and world view are interconnected. Therefore, celebrating the uniqueness of the national language was and still is an essential part of nationalist identity-building, of elevating one's own nation above others. While linguists since the 19th century have hardly ever questioned the axiom that all natural languages, based on universal mechanisms

of the human mind, are at the same level as concerns their power of expression, many laymen are still emotionally attached to the idea of a certain language – typically, their own language – being "richer", "more complex", "more logical" or "more developed" than all the others.

The Hungarian language, completely unrelated to all its neighbours and lacking close relatives, is particularly well suited for such uniqueness myths. Interestingly enough, in Hungary these myths can happily coexist with other non-mainstream ideas about the genealogical affiliation of Hungarian, i.e. pseudolinguistic comparisons with Sumerian, Etruscan, Japanese, Old Egyptian, Turkish, or practically any language of the world. Such pseudolinguistic comparisons are often combined with conspiracy theories: the Finno-Ugric relatedness of Hungarian, it is claimed, was an evil scheme – first developed by the Habsburg rulers, then taken over by the Communists – to humiliate the proud Magyars and obliterate their true, glorious history. These ideas, a true *hungaricum* in that they are almost exclusively practised in Hungary or in Hungarian minority or diaspora communities, have very little to do with language or linguistics (cf. Szeverényi 2015: 121). They are motivated by a romantic, holistic view of nationhood (for studies on different aspects of this phenomenon, see Bakró-Nagy (ed.) 2018) and need not concern us here. However, the idea of Hungarian as a language exceptional in some sense is a wider question.

In the perception of non-linguists, either Hungarians or non-Hungarians, the all too obvious differences between the grammars and vocabularies of Hungarian and major European languages easily turn into evidence of the exceptional nature of Hungarian. On various Internet fora and in social media, statements to that effect, by Hungarians and non-Hungarians, are still actively circulated. For example: the mathematician János Bolyai thought of Hungarian as a "perfect" language, also because he believed it to be one of the most ancient languages in the world (Barotányi 2019); the physicist Ede (Edward) Teller credited his Hungarian mother tongue for his achievements in science, while his compatriot and colleague Leó Szilárd with his humorous remark gave rise to the mythology

about the extraterrestrial origin of the numerous eminent Hungarian scientists in America and their mysterious language ("the Martians", Marx 2000); various foreign scientists, authors and other famous persons have praised Hungarian for its aesthetic qualities, for the exceptional richness of its lexicon or its alleged ability to express very fine semantic nuances. Examples, or even collections of examples, are easy to find with a simple Internet search; many such quotations are fabricated or misinterpreted (see e.g. elhe taifin et al. 2012).

Beyond simple nationalist motivations, this folk-linguistic exceptionalism also illustrates a more general problem: when speaking about languages, non-linguists, lacking proper terminological tools, often remain captive of metaphors taken at face value. In the popular discourse around the Hungarian language, four such metaphors often emerge and lead to questionable corollaries:

1. *A language is an ethnic attribute.* The Hungarian language is, above all, the marker and carrier of a Hungarian ethnic identity. It is transmitted from parents to their biological children, together with cultural and genetic features, and it is organically connected to the national mentality or the "Hungarian way of thinking". The purported exceptional features of the Hungarian language are a matter of national pride. Hungarians' particular skills in complex thinking are reflected in their language, or vice versa.

2. *A language is a tool of communication.* Languages can be more or less efficient, more or less useful. An "exotic" or "unique" language like Hungarian can be seen as exceptionally efficient and powerful. On the other hand, less well taught and studied languages like Hungarian, especially if they are perceived as particularly complicated and difficult to learn, have less practical value in international comparison.

3. *A language is a living organism.* Languages arise, grow, flourish, and then decay towards their "natural" death. Some languages are "old", others are "young"; "old" languages such as Hungarian have

resisted decay and death more successfully than others, which proves their superiority.

4. *A language is a mechanism consisting of interconnected parts, like a clockwork.* The construction of such a system and, therefore, language correctness as well, is a matter of logical relations.

