

# Ott ‘there’ in Hungarian and the theory of expletives\*

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In this squib I examine the use of *ott* ‘there’ in the Hungarian verbal modifier (VM) position. It will be shown that *ott* invariably has an associate locative phrase, with which it forms a chain. I first raise and reject an analysis in which *ott* and the locative uniformly form an appositive structure, and then explore the proposal that *ott* is the spell out form (in a Distributed Morphology framework) of the formal features (FF) of the locative phrase, raised to the VM position. The analysis then makes an argument in favour of the possibility of pure FF-movement in overt syntax.

Hungarian allows constructions like (1a,b), where the VM slot is filled by *ott* ‘there’, while a locative expression (LOC) occupies a postverbal position.

- 1    a    Ott van egy fa a parkban  
          there be-3SG a tree the park-LOC  
          ‘There is a tree in the park’  
      b    Ott fut Bill a parkban  
          there run-3SG Bill the park-LOC  
          ‘Bill runs in the park’

*Ott* ‘there’ can co-occur with a LOC in a variety of other settings, including (2a,b).

- 2    a    Áll egy fa ott a parkban  
          stand-3SG a tree there the park-LOC  
      b    Ott a parkban áll egy fa  
          there the park-LOC stand-3SG a tree

In these scenarios, *ott* and LOC form a constituent: e.g. in (2b) this constituent is moved to the preverbal topic position, and both preverbally and postverbally it can be participate in coordination:

- 2    a’    Áll egy fa [ott a parkban] és [itt a ház előtt]  
          stand-3SG a tree [there the park-LOC] and [here the house-in-front-of]

Note that in all these grammatical examples *ott* ‘there’ is intended as being interpreted as co-referential with the locative phrase.<sup>1</sup> This makes the construction akin to appositives like (3):

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\* Results reported here form part of Csirmaz and Surányi (1998a,b). Parts of the present material have been the subject of extensive discussions with Anikó Csirmaz, which have resulted in numerous significant improvements, clarification as well as better exemplification. For notes on semantic issues and on differences between verb classes (by Anikó Csirmaz), see Csirmaz and Surányi (1998a,b). Thanks to Katalin É.Kiss, who brought the *ott*-construction to my attention. This squib was written in 1998, and was revised (w.r.t. wording, structuring and references) in 2005.

<sup>1</sup> In (2a,b), another interpretation also available is one where the reference of *ott* ‘there’ is a location properly included in the location identified by the locative phrase. This interpretation is irrelevant here, and will be disregarded in what follows.

- 3 a Szeretünk futni [mi rendőrök]  
like-1PL run-INF we policemen  
'we policemen like to run'  
b [mi rendőrök] szeretünk futni

Indeed, the *ott*-LOC construction exhibits several similarities to appositives:

- 4 a \*A parkban sokat fut Bill ott  
the park-LOC much run-3SG Bill there  
b \*A PARKBAN fut sokat Bill ott  
the park-LOC run-3SG much Bill there
- 5 a \*Rendőrök szeretünk futni mi  
policemen like-1PL run-INF we  
b \*RENDŐRÖK szeretünk futni mi  
policemen like-1PL run-INF we

And indeed, appositive structures apparently exist with locative phrases too:

- 6 a kint az esőben  
out the rain-in  
b fent a tetőn  
up the roof-on

One feasible approach to the construction in (1) would be to analyse them as deriving from an appositive structure: the pronominal element can strand the appositive constituent and move (whereas the content element cannot strand the pronominal, cf. (4,5)):

- 7 a Mi szeretünk futni rendőrök (topic position)  
we like-1PL run-INF policemen  
b Mi is szeretünk futni rendőrök (quantifier position)  
we also like-1PL run-INF policemen  
c MI szeretünk futni rendőrök (focus position)  
we like-1PL run-INF policemen
- 8 a [context: What did you say about the park?]  
Ott sokat fut Bill a parkban (topic position)  
there a.lot run-3SG Bill the park-LOC  
b Ott is sokat fut Bill a parkban (quantifier position)  
there also a.lot run-3SG Bill the park-LOC  
c OTT fut sokat Bill A PARKBAN (focus position)  
there run-3SG a.lot Bill the park-LOC

However, there are two considerations that suggest that assimilating (1) to appositives may be incorrect. Note that these observations concern only the construction in (1), i.e. where *ott* occupies the VM slot – in other words, they do not affect the analysis of sentences where *ott* is postverbal or is raised to a topic, quantifier or focus position (cf. (8)). First, *ott* in the VM position can co-occur with an *ott* that forms part of an appositive structure:

- 9 Emlékszem, ott kellett állnom egész délutánokat ott a sarokban  
 recall-1sg there must-past stand-inf-1sg whole afternoon-pl-acc there the corner-in  
 ‘I recall I had to stand there in the corner for whole afternoons’

Analysing such examples as involving multiple apposition would involve generating structures like [*ott* [*ott* [LOC]]], which, however, are never attested: they cannot surface as they are generated, neither can the outer *ott* move away:

