

Acta Linguistica Hungarica, Vol. 51 (3–4), pp. 325–349 (2004)

MORPHOPRAGMATIC PHENOMENA IN HUNGARIAN

FERENC KIEFER

Abstract

Morphopragmatics is defined as the relationship between morphology and pragmatics, in other words, it investigates pragmatic aspects of patterns created by morphological rules. The paper discusses three morphopragmatic phenomena in Hungarian. The first one concerns the use of the excessive which does not add semantic information to the superlative and carries purely pragmatic information. It is used to express the highest possible degree of some property and it carries the conversational implicature that the speaker wants to draw the listener's attention to the importance of what he is saying. The second problem discussed has to do with the pragmatics of the diminutive suffix. The semantic meaning of the diminutive suffix is 'small' or 'a little' (the latter occurs with mass nouns), which, however, is often overridden by the pragmatic meaning. In most cases, the use of the diminutive signals a positive emotional attitude, but it may carry a pejorative meaning, too. Finally, the third phenomenon concerns the pragmatics of the possibility suffix *-hat/-het*. From among the various pragmatic meanings the deontic speech acts are well known from other languages. There are, however, several other uses which seem to be typical of Hungarian. Two of these are particularly interesting: (a) the context may turn possibility into necessity, (b) the verb *mond* 'say, tell' suffixed by the possibility suffix may carry the pragmatic meaning 'say/tell in vain'. In addition to these two uses, several others will be discussed.

1. Introduction

Morphopragmatics investigates the relationship between morphology and pragmatics. Semantic meaning is not dependent upon the context of the utterance: it is predictable on the basis of lexical meaning, sentential context and the syntactic structure of the utterance. On the other hand, pragmatic meaning also depends on the speech situation and is not predictable in general. Speech situation includes, among other things, the speaker, the listener, the relationship between speaker and listener, as well as the time and place of utterance. Pragmatic meaning entails semantic meaning; hence the investigation of the former must take the latter as its starting point. The main task of pragmatics is the investigation

of meaning as determined by the speech situation, whereas the description of speech-situation-independent meaning is the job of semantics.¹ In this paper, the notion of pragmatics is understood as specified above, similarly to my earlier papers and book (Kiefer 1983a;b; 1999; 2000).

Morphology is pragmatically relevant whenever an affix (whether inflectional or derivational) occurring in a morphologically complex word or a pattern of compounding refers to the speech situation, making one or some of its parameters manifest. Morphopragmatics investigates pragmatic aspects of patterns created by morphological rules, rather than those of individual morphological objects. In other words, the issue is not what pragmatic consequences follow from the use of, say, diminutive *lábacska* ‘little foot’ or *kezecke* ‘little hand’—but rather whether the rule creating diminutive forms (briefly: the diminutive suffix) has some pragmatic consequence, and if it does, what kind of pragmatic consequence it has, with respect to a well-defined semantic range of bases. Pragmatic meaning may of course vary depending on what semantically determined subclass of bases the rule is applied to.² In that respect, morphopragmatics does not differ from morphosemantics; in the case of the latter, semantics is made to bear on morphological rules.

Morphopragmatics has to be distinguished both from lexical pragmatics and from syntactic pragmatics.³ Lexical pragmatics deals with pragmatic aspects of lexemes. For instance, two lexemes with identical denotative meanings may refer to two different speech situations: *eszik* ‘eat’ vs. *zabál* ‘devour’, *alszik* ‘sleep’ vs. *durmol* ‘saw the wood’ (Kecskés 2003). Lexicalised morphological formations also belong here: *elromlik* ‘break down’ vs. *bedöglük* ‘go phut’, *meghal* ‘die’ vs. *elpatkol* ‘pipe off’, etc. The investigation of pragmatic consequences, if any, of syntactically required affixes belongs to the realm of syntactic pragmatics. If, for instance, there is a pragmatic difference between *elnökül választ* ‘vote sy for

¹Theories treating semantics as a separate module accept this interpretation of pragmatics. Cf. Swart (1998, 11–4) and Kearns (2000, 254–81), to mention two recent textbooks on semantics.

²The input conditions of a morphological rule include the meaning of the base and that of the affix. The meaning of the derivative will be compositional and is part of the output of the rule.

³Obviously, phonology also has its pragmatic aspects; hence we can further speak of phonological pragmatics. Since, however, morphopragmatics can hardly be confused with phonological pragmatics, the only areas that have to be explicitly demarcated from morphopragmatics here are lexical and syntactic pragmatics.

the role of chairman' and *elnöknek választ* 'vote sy into the chair', then the discussion of that pragmatic difference is the task of syntactic pragmatics (Dressler–Merlini-Barbaresi 1993).

Morphopragmatics entails semantics; hence in investigating morphopragmatic phenomena one must first determine the semantics of some process of inflection or word formation and then derive pragmatic meaning from it, in view of the sentential context and the speech situation. Sentential context only plays a role in a more exact determination of the semantic meaning of a sentence/utterance.