These metaphors are not patently untrue; they are based on observations of language and language-related behaviour, and to some extent, they have even been applied in serious linguistic research. However, academic linguistics today does not accept any of them in their literal interpretation. Linguists know that languages are used in the construction of ethnic identities but they do not run in one's blood or DNA. They know that languages are used not only as tools of communication, that all natural languages in historical terms are equally young or old, that languages do not have life cycles ending with a natural death, and that rather than clockwork precision, natural languages in the course of their evolution have developed functionally unmotivated or even dysfunctional features. In particular, the wide-spread uniqueness myths are incompatible with the basic tenets of mainstream linguistics.

However, not only laymen can fall victim to myths and misinformation. It is a well-known fact that in linguistic literature, outdated and erroneous information about less well-known languages is still being circulated. Engh's (2009) collection of examples from Norwegian used in English-language general linguistic literature covers the whole spectrum from slight orthographic errors to bizarre nonsense, non-existing elements, and coarsely ungrammatical constructions. If this happens to a well-researched and cultivated Germanic language, then we can expect that a language like Hungarian, whose making and genetic backgrounds are far less widely known, will even more probably be misrepresented by well-meaning but ignorant professional linguists.

To mention just one case: the chapter on "Hungarian and the Ugric languages" (Tambovtsev 2004) in an *Encyclopedia of Linguistics* issued by a renowned

publishing house contains numerous fairly bizarre statements. For instance, the author claims that Hungarian has a great number of Slavic borrowings "especially from Slovak and Russian". Now among the indeed numerous Slavic borrowings in Hungarian, Russian lexemes are few and represent the same modern ecological, cultural and political exoticisms which are present everywhere in Europe, such as *tundra* (which, by the way, is a Saami loanword in Russian, see G. Bogár 2004), *vodka,* or *kolhoz.* The same article states that Hungarian only began to "develop without strong foreign influences" in 1918, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Here, the author is not only overinterpreting a direct correlation between political independence and language contacts, he is also blissfully ignorant of the position of Hungarian as an official state language from 1844 on and of the strong puristic language planning which began already before that. These two examples should suffice to show how in the case of Hungarian, the normal quality control mechanisms of a linguistic publication can fail quite spectacularly.

2. The Hungarian language in academic teaching and research worldwide

Linguistics as a discipline in its own right, focusing on the structure of language independently of its artistic and rhetoric uses, was first professionalized and institutionalized during the 19th century. These processes coincided with the development of the comparative method in historical linguistics. This, in turn, was prompted by the discovery of distant linguistic relatedness beyond intelligibility or visible similarity: the understanding of the fact that languages change with time took comparative language studies to a new level, beyond superficial comparisons between existing languages. As described in almost every handbook of historical linguistics, Sir William Jones in his famous speech in 1786 presented the crucial discovery that Latin, Greek and Sanskrit display systematic similarities which can be explained by deriving them "from some common source which, perhaps, no longer exists". In fact, János Sajnovics in his *Demonstratio* already in 1770 had understood the same principle in comparing Hungarian and Saami (see e.g. Stipa

1990: 209–212), and from those very beginnings on, comparative Indo-European and comparative Finno-Ugric linguistics developed in constant interaction (see e.g. Campbell & Poser 2008: 94). By way of its essential role in Finno-Ugric language comparisons, Hungarian, the greatest and best-known language in its language family, therefore acquired a firm position in the emerging discipline of historical linguistics in the modern sense of the word.

Outside the realm of historical-comparative linguistics, the study of the Hungarian language developed and established its position in academia largely in the same way as other modern European philologies. In the course of the professionalization of linguistic studies, gradually also dialectology and descriptive linguistics, philological studies of the written language and applied linguistics (language planning, language teaching) emerged in their institutionalized forms. The professionalization of linguistics led to the growing separation of "linguistic science" from the philological tradition, i.e. the study of texts and text-based culture. This development, however, was partly hindered or countered by ethnopolitical processes.