- 10 \*Ott megláttam Jánost ott a kertben  
 there pref-see-past-1sg John-acc there the garden-in  
 ‘I saw John there int he garden’

Further, in contrast to what is attested with appositives (cf. (4,5)), the content element (here, the LOC phrase) can leave behind the pronominal element (here, *ott*), raising higher (by long topicalisation in (11a), and by focussing in (11b)):

- 11 a A sarkon gondolom, hogy áll ott egy fa  
 the corner-at think-1SG that stand-3SG there a tree  
 ‘I think there stands a tree at the corner’  
 b A SARKON áll ott egy fa  
 the corner-at stand-3SG there a tree  
 ‘It’s the corner where there stands a tree’

In the remainder of this squib I explore an alternative approach to (1), acknowledging that an appositive analysis of (2,8) is tenable.

My proposal consists of the following assumptions:

- 12 a Feature movement (FF-movement) exists (Chomsky 1995, contra Chomsky 2000, 2001).  
 b Late insertion of lexical material as in Distributed Morphology (DM) (Halle and Marantz 1993) (this voids Chomsky’s (1995) ban on ‘feature scattering’ in terms of lexical integrity).  
 c A bundle of formal (morphosyntactic) features can be spelled out as long as there is a morpheme matching their specification.

The implication of (12) is that there is overt feature movement in syntax, and overt FF-movement feeds lexical insertion (in a DM framework). Essentially the same picture is suggested by Roberts (1998) in his analysis of English *have/be*-raising: raised *have/be* are pronounced bundles of verbal FF.<sup>2</sup> The analysis of (1) then is as follows. FF of the locative phrase LOC are copied and raised to the VM position, while the full locative phrase, including (the original copy of) its FF, is preserved in its base generated position. Since FF(LOC) corresponds to the lexical item *ott*, FF(LOC) can be spelled out as *ott*.

In fact the English *there*-construction can receive an analogous analysis. Hoekstra and Mulder (1990) propose that the English *there*-construction involves locative inversion (a kind

<sup>2</sup> See also McGinnis (1995), who treats word-internal fission as the result of overt FF-movement. This treatment of fission still obeys lexical integrity though, since fission phenomena she analyses are within the word boundary. Richards (1997) analyses (some) partial *wh*-movements as involving ‘bottom heavy’ chains, where the *wh*-expletive in the scopal Spec,CP position is a bundle of *wh*-FF satisfying a weak [wh] type feature. Cheng’s (2000) analysis of partial *wh*-movement is essentially similar, involving ‘scattered features’.

of predicate inversion out of a small clause within VP) of *there* to Spec,TP. Along the same lines, Belvin and Den Dikken (1997) analyse the construction as follows:

13 [TP \_\_\_ [T' were [VP caught [SC [Subj several fish] [Pred there/in the lake]]]]]

Note that because *there* is generated postverbally, Belvin and Den Dikken are forced to analyse the postverbal locative expression in a *there*-construction as part of the Small Clause subject:

14 There<sub>i</sub> were caught several fish in the lake t<sub>i</sub>

If *there* is viewed as FF(LOC) in English too, then there and LOC form a chain and LOC continues to be able to function as a predicate even in *there*-constructions:

15 There<sub>i</sub> were caught several fish [in the lake]<sub>i</sub>

Note that if this picture is correct, then sentences involving a *there*-construction and full locative inversion (16) compete in the same reference set.

16 In the lake<sub>i</sub> were caught several fish t<sub>i</sub>

There are at least two issues here: economy and interpretation. As for the former, the analysis suggests that FF-movement and full category movement are equally economical: hence the optionality of (15/16). This is unproblematic if we view category movement as involving one chain (with the full category as its members) (contra Chomsky 1995, where it involves two chains: an FF-chain with FF in the attracting functional head, plus a category-chain). Of course, if no lexical item matches FF of some phrase/head X (as is the case with most movements), then only category movement will result in a converging derivation. The second issue is related to the interpretation of (15) and (16): the two sentences differ with respect to information structure ((16) has the locative as topic, whereas (15) is a categorical judgment, i.e. has no topic). This means that two equally economical derivations can have different semantic interpretations. But as syntax is strongly autonomous in minimalism, this poses no conceptual problems.<sup>3,4</sup>

Let us return now to the *ott*-construction. Interestingly, just as with the English *there*-construction, here too there is an alternative derivation, raising the full category to VM instead of just FF(LOC):

17 a Ott<sub>i</sub> felejtett néhány fontos cikket a hotelben;  
there leave-past-3sg some important article-pl-acc the hotel-in  
'He left behind a few important articles there in the hotel'

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<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, an additional feature may be involved in full locative inversion sentences (e.g. [top]), which will not be satisfied by FF (e.g. FF cannot have reference, but [top] triggers a topic interpretation at the semantic interface, which in turn requires a referential XP).

<sup>4</sup> LOC can be non-overt. Consider the case of sentences like (i,ii), without an overt LOC.

- (i) (He went into the house.) There was a mess.
- (ii) There is a God

LOC is recoverable from the context in (i). For sentences like (ii), we need to assume that a non-overt spatio-temporal phrase is present, functioning as LOC.

