

Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy

## **General and definite verb inflection: a semantic approach\***

### **Abstract**

The Hungarian language has two verbal inflectional paradigms, the general and the definite ones (to use the most frequent terms). Traditional grammars consider the definite or indefinite object to govern the choice between the two paradigms. Working in the cognitive linguistic theoretical framework, the paper proposes a different interpretation. The Hungarian verbal inflectional suffix symbolizes a schematic relation between the trajector and the landmarks and also the process (the event); it profiles one of the substructures in the verb + complement structure. The landmark in a structure with general inflection is less prominent compared to the process, whereas the object landmark in a structure with definite inflection is more prominent compared to the process. Inflection has an influence on the semantic structure of the verb stem, as the result of metonymic attention shift.

*Keywords:* attention focusing, conceptual domain, definite inflection, epistemic grounding, general inflection, Hungarian language, landmark, prominence, trajector

### **1 Introduction**

Two verbal inflectional paradigms are used in the Hungarian language, the general and the definite inflectional paradigms. Several characteristic theories have been elaborated concerning their functions, and their relation to the grammatical object and adverbial complements. One focal question is why the general paradigm is used for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular definite objects, while the definite paradigm is used for 3<sup>rd</sup> person definite objects. The complex phenomenon is still open for discussion, despite significant advances in the literature. A new perspective has been introduced by Wéber (2011). In her doctoral thesis, Wéber argues against the assumption that the choice between the general and the definite paradigms depends on the definite or indefinite nature of the grammatical object. Wéber (2011) starts out from the complex semantics and pragmatics of the two verbal inflectional paradigms that provide functional alternatives. Her theory is based on language acquisition data. The seemingly provocative proposal obviously needs an answer. In what follows, I present the functional system of the two paradigms within the theoretical framework and methodology of cognitive linguistics, focusing on other factors than the formal definiteness of the grammatical object.

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It is a language specific fact that Hungarian has two verbal inflectional paradigms, the general and the definite ones (to use the most frequent terms). Two incomplete ones are added to the two paradigms, one with the *-lak* inflectional morpheme, designating the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular object, and another one with the *-ik* inflectional (or derivational) morpheme, originally for the middle voice or the passive. As a special case, the general paradigm is used for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular definite objects (see example 1), while the definite paradigm is used for 3<sup>rd</sup> person definite objects (see example 2).

- (1) a. Péter vár téged.  
 Peter wait-3S-PRES-INDEF you-ACC  
 ‘Peter is waiting for you.’  
 b. Péter vár engem.  
 Peter wait-3S-PRES-INDEF I-ACC  
 ‘Peter is waiting for me.’
- (2) a. Péter várja Katit.  
 Peter wait-3S-PRES-DEF Kate-ACC  
 ‘Peter is waiting for Kate.’  
 b. Péter várja a sorát.  
 Peter wait-3S-PRES-DEF the turn-POSS3S-ACC  
 ‘Peter is waiting for his turn.’

It has to be noted that variability in this respect is even larger. For instance, the definite paradigm is used for reflexive 1<sup>st</sup> person singular definite objects:

- (3) Látom magamat.  
 see-1S-PRES-DEF I-REFL-ACC  
 ‘I see myself’

Or in certain dialects (e.g. in the Western Hungarian dialect type using *ő* instead of *e*) the general paradigm is used for definite objects, but only with 1<sup>st</sup> person plural subjects (see Juhász 1999):

- (4) leverünk a diót  
 beat down-1PL-PRES-INDEF the nut-ACC  
 ‘we beat down the nut’
- (5) kiszedünk a burgonyát  
 take out-1PL-PRES-INDEF the potato-ACC  
 ‘we take the potato out of the soil’

Nevertheless, only prototypical default cases will be dealt with in the present paper.

Language is not a formal system of logic, but the symbolic result and process of human cognition and intersubjective focusing of attention. Consequently, the verbal inflectional paradigms cannot be analyzed on a pure formal logical basis. The motivational forces behind the two paradigms should be recognized. Arbitrariness cannot be taken as a ground for the interpretation, because grammatical relations symbolize schematic conceptual relations (see

Langacker 1987, Talmy 2000). The present paper proposes a functional semantic interpretation for the two paradigms, with the following hypotheses:

- (H1) The inflectional suffix is a conceptual factor having its role in the conceptual construal of a grammatical structure; it is not a mere operator in a grammatical relation.
- (H2) The finite Hungarian verbs with general or definite inflection have two different complement structures, the systems and the conceptual domains of the landmarks of the two finite verb types differ. The two inflectional systems differ in the complete semantic system of their complements, and the difference does not come from the nature of the grammatical object.
- (H3) The different landmark systems within the verb stem (or in relation to the verb stem) are profiled by the inflectional suffix. The inflectional suffix has an influence on the semantic structure of the verb stem.