During the 19th century, as mentioned above, the emerging nation-state projects often invoked holistic ideas of a romantic *Volksgeist* underlying both the national language and other aspects of national identity-building (cf. Leerssen 2013). In Hungary as well, while Hungarian developed into a modern state language, the study of Hungarian began to be understood as a discipline of special national importance *(nemzeti tudomány;* see e.g. Cser 2006). After 1920, as a reaction to the general feeling of ethno-cultural endangerment and as an academic framework for the promotion of Hungarian philology outside Hungary, the concept of *Hungarologie* emerged as an international field of studies. Across Europe, university departments, institutes, Hungarian seminars and Hungarian cultural centres were founded, often with the support of the state of Hungary. In parallel with these developments, the interpretations, goals, and purposes of *Hungarian Studies (Hungarologie)* have been discussed in a plethora of studies (see, e.g., Nádor ed. 1990, Kovács 2008).

The academic institutionalization of Hungarian studies abroad, as with modern philologies in general, is characterized by the inevitable but uneasy union of "language" (theoretical or historical linguistics, teaching of practical language skills) and "culture" (diverse contents from political history to folk music). These elements of *Hungarologie,* once connected by the romantic nationalist idea of a unified *Volksgeist,* are now kept together by practical, financial, and political factors. Hungarian language courses are needed by linguists and literature scholars alike, while many students (again, this is typical of modern philologies in general) come to Hungarian studies driven by a holistic, often personal interest in everything Hungarian, without more specific ideas about which lines of linguistic, literary or cultural studies they might want to pursue. This kind of a holistic image-building, in which Hungarian studies comprise everything connected to Hungary, therefore fits in with the interests of students and the general public. However, emphasizing the national connections may reduce Hungarian studies into a means of Hungarian cultural diplomacy and nation-branding, and this, in turn, might jeopardize the scholarly integrity and quality of research (see the debate of Sárközy 2017 and Laakso 2017).

Beyond the holistic and cultural motivations, linguistic research into Hungarian outside Hungary has typically been practised either from the viewpoint of historical-comparative linguistics, i.e. Finno-Ugric studies, or within "modern" general linguistics. The latter framework, in Hungary often termed *elméleti nyelvészet* ('theoretical linguistics'), is characterized by the dominance of formalist-generativist (Chomskyan) approaches, which have played a central role in Hungarian linguistics since the late 1960s – even if there are also many important and internationally renowned psycho-, socio- and cognitive linguists doing research on various aspects of the Hungarian language. (To mention but one example of the latter: the seminal work of Susan Gal (1979) on the Hungarian minority in Burgenland, Austria, is still read and quoted in numerous studies on language shift.)

The Hungarian language, with its discourse-configurational word order and its detachable preverbs allowing for even more word order variants, and with its completely grammaticalized system of definite and indefinite articles (thanks to them, the concept of "definiteness" can be understood in a fairly simple and straightforward way), turned out to be an ideal object of study for generative linguists. From the point of view of a theory which focuses on the linear order of constituents and its interplay with the logical structure of sentences, Hungarian is particularly interesting, as its word order variation can encode not only information structure but also the scope of quantifiers and operators. An example from É. Kiss (2002: 109) shows how word order variants encode differences which in many other languages can only be expressed by adding explicit markers or rearranging the whole sentence.

(1) *Sok / számos fiú felemelte a zongorát.*
 'Many / numerous boys (each) lifted up the piano.'

(2) *Sok / számos fiú emelte fel a zongorát.*
 'It was many / numerous boys who lifted up the piano.'

For those linguists who see the importance and fascination of linguistics in this kind of subtleties at the interface of language and formal logic, Hungarian is indeed "a language which wears its logical form on its sleeve". This famous quip by Anna Szabolcsi (see e.g. Kenesei 2018: xiii) has been quoted in numerous studies since the 1980s and probably helped the Hungarian language to a certain fame among generative linguists around the world.