The existence of morphopragmatic phenomena can be primarily expected in areas where there are competing morphological rules (for instance, in the case of the denominal verb forming suffixes $-(V)z$ and $-(V)l$), or where a morphological rule contributes to the denotative meaning of a word to a very slight extent or not at all (this is the case with the diminutive suffix), or where a morphological rule is not prototypical for the given area (inflection, derivation, compounding). For instance, comparative/superlative formation is not prototypical either as a process of inflection or as one of derivation (cf. Dressler 1989).⁴

In this paper, I will discuss some phenomena of Hungarian morphology that are especially interesting from a morphopragmatic point of view; in particular, the excessive, diminutive formation, and the modal suffix *-hat/-het* 'may, can'. On the basis of Dressler's criteria, none of these can be regarded as prototypical cases of derivation.⁵ This is the only property that all three phenomena share; what motivates their discussion here is that the pragmatic relevance of morphology is the most conspicuous within Hungarian derivation in just these three cases.

⁴ Positing a continuum between inflection and derivation has a number of advantages: (a) it explains the order of derivational, in addition to inflectional, suffixes; (b) it gives an explanation for phenomena of the acquisition of morphology; (c) it makes pragmatic relevance predictable. Dressler (1989) makes use of twenty criteria in determining the differences in degree between inflection and derivation. Only three of those criteria will be mentioned here: (a) inflection is more productive than derivation as the latter involves various limiting factors; (b) prototypical inflection does not lead to a change of word class, whereas prototypical derivation does; (c) inflection serves syntax (has syntactic consequences), whereas in the case of derivation syntactic relevance only shows up via the change of word class involved.

⁵ Generative grammar, thinking as it is exclusively in terms of dichotomies, has to make its choice of whether it regards *-hat/-het* as an inflectional or a derivational suffix, whereas theories that accept continua do not have to do that.

2. The excessive⁶

In the Hungarian National Text Corpus,⁷ a number of examples involving the excessive can be found (see (1) and (2)). As the examples in (2) show, the prefix *leg-* may occur as many as three times in a given word form (but more than two occurrences of *leg-* are rare, even though *leg-* prefixation is in principle freely iterable, restricted by productional and perceptual considerations only). Excessive formation is fully productive (all gradable adjectives can be prefixed for the excessive) and lexicalised instances do not occur.

- (1) (a) Mondhat bárki bármit, a szerelem a világon a *legesleg*jobb dolog.
‘No matter what anybody says, love is absolutely the best thing in the world.’
- (b) A *legesleg*nagyobb öröm félelem nélkül élni.
‘To live without fear is absolutely the greatest pleasure.’
- (c) A király [...] berontott a trónterembe, annak is a *legesleg*eldugottabb sarkába, ott dühöngött [...].
‘The king [...] rushed into the presence chamber, into absolutely the most remote corner of it, and went on fretting and fuming there [...].’
- (d) Balmazújvárosból jött, a *legesleg*szegényebbek mélyvilágából.
‘He comes from Balmazújváros, the depths of absolutely the deepest poverty.’
- (e) [...] én vagyok a *legesleg*rosszabb kedvű.
‘[...] I am in absolutely the worst mood of all.’
- (2) (a) [...] az ellenőrzöttek ugyanazt a trükköt használják, mint az ellenőrzők *legesleges*felsőbb főnöke.
‘[...] those controlled make use of the same trick as the absolutely absolutely topmost boss of the controllers.’
- (b) Szerintem a *legeslegesleg*finomabb csokiból kettő van [...].
‘I guess we have two pieces of absolutely absolutely the best chocolate [...].’

The superlative, as is known, semantically expresses the highest degree along some scale of values. There is nothing better than the best, nothing greater than the greatest, nothing more remote than the most remote,

⁶ The pragmatics of the excessive was first discussed in Dressler – Kiefer (1990). This section is a more elaborate version of what was said in that paper.

⁷ All examples cited in this paper (unless noted otherwise) have been gleaned for me from the Hungarian National Text Corpus by Gábor Kiss whom I wish to thank here. The Corpus contains approx. 150 million running words at present; I have looked at roughly 500 randomly chosen occurrences of each of the patterns under scrutiny here, with a roughly ten-word context taken into consideration in each case.

nobody poorer than the poorest, nothing worse than the worst. Therefore, the superlative and the excessive are not different semantically; it is only in pragmatic terms that the latter can differ from the former.⁸ For instance, in (1d), the superlative would do just as well since there can be no semantic difference between *leg-* and *legesleg-*: whoever is *poorer* is poor, and whoever is *the poorest* is even more so; there is no further room for even deeper layers of poverty (semantically speaking). Thus, the function of the excessive must be something else: it expresses that the speaker thinks the place where the person comes from is as poor as can be and that he would like to draw the listener's attention to that fact emphatically. The superlative refers to the highest degree of a scale, thus *x is the poorest* means that of all the individuals considered, *x* represents the poorest one. This is exactly what the excessive means, too—except that it also suggests that *x* could not possibly be even poorer than he already is and that the speaker would like to draw the listener's attention to that. Accordingly, the excessive always has some emotional colouring, as opposed to the superlative that is usually the result of factual comparison (but see (3)). The semantic meaning of superlative and excessive is therefore the same, but the latter, as opposed to the former, carries some pragmatic meaning as well.