- b A hotelben<sub>i</sub> felejtett néhány fontos cikket t<sub>i</sub>  
the hotel-in leave-past-3sg some important article-pl-acc
- 18 a ott állt mindvégig a férje mellett  
there stand-past-3sg throughout the husband beside  
'she stood beside (i.e. supported) her husband all the time'
- b a férje mellett állt mindvégig  
the husband beside stand-past-3sg throughout

This alternative is not available with all verbs, however. For instance (1a,b) have no alternative derivations placing LOC in VM. Apparently, then, either (1a,b) are not instances of FF(LOC) movement, or some interfering factor is at play. The former conclusion would not be far-fetched at all: it appears to be the case that *ott* has developed into a verbal prefix in many instances. Indeed *ott*, like other prefixes, can be input to lexical derivational processes with some verbs:

- 19 a ?ottevés/?ottmaradás  
there-eating/ there-staying
- b ottalvás/ottlét  
there-sleeping/ there-being
- c \*ottfutás / \*ottállás  
there-running / there-standing

Both alternative derivations appear to produce grammatical results only with verbs that have a locative as an (optional) internal argument: e.g. 'forget sg swhere' (17), 'stand beside sy/support sy' (18), or for instance (20,21):

- 20 a ott tartották *pro* az egyetemen  
there keep-past-3pl the university-on  
'he was kept at the university'
- b az egyetemen tartották *pro*  
the university-on keep-past-3pl

This suggests an intimate relation between the locative in the VM position and the verb: the locative (or *ott*) seems to be semantically incorporated into the verb analogously to what happens with bare nominals (cf. Farkas and de Swart 2003):

- 21 Fiú született  
boy was.born  
'A boy was born'

This conjecture is further corroborated by the following contrast:

- 22 a \*van az asztalon a pohár  
be the table-on the glass
- b ott van az asztalon a pohár  
there be the table-on the glass  
'The glass is on the table'

*Van* ‘be’ is a canonical definiteness effect verb in Hungarian: it normally does not allow a definite (specific) object (cf. 22a). However, when *ott* is in the VM position, the definite object is permitted (22b): *van* is no longer a definiteness effect verb, its semantics has changed. In intuitive terms, by semantically incorporating into *van*, *ott* produces a predicate that is interpreted as being in a location, which is compatible with non-new discourse referents (in contrast to *van* ‘be’).<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, by its incorporation, *ott* can also modify the meaning of verbs like *sleep*, which originally do not take a locative as an argument:

- 23 Ott aludt Évánaknál  
 there sleep-past-3sg Eve-pl-at  
 ‘He slept at Eve’s’

The predicate (23) involves is not interpreted simply as ‘sleep’, but as ‘sleep swwhere’, meaning ‘Sleep at somebody’s place’.

Finally, let us return briefly to (9) and (11), which were apparently problematic for the appositive analysis of *ott*–LOC constructions. Doubling of *ott* in (9) is no longer a problem, since *ott* in the VM position is FF(LOC), where LOC itself is an appositive construction involving *ott* and a locative phrase. (11) involves a sentence in which FF-movement to the VM slot is followed by independent further category movement of LOC to the focus position: a derivation that nothing blocks. Indeed, an analogous derivation is available with the English *there*-construction too:

- 24 [In whose garden] are [there] a lot of flowers *t* ?

In sum, the problems for the appositive analysis do not arise on the overt FF-movement proposal.<sup>6</sup>

In this squib, I have suggested that the Hungarian *ott*-construction (with *ott* in the VM position) involves overt feature movement from a locative phrase LOC to the VM position, where FF(LOC) is spelled out as *ott*. Clearly, if correct, this analysis can potentially be extended to treat other expletives in Hungarian (e.g. [azt] mondta, [CP hogy ...] ‘[that-acc] said-3SG [CP that...], [úgy] gondolta, [CP hogy ...] ‘[so] thought-3SG [CP that...]) and in other languages. Such a general approach to expletives (and possibly to pronominal elements)

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<sup>5</sup> The locative phrase, just as in the English *there*-construction, can be non-overt (cf. Note 4) when it is recoverable.

- (i) Hazament es ott talalta az anyosat  
 home-go-past-3sg and there find-past-3sg the mother-in-law-poss-acc  
 ‘He went home and found her mother-in-law (there)’

<sup>6</sup> If LOC is directional, FF includes the feature of directionality too (i). Assuming further features to be able to be included in FF(LOC), examples like (ii) and (iii) can be analysed analogously to the *ott*-construction.

- (i) Oda ment a fához  
 there-to go-past-3sg the tree-to  
 ‘He went up to the tree’  
 (ii) Be ment a házba  
 in go-past-3sg the house-in  
 ‘He went into the house’  
 (iii) Rá nézett Jánosra  
 on look-past-3sg J-on  
 ‘He looked at John’

requires a model of syntax with late insertion (e.g. Distributed Morphology), and with feature movement (Chomsky 1995, contra Chomsky 2000, 2001).

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