The paper first gives an overview of earlier accounts, and then addresses significant historical processes and the semantic structure of the verb before providing a general description of the landmark system of the two inflectional paradigms.

## 2 The literature so far

Traditional grammar defines the two inflectional paradigms as follows: “the function of the general inflectional suffixes is to designate the person and number of the subject; on transitive verbs they can also indicate the lack of an object or the presence of a 3<sup>rd</sup> person definite object. The verb may have the general inflection with a definite object as well, when the latter is a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person personal pronoun” (Kugler 2000: 109). “The function of the definite inflectional suffixes is to designate the person and number of the subject and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person definite object” (Kugler 2000: 110).

Magyar grammatika (Keszler ed. 2000) sees the function of verbal inflection in the grammatical designation of the subject and object complement, and considers the difference between the two inflectional paradigms to depend mainly on the definite or indefinite nature of the object, although 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronominal objects stand with the general inflectional paradigm. Keszler ed. (2000) gives only classifications, but no interpretation. The functional difference between the two inflectional paradigms is illuminated to some degree with the features of the definite or indefinite object. “The object is definite if its semantic content refers to a designatum clearly identifiable for the interlocutors, i.e. the speaker and the hearer think of the same designatum” (Balogh 2000: 416). “The object is indefinite if it is a noun without an article or it is with an indefinite article” (Balogh 2000: 416). Keszler ed. (2000) defines definiteness with semantic features, indefiniteness with formal ones. The volume characterizes the relation between the finite verb and the object complement with the object complement as the determinant participant in the subordination structure: “The definite or indefinite nature of the object determines the inflection of the verb” (Balogh 2000: 416).

According to one formal, generative interpretation, the decision between the two paradigms has a structural nature: only in the case of objects in the DP category do verbs take the morphemes of the definite paradigm (Bartos 2000). On the other hand, É. Kiss (2003) emphasizes one functional semantic feature of the object. In certain Siberian languages, the prominence of persons proves to be a grammatical factor: 1<sup>st</sup> person is more prominent than 2<sup>nd</sup> person, 2<sup>nd</sup> person is more prominent than 3<sup>rd</sup> person. In close connection with that, a restriction is in effect in the agreement on the prominence degrees of the subject and the object: the subject is more prominent than the object. If the object is still more prominent than

the subject, the verb cannot agree with the object. That is the situation in Hungarian with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person object and 3<sup>rd</sup> person subject, and also with 1<sup>st</sup> person object and 2<sup>nd</sup> person subject (all singular), whereby the subject cannot agree with the object. This inverse agreement prohibition results in the connection between the inherently definite 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person object and the general inflection in the case of a 3<sup>rd</sup> person subject. Although prominence receives no definition in É Kiss' theory, its role should be subject to consideration, with further semantic factors. Yet another approach starts out from semantic features: "If the referential argument of a phrase is lexically specified as familiar/new, then the phrase bears the feature [+DEF]/[-DEF], and this feature governs the conjugations" (Coppock 2013: 345; see also Coppock & Wechsler 2012).

According to historical investigations on the development and detachment of the two inflectional paradigms (cf. Sárosi 2003: 160-168), at the beginning of the proto-Hungarian period, the indefinite object was not designated by an inflectional suffix, its function was expressed by the then presumably usual SOV word order. On the other hand, the definite object already had an inflectional designator. The detachment of the two inflectional paradigms began in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular during the proto-Hungarian period, then it extended to the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, and still later to the 1<sup>st</sup> person. "Broadly speaking it can be assumed about the inflectional suffixes of the singular paradigms that the suffixes of pronominal origin became the morphemes for the definite inflection, and suffixes from other sources for the indefinite inflection" (Sárosi 2003: 164). The features and results of the grammaticalization processes assumed by Sárosi (2003) seem significant from the perspective of the semantic factors of the present day inflectional system. The historical aspects of the morphophonological forms are less important in that respect, they are not discussed any further below.