In everyday speech, the excessive is one way of expressing a hyperbole. In a hyperbole, what is big is seen/shown to be bigger than life, what is small is presented as smaller than it actually is, a feature that increases the perceived intensity of the phenomenon at hand. Even a simple superlative may often do that, e.g., when a deceased relative is described in a death notice as “the most faithful husband, the best father”, and so on. A sequence of superlatives or excessives is especially well suited to arousing the listener's attention, to heighten tension. Here is a widely known literary example. Madame de Sévigné begins one of her letters to her daughter as follows:⁹

- (3) What I will write about now is the most surprising, the most amazing, the most wonderful, the most fascinating, the most triumphant, the most astounding, the most unbelievable, the most unexpected, the most gigantic and the tiniest, the most ordinary and the brightest, even today the most clandestine, the most glamorous, and the most enviable history.

⁸ In Dressler – Kiefer (1990) I mistakenly claimed that there is a presuppositional difference between the superlative and the excessive.

⁹ Cited in Hungarian translation by Fónagy (1975, 481).

If we replace all superlatives in (3) by excessives, the passage only becomes even more effective.

What is *more urgent* is urgent enough; what is *the most urgent* is obviously even more so. Similarly, *more shameful* is shameful, and clearly *the most shameful* is also that. *The most urgent* is the highest degree of urgency: *absolutely the most urgent* cannot be more urgent than that: the excessive and the superlative do not differ semantically:

- (4) (a) Milyen feladatok megoldását látja legsürgösebbnek?— A *legeslegsürgösebb* az M1-es autópályát üzemeltető társaság pénzügyi gondjainak megoldása.
 ‘What do you think are the most urgent tasks?— Absolutely the most urgent one is to solve the financial troubles of the company running the M1 motorway.’
- (b) [...] a túlzókok használata sem merész, az a *legeslegszégyenletesebb*, amikor a szégyen lehetőségét is kétségbe vonja [...].
 ‘[...] it is not too bold to use the excessive here: absolutely the most shameful thing is that he doubts even the possibility of shame [...].’

In (4a), the speaker wishes to draw his listeners’ attention to the urgency of the task, and in (4b), to the shameful character of the situation concerned. In the given speech situations, the highest possible degree of urgency and the highest imaginable degree of shamefulness is referred to.

Almost half of the 500 utterances involving excessive, chosen at random from the corpus, include the forms *legeslegjobb* ‘absolutely the best’, *legeslegnagyobb* ‘absolutely the biggest/greatest’, and *legeslegújabb* ‘absolutely the newest’. Further very frequent forms (with 20 to 30 occurrences each) are *legeslegutolsó* ‘absolutely the very last’, *legeslegvégső* ‘absolutely the most final’, *legeslegelső* ‘absolutely the very first’, *legeslegelőször* ‘absolutely the very first time’, *legeslegutoljára* ‘absolutely the very last time’, *legeslegvégére* ‘absolutely to the very end’, *legeslegelején* ‘absolutely in the very beginning’, *legeslegvégén* ‘absolutely in the very end’. Consider a few examples:

- (5) (a) A szakszervezeti főbizalmi jelentéséből a *legeslegutolsó* bekezdést hadd olvassam el [...].
 ‘Let me read out absolutely the very last paragraph of the report of the chief trade union steward [...].’
- (b) Az igazság az, hogy a megszakítás az a *legeslegvégső* eszköz, amihez a sportszakmai személyzet nyúl [...].
 ‘The truth is, interruption is absolutely the last measure that the body of sports experts will take [...].’

- (c) [...] Svédország külügyminisztere a *legeslegelső* feladatnak nevezte, hogy [...].
 ‘[...] the foreign minister of Sweden said it was absolutely the first task of all to [...].’
- (d) Minden feltört dióba, szétzúzott kő belsejébe te pillantasz be *legeslegelőször*.
 ‘You will be absolutely the first one to glance into every cracked nut, into every smashed stone.’

In all these cases, the use of the excessive can be paraphrased as follows: the speaker wants to draw the listener’s attention to the importance of the event he is speaking about. Words that unambiguously define (extreme points of) spatial order or temporal sequence are semantically ungradable. Even *utolsó* ‘the last’ and *legutolsó* ‘the very last’ are not semantically different; hence *legutolsó* ‘the very last’ and *legeslegutolsó* ‘absolutely the very last’ cannot involve any semantic difference, either. By using the excessive in (5a), the speaker wants to suggest that he considers the last paragraph of the report to be important (in the given speech situation). The same applies to *legeslegvégső* ‘absolutely the most final’ in (5b). In (5c), the context is Hungary joining the European Union, an event that the speaker probably considers to be an important task even more than the Swedish foreign minister does. Likewise in (5d), it is the wider context that explains the use of the excessive: the text is about secrets and miracles. The speaker wants to call the listener’s attention to these.

It is interesting to note that the excessive never occurred in the corpus as the opposite of a positive or comparative (and rarely as the opposite of a superlative) adjective, i.e., no examples similar to the constructed ones below (that is, where the excessive is used instead of the repetition of an adjective in the positive) have been found, though it is clear that the excessive can be used as a corrective device.¹⁰

- (6) (a) Mi az utolsó határidő? — A *legeslegutolsó* határidő augusztus 31.
 ‘What is the last deadline? — Absolutely the very last deadline is 31 August.’
- (b) Szép ruhát vegyek fel? — A *legeslegszebbet*.
 ‘Shall I wear a pretty dress? — Absolutely the prettiest possible.’