3. Hungarian as a European language

Even serious professional linguists seem to take pride in the fact that "Hungarian has many features unknown to [other] European languages" (Kiefer 2006). Yet, in comparison with the rest of Uralic, Hungarian often patterns with its Indo-European neighbours. Luckily, the question of "Europeanness" is no longer a matter of subjective impressions. In contrast to the tradition in which

"European" is simply a synonym for cultural sophistication, "a club, whose membership is open only to candidates certified as suitable by the club committee" (Hobsbawm 1998: 294–295), linguistic typology since the late 20th century has worked out a series of criteria for linguistic Europeanness.

In a number of typological studies – the best known might be the EUROTYP project of the European Science Foundation and its publications in the series *Empirical Approaches to Language Typology* from 1998 to 2006 – something like a core European area has emerged, with French, Dutch, and German sharing the greatest number of features (hence the term "Charlemagne Sprachbund"). The rest of Europe consists of "associated members" connected to these core varieties by a smaller number of shared features. Some European features are transparently connected to cultural history: they stem from the European tradition of literacy and translated texts, such as the Bible, or in general from the shared conventions of written literature. Already before the rise of modern linguistic typology or enterprises like "Eurolinguistics" (Hinrichs 2010) which stress the special role of language contacts and multilingualism in the evolution of linguistic Europeanness, this has been pointed out by many linguists using examples from the all-European lexicon.

In Hungarian, as in all European languages, Greek- and Latin-based internationalisms now form an essential part of the lexicon: words (*biológia, fizika, autó, rádió*) as well as word-formational elements or word-formation models (***ex**-girlfriend / **ex**-barátnő, **trans**sexual / **transz**nemű, fabric**ation** / kital**áció**...*). Some lexical Europeanisms are less conspicuously present in Hungarian, as translators and language planners have replaced the original internationalisms with calques built from native elements. European language users seldom realize that compounds such as *Schadenfreude / káröröm,* metaphoric expressions such as *benign / jóindulatú* in the sense of 'not malignant, harmless (medical condition)' or *fall / elesik* in the sense of 'be killed in battle', or innumerable technical terms such as *Eisenbahn / chemin de fer / vasút* or *semiconductor / félvezető* are actually part of our common European linguistic

heritage. (Hakulinen 1969, regrettably only available in Finnish, is an excellent overview of all-European calques, including many examples from Hungarian.) In the course of a thousand years, the lexicon of Hungarian has been formed by influences, models and policies analogous to those in other European countries, by translation of religious and legal texts, by processes of technical, political and educational development and terminologization.

The effects of European literacy can also be seen in what Kortmann (1998) calls "cultural diffusion of syntax". The well-known fact that "[t]he grammar of a written language is profoundly different from that of the spoken language" (Givón 1993: 13) is largely based on the prevalence of complex and hierarchic syntactic structures in written texts. The traditions of European literacy have given rise to a variety of complex clause types, formed with various conjunctions (causal: *because / mert;* adversative: *but / de;* conditional: *if / ha*; complementizer: *that / hogy...*) and grammaticalizing multi-word connectives (for instance: *provided that / azzal a feltétellel, hogy...; despite the fact that / annak ellenére, hogy...*). Practically all of them are reflected in Hungarian, which – together with other "Western" Uralic languages such as Finnish or Estonian – has developed a Western-type system of finite subordination by way of conjunctions and relative pronouns. In this, Hungarian differs sharply from its Eastern relatives, in which subordinated clauses are built on non-finites (or, if finite, on conjunctions recently borrowed from Russian; see Skribnik forthcoming). Non-finite subordination is only marginally present in modern Hungarian but far more prominent in Old Hungarian texts, possibly supported by Latin models: the first preserved Hungarian text, *Halotti Beszéd,* has *hadlaua choltat* (*"hallá holtát",* lit. "he heard his dying") and *birsagnop ivtua ("bírságnap jutva",* 'judgment-day coming') where today's Hungarians would write *hallotta,* **hogy** *meg fog halni* 'he heard **that** he will die' or **amikor** *eljön az ítélet napja* '**when** the day of judgment comes'.