From another historical perspective, E. Abaffy (1991: 154-159) starts out from the ancient agglutinative structure, whereby the lexical verb stem designated the action, the suffix stood for the agent, the acting person (in the etymological sense, too). The definite inflection referred both to the acting person and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person object, whereas the indefinite inflection referred to the acting person and indicated that the action was not directed towards an object or it was directed towards an indefinite object. By the beginning of the Old Hungarian period, the two kinds of inflection had already separated. In E. Abaffy's views (1991: 158), the intransitive or transitive nature of the verbs determine the general or definite verb inflection: verbs used without an object or indefinite verbs are inflected in the general paradigm, the definite inflection of the transitive verbs refers always to a definite object. The process was later completed with person and definiteness indicated on the object and person designated on the subject. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns with the accusative (*engem, téged*), formed by the possessive suffixes, are unambiguously definite, so there was no need to designate definiteness on the finite verb (E. Abaffy 1991: 158-159).

Havas (2004) enumerates seven different historical models that were elaborated to interpret the two inflectional paradigms, during the last one hundred and fifty years in Hungarian linguistics. The eighth one is proposed by Havas himself. That theory, like the earlier ones mentioned by Havas, focuses on the morphophonological development of the inflectional suffixes, with a modest semantic background. Havas (2004) assumes that the two inflectional paradigms were formed on an uninflected stem: in the case of transitive 3<sup>rd</sup> person verbs without a definite nominal object, a deictic or cataphoric pronoun was used as a suffix. A similar process took place in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> persons, with an inflectional paradigm in the middle voice on intransitive verbs, forming one structure with objects expressing some adverbial condition. The structure was later extended to non-salient objects. The difference between non-salient and salient objects led to the two inflectional paradigms in modern times.

The descriptions outlined so far do refer to semantic and pragmatic factors, but only as secondary ones that contribute to the functioning of the two inflectional paradigms, and consequently their description. Such factors include the salience (or foregrounding) of the object or its secondary nature, and the presence of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person within the speech situation, as opposed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. Following Lotz (1976), Dugántsy (2003) points out that the grammatical distribution of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person according to subject and object presumes features of semantic compatibility: verbs expressing an event of the interpersonal connection between the interlocutors can be complemented by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects and objects. Wéber (2011) takes clearly the speaker's intention as the starting point in describing the two inflectional paradigms: "the determination of the clausal objects is dependent on the speaker's intention, the ongoing process of the continuous re-structuring of the discourse" (Wéber 2011: 195). This notion is based on Lotz (1976: 127-134, 179-184), who interprets the general and the definite paradigms as two inflectional paradigms different in their functions (adding the *-lak* implicational suffix as the third one), and not as a symmetric opposition.

Wéber (2011: 9-11, 59-61) assumes the following points.

1. Verbal inflection does not depend on the syntactic features of the object; it is not definiteness of the object that determines the choice between the two inflectional paradigms, as stated by earlier grammars.
2. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person objects are formally indefinite by the verbal inflection, although by definition they are deictic and grounded, consequently semantically they are definite. That feature is pointed out, though not explained by the grammars.
3. The two inflectional paradigms cannot be compared on a purely morphosyntactic basis; as proposed earlier, the comparative description should be based on the fact that the two versions "function as alternatives to each other in the speaker's decisions" Wéber (2011: 59).

Wéber defines four semantic and usage-based factors for the description: the transitivity or intransitivity of the verb (if transitive, the object complement is compulsory or optional), the meaning of the verb, the person of the object, and the context of the utterance including the object.

The explanations outlined above show differences, but one can find a shared feature: all the descriptions investigate the subject–object relation, not focusing on other complements. Besides that, the subject–object relation is discussed in the building block model. In what follows, the broader complement structure of the two inflectional paradigms will be investigated, the conceptual domains of the landmarks (the non-subject complements) of the verb in particular, within the network model of cognitive linguistics. In the case of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects and objects, the two complex schemas are related to subjectification, and epistemic grounding in all persons.

### **3 The semantic structure of the verb**

The semantic structure of the prototypical verb includes two schematic figures (cf. Langacker 1987, based partly on Fillmore's case grammar). The two (or more) schematic figures are elaborated in the clause by nominals as the main participants of the event expressed by the clause. The relation between the schematic figures is asymmetric; one of them, the primary figure, i.e. the trajector in the focus of attention is construed in relation to the other one, the secondary figure, the landmark, within the temporal relation of the verb. The schematic figures are elaborated in the clause by nominals with complement status. This means that

those figures are differentiated within the semantic structure of the verb that are designated by nouns in syntactic relations.