This is probably due to the fact that the corpus does not contain a large amount of dialogues.

In sum, the excessive does not differ semantically from the superlative: both signal the highest degree of the property referred to by the ad-

¹⁰ See also Dressler–Kiefer (1990, 71).

jective. Whatever the excessive additionally conveys in the given speech situation belongs to pragmatics. In a pragmatic interpretation of the excessive, an important role is played by the speaker's intention, the aim he wants to achieve with what he says, the strategy employed. The listener knows that the excessive is semantically identical with the superlative; hence he also knows that it is not the denotative meaning of the utterance that the speaker wants to enrich by using the excessive. The use of that form can only be relevant if the speaker wishes to convey some pragmatic meaning that cannot be expressed by the denotative meaning. As we have seen, that pragmatic meaning is that the speaker wants to draw the listener's attention to the importance of what he is saying by emphasising the highest possible degree of some property. That meaning appears to the listener as a conversational implicature. In the case of words unambiguously describing spatial order or temporal sequence, the superlative carries a pragmatic meaning already; the excessive just strengthens it even more.¹¹ In that case, we cannot speak of the highest possible degree of some property in the first place.

3. The diminutive suffix

In what follows, the pragmatic meanings of the diminutive suffixes *-cska/-cske* and *-ka/-ke* will be discussed; we ignore the diminutive suffix *-i*. Of the two suffixes mentioned, *-cska/-cske* is the more productive one since its use is limited by fewer conditions.¹² The two suffixes do not differ either semantically or pragmatically. The basic meaning of the diminutive suffix is 'small, a little'; the meaning 'a little' (i.e., 'not much') occurs with mass nouns (e.g., *tejecske* 'a little milk'). However, that basic meaning is often overridden by the pragmatic meaning (Dressler–Kiefer 1990; Dressler–Merlini-Barbaresi 1993; Kiefer 1998; and see below). The derivational process is of almost unlimited productivity in the case of monomorphemic bases, and lexicalisation is very infrequent.¹³

¹¹ Comparative forms of *elején* 'in the beginning of', *végén* 'in the end of', *utolsó* 'the last' do not exist.

¹² The distribution of the two diminutive suffixes essentially depends on phonological properties of the base. The issue is discussed in detail in Kiefer–Ladányi (2000).

¹³ Derived words often preclude the use of a diminutive suffix. For instance, abstract nouns in *-ság/-ség* '-ness' cannot be diminutivised (**jóságocska* 'little goodness', **szélességecske* 'little width'); nor can deverbal nouns in *-ás/-és* '-ing' denoting

The speaker can always use a diminutive suffix to convey some pragmatic meaning: e.g., *fonémácska* ‘small phoneme’ (referring either to a phoneme that is the speaker’s special favourite or to one that has a very limited distribution), *definíciócska* ‘little definition’ (the definition is either not very significant or else it is not full, not faultless, etc.), *implikaturácska* ‘tiny implicature’ (minor, insignificant implicature, or one that is the speaker’s favourite, etc.). A more exact definition of the pragmatic meaning involved can only be given if the wider sentential context and the speech situation are known.

In this section, I will provide a more detailed overview of the typical uses of the diminutive suffix in Hungarian than is given in the papers cited above, on the basis of the material of the Hungarian National Text Corpus. I wish to emphasise, however, that the discussion will be restricted to the typical uses.¹⁴ The occurrence of diminutive forms cannot be predicted; but the typical speech situations in which they tend to be used can be listed. We will see that the pragmatic meaning of the diminutive suffix can be derived, in general, from its semantic meaning, the sentential context, and the speech situation. Also, it is possible to determine the typical semantic fields that are compatible with the given pragmatic meaning of the diminutive suffix. It is to be emphasised, however, that in principle the speaker can use the diminutive form of any base at any time; incompatibility may only arise between certain lexical fields and certain speech situations. Thus, for instance, it is unlikely that lovers should indulge each other with diminutive forms of abstract nouns.

The pragmatic meaning of the diminutive suffix depends on the meaning of the base, too; in other words, the meaning of the base contributes to whether the diminutive form should be attributed both its semantic and pragmatic meanings, or primarily some pragmatic meaning only. This does not contradict the assumption that morphopragmatics is for the investigation of pragmatic consequences of morphological rules. The input of morphological rules has to include reference to the semantic range of bases for which the diminutive suffix has the meaning ‘small

events (**ásásocska* ‘a little digging’, **nézésecske* ‘a little watching’). Examples of lexicalised derivatives include the event nouns *főzőcske* ‘a doll’s dinner party’, *fogócska* ‘game of tag’, *bújócska* ‘hide and seek’, as well as *tálka* ‘bowl’, *asztalka* ‘small table’, *szócska* ‘small word, particle’.