Furthermore, a strong tradition of written and official language use is probably one of the factors behind the rich all-European system of grammaticalized sentence adverbials (see, e.g., Ramat & Ricca 1998). Hungarian shares this system

of adverbials for evaluative (*várhatóan* 'expectably', *szerencsére* 'fortunately', *remélhetőleg* 'hopefully'), quotative (*állítólag* 'allegedly') or performative functions (*ezennel* 'hereby') or for the hierarchy of positive probability (*alig(ha)* 'hardly' < *talán* 'maybe' < *valószínűleg* 'probably' < *biztosan* 'certainly').

In addition to these phenomena which can be transparently connected to European traditions of literacy, Hungarian displays numerous syntactic, morphological and perhaps even phonetic features which seem to be areally conditioned in some way: they are typical of Europe but less frequent elsewhere – and often also less typical of Uralic in general. To mention but a few: Hungarian is the only Uralic language with a completely grammaticalized system of definite and indefinite articles. It is also one of the few Uralic languages with a true dative case, i.e. a case which primarily marks the recipient in a prototypic "give" construction and does *not* belong to a typically Uralic three-part source-location-goal set of local cases. Furthermore, Hungarian, unlike the majority of Uralic languages but similarly to German, for example, has absolutive participles, i.e. participles which can relativize both the patient argument of a transitive verb (*lopott ló – gestohlenes Pferd* 'stolen horse') and the single argument of an intransitive (telic) verb (*elhullott levél – gefallenes Blatt* 'fallen leaf'); absolutive participles seem to be an areal phenomenon, "more common in Europe and in South America than elsewhere" (Shagal 2019: 83–84). Also the equative construction in Hungarian conforms to the core European model (see Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998), as shown in Fig. 1.

Figure 1. Equative construction 's/he is (just) as old as I' in Hungarian and German

	parameter marker (derived from a demonstrative)	parameter	standard marker (derived from an interrogative)	standard
Hungarian	*ő*	*(ugyan)olyan*	*idős*	*mint*	*én*
German	*er/sie ist*	*(genau)so*	*alt*	*wie*	*ich*
	's/he (is)'	'such / so'	'old'	'as' < 'how'	'I'

4. Beyond and within Europe

As shown by the examples above, Hungarian – despite its traditionally strong position in Uralic language studies – is in many respects an un-Uralic language, shaped by a long period of separate development and contacts with unrelated languages. This becomes particularly clear when comparing information structuring (expressing old or new information, focus, etc.) in Hungarian with its Ob-Ugric sister languages (cf. Skribnik and Laakso, forthcoming): on its way to Europe, Hungarian has acquired new means of information structuring, such as definite and indefinite articles, while reanalysing old ones or losing them.

An example of old techniques reanalysed is the use of the object-agreement marking on the verb ("definite conjugation", as it is slightly misleadingly called in many Hungarian grammars and textbooks): other Uralic languages having this device use it to mark object person or the topicality of the object, while in Hungarian it is (largely) conditioned by definiteness in the Standard Average European sense. An example of loss (and reorganization) is the marking of direct objects. Hungarian, like all other Uralic and most other European languages, belongs to the nominative-accusative alignment type: subjects of transitive and intransitive verbs alike are encoded in the same way, with the nominative case, and differently from direct objects. However, most other Uralic languages display the so-called differential object marking (DOM): instead of one accusative case, objects, depending on various features such as animacy, specificity or identifiability, can be in two or more different cases. Hungarian, in contrast, only has one accusative case used for practically all direct objects.

Looking more closely into the putative European features of Hungarian, one will of course notice that many of them are much more widespread and that instead of sharp boundaries, we must speak of more complicated geographic distributions of features, of greyzones and contacts of different strengths. Clausal negation is a good example. Hungarian differs from the majority of Uralic in having so-called symmetric negation, i.e. the negated clause is otherwise identical with the affirmative one, the only difference being that a negation marker (Hung. *nem*) is

added. Most Uralic languages express negation asymmetrically: the negation marker is an auxiliary verb, on which the person is marked, while the main verb is always in the so-called connegative form. This system occurs in strikingly similar and etymologically cognate forms also in two peripheries of Uralic, viz. Finnic-Saami and Samoyedic, and probably goes back to Proto-Uralic.