The complex linguistic structures are organized by the network principle. Larger linguistic structures form networks by the schematic relations (e.g. elaboration patterns, profiling schemas) of less complex linguistic structures. One basic feature is linguistic unit status; a linguistic unit is a structure that may be transparent in its morphology for the speaker, but s/he is able to process this structure as a Gestalt, as a unit, without processing individually the components, or doing it in a secondary phase (see Langacker 1987, Gundersen 2001).

Grammatical elements do have a meaning, i.e. they are not “empty morphs”, they are highly grammaticalized, schematized linguistic elements with motivated semantics (cf. Talmy 2000). The Hungarian stem + suffix structure is the composite structure of two linguistic elements, one with a detailed and one with a schematic meaning. In traditional or formal grammars, according to the building block model, this structure counts as the connection between a lexical stem and a morph with a morphosyntactic role. Under the assumptions of the network model, the schematic semantic function of the suffix is elaborated semantically by the stem. In *házban* ‘in the house’, literally house+in, i.e. house.INESS, the concept INSIDE A BOUNDED SPACE, activated by the case suffix *-ban* ‘in’, is elaborated by the specific space profiled by the noun *ház* ‘house’. The two components form a composite structure (see Langacker 1987: 277-326). This semantic and morphosyntactic structure seems to be transparent and explicit for native speakers of Hungarian. Nevertheless, it does not need a step by step processing. In the case of Hungarian verbs, transparency and explicitness have a lower degree both from semantic and morphophonological perspectives, since the stem and the suffix are both variable to a great extent, their edges are relatively fuzzy, and the verbal suffix has a complex meaning performing four or five functions simultaneously.

#### 4 The semantics of the two inflectional paradigms

The finite verb and its complements are treated in the cognitive description as a complex structure, to be explored in its instantiations in usage events (i.e. in context-dependent utterances). Consider the examples in (6).

- (6) a. Mit csinálsz?  
 ‘What are you doing?’  
 Várom a postást.  
 wait-1S-PRES-DEF the postman-ACC  
 ‘I am waiting for the postman.’
- b. Mit csinálsz?  
 ‘What are you doing?’  
 Várom a postásra.  
 wait-1S-PRES-INDEF the postman-SUBL  
 ‘I am waiting for the postman.’

- c. Mit csinálsz?  
 ‘What are you doing?’  
 Várom a soromat.  
 wait-1S-PRES-DEF the turn-POSS1S-ACC  
 ‘I am waiting for my turn.’
- Várom a soromra.  
 wait-1S-PRES-INDEF the turn-POSS1S-SUBL  
 ‘I am waiting for my turn.’
- d. Mit csinálsz?  
 ‘What are you doing?’  
 Várom.  
 wait-1S-PRES-INDEF  
 ‘I am waiting.’
- e. Mit csinálsz?  
 ‘What are you doing?’  
 Várom valakit.  
 wait-1S-PRES-INDEF someone-ACC  
 ‘I am waiting for someone.’

In the clauses of (6) one can see that a finite verb with the general inflection take landmarks with different case suffixes, and also clauses without elaborated landmarks are possible. A finite verb with the definite inflection obligatorily takes a definite object.

We can investigate the semantic nature of the two inflectional paradigms by looking at the potential complement domains of the Hungarian verb *vár* ‘wait’. The functions of the general and the definite inflection are to be described with the characterization of the intentionality (directionality) inherent in the verb’s meaning. Intentionality is interpreted here in the broadest sense: the nominal elaborating the trajector of the verb, prototypically the subject, directs its action towards another figure in the conceptually mapped event structure. The other figure or figures are schematized by the landmarks within the semantic structure of the verb. The finite forms of the Hungarian verb *vár* ‘wait’ in the two inflectional paradigms are as follows.

The versions of *vár* ‘wait’ in 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, present tense, indicative mood.

- a) The finite verb: *várom* ‘wait-1S.PRES-INDEF’ (similarly: *vársz* ‘wait-2S-PRES-INDEF’, *vár* ‘wait-3S-PRES-INDEF’); the landmarks: *valamit* ‘something-ACC’, *valakit* ‘someone-ACC’, *valamire* ‘something-SUBL’, *valakire* ‘someone-SUBL’, *valahol* ‘somewhere’, *valamiért* ‘something-CAUS’.