¹⁴ ‘Typical use’ will simply be taken to be coterminous with frequency of occurrence in the corpus studied: a use is typical of it occurs at least 20 times in the randomly selected 500 examples.

object'. In the examples that follow, the diminutive suffix carries its semantic meaning only:

- (7) (a) Ez a *könyvecske* az első önálló magyar nyelvű neveléstudományi-didaktikai szakkönyv.
'This small book is the first independent textbook on the theory of education and didactics ever published in Hungarian.'
- (b) Mindennap megnézi a postaládát, csikorog a *kulcsocska* a zárban [...].
'She looks into the mailbox each day, the little key scroops in the lock [...].'
- (c) Mind ez ideig remélték, hogy a lelőhelyről több ilyen *kőlapocska* előkerül még [...].
'They have been hoping so far that more such tablets would be found at the place of discovery [...].'

This meaning can be reinforced by the immediate context (the presence of the adjective *kis* 'small'):

- (8) (a) Egész sor *kis ablakocska* [...].
'A whole row of small windows [...].'
- (b) A *kis könyvecske* [...].
'The small booklet [...].'
- (c) Az a *kis házacsk*a [...].
'That small house [...].'

In the environment of a diminutive noun we often find adjectives like *kis* 'small', *pici* 'tiny', *törpe* 'miniature' that merely reinforce the diminutive meaning since in examples like (8a–c) the meaning 'small' is present even without the adjective. To generalise this observation: diminutive forms of names of physical objects usually enrich the meaning of the base by the semantic feature 'small' and have no pragmatic meaning.

But this does not preclude, even in such cases, the possibility that the speaker uses the diminutive suffix to convey pragmatic meaning. It is easy to imagine situations in which the speaker refers to large objects by *könyvecske* 'small book, booklet', *kulcsocska* 'small key', *kőlapocska* 'tablet'. Suppose, for instance, that someone is reading a very large codex. By asking *Mit olvasol abban a könyvecskében?* 'What are you reading in that tiny little book?', the speaker may emphasise the large size of the book. In that case, the use of the diminutive suffix is 'non-serious', since it means just the opposite of what it is supposed to mean. When 'small' stands for 'large', the speech situation can invariably be characterised by the attributes 'funny', 'non-serious'. It is no surprise

therefore that Dressler–Merlini-Barbaresi (1993) takes the feature ‘non-serious’ to be the invariant pragmatic meaning of the diminutive suffix: that meaning is in fact present in most uses of that suffix (see below).¹⁵ However, the presence of that feature is only obvious in cases where ‘small’ does not actually mean small. In the cases illustrated by (9), (11), and (12) below, the feature ‘non-serious’ is not present.

Names of tiny animals are often used in a diminutive form, except in scientific discourse. Pragmatically, the presence of the diminutive suffix suggests that the speaker wants to express his emotional attitude—something that a technical text would not tolerate. From the use of diminutive forms, then, we can conclude that the text is not a scientific one. This use is illustrated in (9a–d):

- (9) (a) [...] ahány méhecske egy nyitott mézesbödön körül zümmög nyáron a kertben.
 ‘[...] like the number of bees buzzing around an open jar of honey in the garden, in summer.’
- (b) [...] egy mumifikált mutáns méhecske.
 ‘[...] a mummified mutant bee.’
- (c) [...] tántorog az összeharapdált legyecské [...].
 ‘[...] the fly, bitten all over, is staggering [...].’
- (d) Egérkéekkel kísérleteztek.
 ‘They were experimenting with mousies.’

Bees give us honey, so we tend to be fond of them;¹⁶ and we pity both the fly bitten all over and the little mouse used as a laboratory animal. Why do people use a diminutive suffix with names of animals that are small anyway? The semantic meaning of the diminutive suffix (whereby *méhecske* = ‘small bee’) yields its place to the pragmatic meaning in this case: the speaker has an emotional attitude to the entity referred to by

¹⁵ This only means, of course, that whenever the diminutive suffix does have a pragmatic meaning, that meaning may be connected with the feature ‘non-serious’. Otherwise the feature ‘non-serious’ could be taken to be a semantic, rather than pragmatic, property. The feature ‘non-serious’ is by no means interchangeable with the feature ‘ironical’ (as suggested by one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper) since irony can only be spotted in utterances like (16e) below.

¹⁶ The form *méhecske* is often used for phonological convenience only; the form *méh* vacillates between two pronunciations with or without dropping the final *h*. Many people simply say *méhecske* in order to avoid that difficulty (Péter Siptár, personal communication). In this case, the diminutive suffix does not contribute any meaning, semantic or pragmatic.

the noun, and wishes to communicate that attitude. The exact nature of the emotion concerned can only be determined, of course, by examining the speech situation.

Diminutive forms of animal names, with the exception of cases exemplified in (9), occur in texts meant for small children (especially in fairy tales), cf. (10a–d):

- (10) (a) [...] *kis ló, hiszen te beszélni is tudsz, táltos paripácska, kis cigány lovacska.*
 ‘[...] little horse, so you can speak, little magic steed, little Gypsy horsey.’
- (b) [...] *kakas és a tyúkocska, szlovák népmese [...].*
 ‘[...] rooster and the little hen, Slovakian folk tale [...].’
- (c) [...] *két iciri-piciri ökröcske.*
 ‘[...] two teeny-weeny little oxen.’
- (d) *Szamárka, ökröcske, juhocska [...].*
 ‘Little donkey, little ox, little sheep [...].’