Fig. 2. Examples of symmetric and asymmetric negation

Hungarian	Finnish	
Mari fut.	*Mari juoksee.*	'Mary is running.'
*Mari **nem** fut.*	*Mari **ei** juokse.*	'Mary is **not** running.'
Te futsz.	*Sinä juokset.*	'You are running.'
*Te **nem** futsz.*	*Sinä **et** juokse.*	'You are **not** running.'

Both symmetric and asymmetric negation occur in numerous languages worldwide; however, languages with exclusively asymmetric negation are not dominant in any part of the world, whereas symmetric negation dominates in large parts of Continental Europe and Southeast Asia (Miestamo 2013). Against this background, the Hungarian symmetric negation might look like a "Europeanism", just like the presence of definite and indefinite articles (cf. Dryer 2013) – but appearance can deceive. While other Western Uralic languages in the Finnic and Saami branches, despite numerous influences from their Indo-European neighbours, have maintained the inherited negation strategy with a negative auxiliary, the closest sister languages of Hungarian, Khanty and Mansi in Western Siberia, also use a European-style symmetric negation. If the somewhat problematic attempts to derive the clausal negation markers of all Ugric languages from the ancient Uralic negative auxiliary (see e.g. Zaicz [ed.] 2006 s.v. *nem*, Simoncsics 2011) are to be taken seriously, the symmetric negation in Hungarian might reflect common Ugric heritage rather than more recent European influences.

Certain areal features of Hungarian are not merely European but characteristic of a larger area in Northern or Northwestern Eurasia. One such feature is the presence of front rounded vowels, i.e. /ö/ and /ü/, which seem to be extremely rare in Africa, India and Indochina, Oceania and the Americas but do occur in numerous more northern Eurasian languages from Breton to Yakut (Maddieson 2013). Other characteristic features which distinguish Hungarian from other Uralic languages are typical of a smaller area, but not necessarily the "Charlemagne *Sprachbund*". Two often-mentioned examples are the preverbs or verbal prefixes (*igekötő),* which (as Hungarian Finno-Ugricists often point out, see e.g. Honti 1999) have cognate parallels in Ob-Ugric but can also be explained as an Eastern Central European areal phenomenon (Kiefer 2010), and the Eastern Central European cultural lexicon. The latter is historically connected to *Kakanien,* the centralization of cultural and political influences in the Habsburg empire. These words come from different languages but typically occur in Hungarian, in at least some of the neighbouring Slavic idioms and in Austrian German: the words for 'cauliflower' and 'maize' are *karfiol* and *kukorica/Kukuruz* in Hungarian and Austrian German, in contrast to *Blumenkohl* and *Mais* used in Germany. (For a nice survey of lexical *Kakanismen,* see Newerkla 2002.)

5. Uralic, and why labels matter

Of course, it is not without reason that so many Europeans think of Hungarian as a language totally different from its European neighbours – whether they ascribe this to its genetic affiliation with other exotic languages such as Finnish, or simply consider Hungarian an *idioma incomparabile.* Hungarian does lack many features which are shared by well-known Western European languages. For instance, Hungarian does not express predicative possession with a *have* verb; actually, this *have* strategy is used only in roughly one quarter of the world's languages, it is less frequent worldwide than the so-called oblique possession (the type to which the Hungarian predicative possession also belongs; see Stassen 2013) but, interestingly, both Khanty and Mansi use a *have* verb to express

possession. As there is no *have* verb, there cannot be a *have* perfect tense either, and *have* perfects as well are an often-mentioned typical Western European feature.

Above all, by virtue of its rich morphology and discourse-configurational word order, Hungarian is bound to express syntactic and semantic relations in a way which is completely different from Western European languages with their compact morphologies and fairly fixed word order patterns. For example, the use of verb-subject inversion to form questions (*kommst du? viens-tu?*), a typical "Europeanism", is incompatible with the principles of word order in Hungarian.