The elaborated trajector is a 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, subject complement (a conceptually autonomous component that elaborates the conceptually dependent head, i.e. the profile determinant; Langacker 1987: 309) in the nominative, corresponding to the speaker. The landmark may be any entity satisfying the conceptual constraints imposed by the verb. On the syntactic side, landmarks are object or adverbial complements, nouns with diverse case suffixes. They are ‘indefinite’ in the sense that they profile a non-prototypical thing; no process is directed towards the landmark directly from the trajector in the specific event structure of the verb. The landmark is not necessarily identifiable for the speaker and the hearer.

- b) The finite verb: *várom* ‘wait-1S-PRES-DEF’ (similarly: *várom* ‘wait-2S-PRES-DEF’, *várja* ‘wait-3S-PRES-DEF’); the landmarks: *valamit* ‘something-ACC’, *valakit* ‘someone-ACC’, *valahol* ‘somewhere’, *valamiért* ‘something-CAUS’.

The elaborated trajector is a 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, subject complement in the nominative, corresponding to the speaker. The landmark may be any entity satisfying the conceptual constraints. On the syntactic side, the obligatory landmark is expressed by the grammatical object, a noun with the accusative case suffix. The landmark is ‘definite’ in the sense that it profiles a thing; the process is directed towards the landmark directly from the trajector in the specific event structure of the verb. The object landmark is necessarily identifiable for the speaker and the hearer. Landmarks other than the object contribute mainly to the construal of the setting.

- c) The finite verb: *várlak* ‘wait-1S-PRES-IMPL’; the landmark: *téged* ‘you-ACC’.

The elaborated trajector is a 1<sup>st</sup> person singular subject complement in the nominative, corresponding to the speaker. The landmark is a human being, the addressee in the current discourse space. On the syntactic side, we find one compulsory complement expressing the landmark: formally it is the grammatical object, coded by a pronoun with the accusative case suffix or it may have a zero realization, with the verbal suffix expressing its person and number. The landmark is ‘definite’ in the sense that the current addressee is an identifiable participant of both the expressed scene and the current discourse space.

If we take into consideration all the potential complement schemas besides the object and their differences instantiated in the two inflectional paradigms, the non-symmetric functional difference is striking enough. These differences do not come from syntax, they are of semantic origin primarily, in connection with the secondary figures (landmarks) of the verb. And also, these differences appear in the semantic features of the frequent and characteristic complements elaborating these landmarks. The semantic domain of the schematic figures activated by the general inflection is wider and more variable than that of the definite inflection. The structures *vár valakit* ‘wait-3S-PRES-DEF someone-ACC’ and *vár valakire* ‘wait-3S-PRES-INDEF someone-SUBL’ are alternative variants in the general inflection. No fundamental difference can be found between the object and the adverbial complement, their functions are basically the same. The adverbial complement designates the direction of the action as well as the object complement, it is not part of the setting. Although the conceptual structures of the case suffixes differ, the case suffix of both the object and the adverbial comes from spatial semantic relations. Their shared feature is that it is the process within the complete scene that is profiled, the attention is focused on the process denoted by the verb, while the landmark is less prominent. On the other hand, in structures with definite inflection it is the object that expresses a participant (this case a landmark), obligatorily, while the adverbial complements function as part of the setting, they are not participants. The thing designated by the grammatical object is prominent in clauses with verbs in the definite inflectional paradigm, while the process is less prominent, in contrast with clauses construed in the general inflectional paradigm<sup>1</sup>. The prominent (i.e. the profiled) character of the grammatical object comes from the participant status of its referent in the scene expressed by the clause. Certainly, Hungarian verbs should be investigated further with respect to transitivity (see e.g. the model of Hopper & Thompson 1980).

Besides the semantic potential of the landmarks in the two inflections, a difference in the hierarchy of the landmarks is also detectable. There is no significant hierarchical order

<sup>1</sup> I thank Gábor Simon for calling my attention to this factor.

between the landmarks in verbs inflected with the general paradigm, none of the landmarks is profiled independently of the others as the default. On the other hand, the relations between the landmarks in verbs inflected with the definite paradigm are more hierarchical: the figure functioning as the object complement is profiled compulsorily, that figure is the second most prominent figure after the trajector (prototypically the subject). It is significant here that the same verb stem occurs in all cases, and the difference between the conceptual structures of the landmark systems (i.e. a substructure in the verb meaning) outlined above originates from the two inflectional paradigms. Inflection has an influence on the semantic structure of the verb stem, as the result of metonymic attention shift. Only certain substructures of a semantic structure are within the focus of attention during the construal process (cf. Langacker 1987: 116-137, Talmy 2000: 257-309). Focusing may change, being shifted from the default zone to another one (for details of metonymic attention shift see e.g. Panther & Thornburg & Barcelona eds. 2009). The landmark in a structure with general inflection is less prominent compared to the process, whereas the object landmark in a structure with definite inflection is more prominent compared to the process.