The world of tales is an imaginary world, one in which everything looks smaller or downright small. Words like *lovacska* ‘little horse’, *tyúkocska* ‘little hen’, *ökröcske* ‘little ox’, *szamárka* ‘little donkey’, *juhocska* ‘little sheep’ can refer to full-grown animals, too. The world of tales is ‘non-serious’ because it does not directly reflect reality. The transposition of the real world into that of tales is carried out by the help of the diminutive suffix here. Hence, *paripácska* is not ‘a small magic steed’, just like *tyúkocska* is not ‘an undersize hen’. The corresponding adjective plus noun constructions (*kis X* ‘small X’) do not convey the pragmatic meaning of the diminutive forms. *Paripácska* ‘little horse’, *tyúkocska* ‘little hen’, *ökröcske* ‘little ox’, *szamárka* ‘little donkey’, *juhocska* ‘little sheep’ only occur in specific contexts like tales told to little children or adult–child dialogues.

Three typical speech situations in which diminutive suffixes are generally observed to be often used are missing from the corpus.¹⁷ When a mother talks to her small child (motherese,¹⁸ baby talk), she typically uses diminutive forms. The bases concerned are primarily names of body

¹⁷ With respect to these contexts, cf. Dressler – Merlini-Barbaresi (1993, 116–70). The use of diminutive suffixes in such functions is very frequent, in addition to Hungarian, in Southern German dialects, in Italian, in Spanish and in Slavic languages, too.

¹⁸ Since the speech of fathers, grandparents, close relatives, caretakers may be characterised by the same features, the term *caretaker speech* is often used instead (Crystal 1994, 258).

parts and names of kinds of food that belong to the diet of a small child, but names of objects with which a small child gets into contact (*párnácska* ‘little pillow’, *ágyacska* ‘little bed’, *kendőcske* ‘little shawl’, *labdácska* ‘little ball’, etc.) may also occur. The three semantic fields just mentioned can be illustrated by the following constructed examples:

- (11) (a) Add ide a kezecskédet!
 ‘Give me your little hand.’
 (b) Tedd ide szépen a fejecskédet!
 ‘Put your little head down here.’
- (12) (a) Kérsz még egy kis tejecskét?
 ‘Do you want some more milkie?’
 (b) Kapsz mindjárt egy kis vizecskét.
 ‘You will get a little water right away.’
- (13) (a) Gyere, megigazítom a párnácskádat.
 ‘Come, let me fix your little pillow.’
 (b) Kéred a kendőcskédet?
 ‘Do you want your little shawl?’

The body parts of a small child are really small—but the amount of milk or water offered need not actually be little. And what is more important: one would never offer milk or water to an adult using *kis tejecske/vizecske* ‘a little milkie/water’ even if it is a very small amount of milk or water: (12a–b) thus unambiguously signal baby talk.¹⁹ The same applies to (13a–b): apart from the fact that the pillow or shawl may be ‘normal’ size, these diminutive forms are not used in adult-to-adult conversation. And since in such cases diminutive names of body parts are not normally used either, utterances like (11)–(13) automatically evoke a particular speech situation that primarily refers to the relation between mother and small child; but in the case of (11a–b) the addressee could be a lover, or in the case of (12a–b), a pet animal. Owners of dogs or cats often address their pets using diminutive nouns. The three speech situations, talking to a small child, a lover, or a pet, are clearly distinct. Nevertheless, with respect to the pragmatic meaning of the diminutive

¹⁹ This is not to say that diminutive forms may not be used within a family or a small community even in adult conversation. However, such exceptions do not invalidate the claim in the text, since in this case an adult listener is treated as if he was a child.

suffix, there is not much of a difference: the suffix expresses endearment, loving, fondness here.

In baby talk, the diminutive forms of names of body parts generally retain their original semantic meaning; for love talk this does not necessarily hold. An adult foot (if not overly big) can be referred to as *lábacsk*a ‘little foot’, and an adult mouth as *szájacsk*a ‘little mouth’.

- (14) (a) Nagyon szeretem a szép szájacskádat.
 ‘I love your nice little mouth a lot.’
 (b) Mutasd a formás lábacskádat!
 ‘Let me see your shapely little foot.’

In all three cases (where the partner is a small child, a pet, or a lover), the use of the diminutive suffix is controlled by the speech situation in which the decisive criterion is the relationship between speaker and listener. The diminutive suffix primarily conveys the speaker’s emotion (joy, happiness, love, affection).

Bor ‘wine’, *sör* ‘beer’ and *konyak* ‘brandy’ (names of other alcoholic drinks did not occur in the corpus) also often occur in casual speech with a diminutive suffix.²⁰ Since *borocsk*a ‘little wine’, *söröcske* ‘little beer’, *konyakocsk*a ‘little brandy’ are characteristic of adult casual speech, their use signals both that the speaker takes his relationship to the listener to be an intimate one and that he is on good terms with alcoholic drinks. One would never speak of *borocsk*a if one did not like wine. The use of the diminutive suffix does not relate to the amount of drink involved. Utterances like (17a–c) only occur in adult conversation:

- (15) (a) [...] a *konyakocsk*a helyében [...].
 ‘[...] in place of the little brandy [...].’
 (b) [...] egyébként nagyon finom *borocsk*a is hozzájárul [...].
 ‘[...] otherwise very nice little wine also contributes [...].’
 (c) Export a *söröcske*.
 ‘The little beer is an exported brand.’