The noun inflection in Hungarian, including the notorious abundance of cases, is superficially different from the systems in the neighbouring Indo-European languages, which often express the same meanings with the help of prepositions. However, at a higher level, the correspondences between Hungarian local cases and Indo-European local prepositions are fairly transparent and can be reflected, for instance, in the conspicuously "Kakanian" tendency to increased use of 'upon' prepositions (German *auf,* Slavic *na*) and the Hungarian superessive (*-(V)n*) in the expressions of institutional locations: Austrian German *auf der Universität* and Czech *na univerzitě* correspond to Hungarian *az egyetemen* (Newerkla 2002: 10).

More interesting, therefore, is the use of inflectional and derivational morphology especially in verb derivation, at the border of morphology and syntax. It is here that Hungarian shows some interesting, ancient features well retained. For example, Hungarian, like most other Uralic languages, can use proprietive (e.g. *nő-s* 'having a wife, married (man)') and caritive derivatives (e.g. *pénz-telen* 'without money, penniless') to express (lack of) possession, in constructions which often correspond to predicative possession in other European languages.

(3) *Mit ér az ember, ha pénztelen?*
    'What is a man worth if he has no money (lit. "if [he is] penniless")?'

Moreover, the proprietive and caritive derivational suffixes represent ancient heritage also as concerns their substance. A similarly ancient derivational suffix

is the curative-causative, valency-increasing *-(t)At:* it is well represented throughout the Uralic language family, while in many other European languages there is no productive derivation of deverbal causatives:

(4) *A fodrász rövidre vágta a hajamat.* 'The hairdresser cut my hair short.'
Rövidre vágattam a hajamat a fodrásszal. 'I had the hairdresser cut my hair short.'

In fact, the words of Kangasmaa-Minn (1992) about the role of derivation in Finnish also apply to Hungarian: it represents the "inconspicuous linguistic inheritance", retaining some essential aspects of the most ancient Uralic heritage.

We have come full circle and returned to where we started: holistic ideas about languages. It is not only laymen who feel tempted to think about languages as unified entities defined by their affiliation to a language family or a linguistic area. Also according to the practical experience of many linguists, "every language has a particular 'feel', a characteristic cut to its jib" (Fortson 2004: 70). Educated Europeans learning Hungarian – or Hungarian speakers who learn other European languages – will form their opinion about Hungarian as an European language on the basis of this 'feel'. Whether and how they will interpret this 'feel' in terms of genetic or areal labels such as "Uralic" or "European", whether and how they will understand the complexity behind these simple labels, will be an important issue for the future of European language education and language policies. But that is another story for another day.

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A magyar nyelv a (finnugor) nyelvészeti világban

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Összefoglaló

A magyar nyelv meghatározó szerepet játszott az uráli nyelvek kutatásában. Mindazonáltal a magyar sok tekintetben nem tipikus uráli nyelv, mivel szerkezetében számos egyedi, genetikai és areális tényezőktől függő vonás kombinálódik. Tanulmányomban néhány ilyen tulajdonság példáit elemzem, hogy bemutassam a történeti és areális tényezők gyakran félreértett komplexitását.

Kulcsszavak: magyar nyelv, nyelvészet, nyelvrokonság, tipológia.

Mesto mađarskog jezika u svetu lingvistike

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Sažetak

Mađarski jezik odigrao je odlučujuću ulogu u istoriji proučavanja uralskih jezika. On je, ipak, u mnogim pogledima netipičan uralski jezik koji prikazuje jedinstvenu kombinaciju genetski i arealno uslovljenih strukturnih karakteristika. U nameri da se ilustruje često pogrešno shvaćena složenost istorijskih i arealnih faktora, u ovom radu su analizirani neki od primera tih karakteristika.

Ključne reči: mađarski jezik, jezička tipologija, evropski jezici, standardni prosečni evropski, uralski jezici.