## 5 Epistemic grounding

The Hungarian verbal suffixes fulfill complex functions. One of these functions is epistemic grounding. When grounding epistemically a clausal element, the conceptualizer makes reference to an element of the ground (the core part of the discourse universe) in order to enable a more or less unique identification of the entity at issue in the nominal or clause. In doing so, the process of grounding changes the type (i.e. noun or verb) into instantiation (i.e. nominal or clause), completing the construal of the clause. “Grounding predications tend to set up a path and point out a region in which to look for intended referents, but they never indicate these referents as such, or only schematically” (Brisard 2002: xv, cf. Langacker 1987: 126-129, Pelyvás 1996, 2006, for certain aspects of epistemic grounding see Pelyvás 1998, 2011). Epistemic grounding is effected by the marking of number and definiteness in the case of nouns, while verbs are grounded by person, number, tense, mood and definiteness in Hungarian. One aspect of the dilemma concerning the two inflectional paradigms set up by Wéber can be grasped at this point; on the one hand by the control function proposed by Langacker, on the other hand by the notion of reference proposed by Laury (2002) and Brisard (2002) based on the joint meaning construction and negotiation. According to this framework, definiteness and indefiniteness are the processual designators of the mental connection between speakers and the activated entities, since they do not operate as the designators of physical objects in the real world.

As pointed out above, the general inflection of the verb focuses the interlocutors’ attention to the process itself, not the secondary figure of that process. Thus the grounded landmark may be less definite than the process or the trajector. The verb with definite inflection, on the contrary, directs attention to its object complement, the compulsory landmark; its epistemic function for identification is important. It is still important, even if the object is formally indefinite.

In this respect the Hungarian 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects and objects differ from the 3<sup>rd</sup> person ones. While the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects and objects are both referential and self-referential expressions, 3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects and objects are not self-referential ones. That is, while 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects and objects are participants in the objectified scene expressed by the clause as well as participants in the ground (the core part of the current discourse space), 3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects and objects are only participants in the objectified scene. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person participant is inherently subjectified and objectified at the same time, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> person

participant is objectified by default. “An entity is said to be objectively construed to the extent that it goes “onstage” as an explicit, focused object of conception. An entity is subjectively construed to the extent that it remains “offstage” as an implicit, unselfconscious subject of conception” (Langacker 2006: 18). Since 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person participants are the speaker and the hearer by default, the double feature of subjectification and objectification is present in their construal.

As a consequence, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person participants, subjects or objects are activated, they are inherently focused figures, relatively prominent in the current discourse space. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person participants always need individual activation and attention focusing. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person participant as an object has a position within the conceptual domain of the figures (elaborated as complements) whereby it is activated in advance, it has its conceptual position among the conceptual relations of things, relations and circumstances. There is no need to mark its “definiteness” on its own. By contrast, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person participant, expressed by the grammatical object, has to be profiled among the potential secondary figures of the scene.

## 6 Summary

The analysis outlined above implies further consequences. The choice between the two inflectional paradigms does not depend directly on the logical nature of the grammatical object, whether it is definite or indefinite. Rather, the Hungarian verbal inflectional suffix symbolizes a schematic relation between the trajector and the landmarks and also the process (the event). More precisely, the suffix specifies the relation, it profiles one of the substructures in the verb + complement structure. A semantic relation is constructed between the suffixes denoting the two types of verbal inflections and the verb stem, in harmony with the construal processes and perspectives of the speaker. If the inflectional suffix influences the meaning of the stem (and under the present proposal, it does), then the inflectional suffix has an effect on the number and nature of the landmarks. This kind of conceptual construal is complemented by a relatively high level of subjectification in the case of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person objects with either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects. This approach represents a break with the earlier formal descriptions of the grammatical elements in the finite verb.

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Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy  
Eötvös Loránd University  
Department of Modern Hungarian  
H-1088 Budapest  
Múzeum krt. 4/A.  
tng hu@hotmail.com