Diminutive forms of names of intellectual products, political or other organisations, as well as functions/occupations are mostly pejorative. The

²⁰ The noun *vodka* may also take the diminutive suffix (*vodkácska*) since the ending *-ka* is not identified as a Hungarian diminutive suffix in it. The names of other spirits may, of course, also be diminutivised: *tequilácska*, *cinzanócska*, *armagnacocsk*a, etc.

positive emotions (joy, happiness, affection) that are so characteristic of diminutive forms used in other speech situations are not found here.

- (16) (a) [...] kénytelen turáni újságocskát kiadásával vigasztalódni.
'[...] he has to comfort himself by publishing a little Turanian newspaper.'
- (b) [...] kompromisszumokból álló szegényes reformocskát [...].
'[...] a miserable little reform consisting of compromises [...].'
- (c) [...] minden kis pártocskát igyekszik parlamenti képviseletet biztosítani magának [...].
'[...] all little parties try to make sure they are represented in Parliament [...].'
- (d) Ez lenne tehát a *Kóstoló* című műsorocskát „nyári koktélja”, mondja eufemisztikusan egy titokzatos hang.
'This should be the “summer cocktail” of the little program called *Foretaste*, a mysterious voice says euphemistically.'
- (e) [...] nem valószínű, hogy valamelyik helyi elnököcske ugyanerre a következtetésre jut az elemzésben [...].
'[...] it is unlikely that some local little chairman should come to the same conclusion in his analysis [...].'

From (16a) it becomes clear that the newspaper involved is not a serious, well-known one; from (16b), that the reform is not an overall one; (16c) tells us that the parties we are talking about are not only small but also insignificant; (16d) that the program is not of a very high quality; and finally, (16e) suggests that the chairman cannot be that of a serious organisation or company but that he is fond of making a fuss. These or similar conclusions can be drawn from the presence of the diminutive suffix itself; the context, at most, reinforces our conclusion or makes it more precise. The meaning 'small' is in some sense present in all diminutive nouns of the utterances in (16a–e), that is, their semantics does not get lost altogether, but the point is not in the semantic meaning. The difference is clearly shown by comparing the following pairs: *kis újság* 'small paper' – *újságocskát* 'little paper', *kis reform* 'minor reform' – *reformocskát* 'little reform', *kis párt* 'small party' – *pártocskát* 'little party', *kis műsor* 'short program' – *műsorocskát* 'little program'; *elnököcske* 'little chairman' cannot even be opposed to *kis elnök* 'a short chairman'.²¹ The

²¹ It is possible that diminutive forms of words denoting a function or occupation are all pejorative in their meaning (cf. also *igazgatócske* 'little director', *mérnököcske* 'little engineer'); 'little' in this case equals 'insignificant, trifling, trivial, petty', i.e., the meaning component 'little' is understood to refer to the director's or engineer's significance, not his size.

adjective–noun constructions do not carry the pragmatic meanings of the diminutive forms. On the other hand, it is clear that the latter do contain the meaning component ‘small’; if that was not the case, expressions like **nagy újságocska* ‘big little newspaper’, **nagy reformocska* ‘big little reform’, **nagy pártocska* ‘big little party’, **nagy műsorocska* ‘big little program’ should be acceptable.

Let us finally add that some adjectives of negative meaning may also take a diminutive suffix that subdues or tones down the negative meaning and hence the impoliteness involved.

- (17) (a) Talán, hogy túlságosan szeleverdi? Vagy ostobácska, butuska?
‘Maybe she’s too light-headed? Or a little stupid, a little silly?’
- (b) [...] bájosan butácska, de hűséges segítőtársát, Hálefet, a szolgát [...].
‘[...] his charmingly silly but faithful helper, Haleph, the servant [...].’
- (c) Az viszont gyöngécske érv, hogy lám, a nagy európai [...].
‘On the other hand, it is somewhat poor for an argument that, see, the great European [...].’
- (d) A gyengécske Trnava elleni összecsapáson a bíró 43 szabálytalanságot [...].
‘During the match against the weakish team of Trnava, the referee awarded 43 fouls [...].’
- (e) OK bunkócska, akkor a Pagony Lajos vagy, ami [...].
‘Okay you little boob, then you must be Lajos Pagony, a fact that [...].’

We do not always prefer to tell the truth; to name a negative property is something that we especially try to avoid, for reasons of politeness, in everyday speech situations. Therefore, we resort to various ‘subduing’ strategies. One of these is negation of the positive adjective: ‘not clever’, ‘not strong’. But we also often use diminutive forms for the same purpose. We do not say that someone is *ostoba* ‘stupid’, *buta* ‘silly’, or *bunkó* ‘boorish’, but rather that he is *ostobácska*, *butuska*/*butácska* or *bunkócska*. It is true that *ostobácska* may simply mean ‘stupid’ or ‘rather stupid’, but how much better it sounds! The team is not weak but weakish, which is less categorical. Similarly, we can say someone is *lustácska* ‘a little lazy’, *rosszacská* ‘a little bad’, *betegecske* ‘a little ill’. Of adjectives referring to a positive property, it is only *okoska* ‘cute little’ that the corpus contained data of; but of course *szépecske* ‘nice little’, *ügyeske* ‘skilful little’, *csinoska* ‘pretty little’ etc. can also be formed with ease. In this case, the function of the diminutive suffix is obviously not subduing but rather being amiable. However, productivity is out of the question in this case since the range of basic adjectives cannot be freely extended.

The semantic meaning of the diminutive suffix is in all cases ‘small, a little’; that meaning can be modified or added to in various speech situations that are accounted for within pragmatics. We have seen that diminutive forms are used in various speech situations and that the meaning of the diminutive suffix will change or be modified accordingly, in several different ways. In most cases, it signals a positive emotional attitude of the speaker towards the person or thing denoted by the base, but it may carry a pejorative meaning, too.

4. The modal suffix *-hat/-het*

The suffix *-hat/-het* ‘may, can’ differs from verb forming suffixes in a number of basic respects: (a) it does not produce a new verb, as evidenced by a total lack of lexicalisation; (b) verbs suffixed by it cannot be further suffixed to become infinitives or participles (**játshatni* ‘to be able/allowed to play’, **játsható* ‘being able/allowed to play’, **játshatott* ‘one that was able/allowed to play’, **játshatandó* ‘one that will be able/allowed to play’, **játshatva* ‘while being able/allowed to play’);²² (c) suffixation by *-hat/-het* is not restricted by any condition (a property characteristic of inflection but not of derivation). Therefore, we are entitled to exclude *-hat/-het* from among prototypical derivational suffixes.²³

The suffix *-hat/-het* can express various modal meanings (Kiefer 1981; 1985). Of the types of modality, it is primarily deontic modality that is normally taken to be pragmatically relevant, since it is closely connected to what are called deontic speech acts (command, prohibition,

²² Of course, *játsható* ‘playable, something that can be played’, formed by the adjective forming suffix *-ható*, is grammatical; what is claimed to be ungrammatical here is the participial form (in *-ó*) of the verb *játshat*. Similarly, *játshatott* is only unacceptable as a past participle; as a past-tense verb form ‘he was able/allowed to play, he may have played’ it is quite all right. Compare *a gyerek játshatott* ‘the child was allowed to play’ vs. **a játshatott gyerek* ‘the child that was allowed to play’. We only say that something ‘can be derived’ if the forms at hand can be derived in a productive way (i.e., in a way that can be stated in a rule). Occasional formations like *olvashatni* ‘one can read about it’, *mondhatni* ‘one could say; as it were’ are marginal and are not evidence of productive derivability.

²³ Given the fact that we accept the continuum view in this paper, we do not have to decide if *-hat/-het* is a derivational suffix or an inflectional one. See also footnotes 4 and 5.

permission, exemption).²⁴ However, we have to draw a distinction between deontic modality and deontic speech acts (Kiefer 1998). Deontic modality only expresses deontic possibility or deontic necessity; in order for utterances involving deontic modality to express deontic speech acts, other conditions have to be met, too. Such conditions are a hierarchical relationship between speaker and listener, the speaker's conviction that the action can be performed, and time and place appropriate for performing the action. All in all, deontic speech acts can only be performed if all necessary parameters of the speech situation are present. Typical deontic speech acts are illustrated by (18a–d).

- (18) (a) *Este elmehetsz moziba.* 'You can go to the cinema tonight.'
 (b) *Este nem mehetsz el moziba.* 'You cannot go to the cinema tonight.'
 (c) *Este el kell menned moziba.* 'You must go to the cinema tonight.'
 (d) *Este nem kell elmenned moziba.* 'You need not go to the cinema tonight.'

If the background to the utterances in (18a–d) is taken to be the set of permitted and forbidden, advised and not advised things, then (18a) expresses that going to the cinema tonight is among the things permitted, and (18b) expresses that going to the cinema tonight is among the things not permitted. The present state of affairs may make going to the cinema tonight necessary, as expressed by (18c), or may not make going to the cinema tonight necessary, as stated in (18d). (18a–d) as they stand are statements of facts, not speech acts. They turn into speech acts if the speaker has the appropriate authority and assumes that his utterances will have the intended effect on the listener. In such a speech situation, (18a) can be interpreted as giving permission, (18b) as prohibition, (18c) as a command, and (18d) as exemption.²⁵ If the relationship between speaker and listener, the social status of the participants is not the appropriate one, (18a–d) cannot be interpreted as deontic speech acts.²⁶

²⁴ Deontic speech acts are discussed in detail by Lyons (1977, 823–41).

²⁵ Of course, all speech acts that are connected to deontic possibility or to deontic necessity count as deontic speech acts. Thus, in addition to those mentioned above, further examples of deontic speech acts include *Elmehetek este moziba?* 'May I go to the cinema tonight?' and *Muszáj este elmennem moziba?* 'Do I really have to go to the cinema tonight?'; the former is an instance of asking for permission, and the latter is an instance of asking for exemption from an obligation.

²⁶ The problem of deontic speech acts is made theoretically interesting by the fact that deontic logic was originally a kind of action logic, that is, it took speech acts

In the case of some verbs, deontic modality in an utterance always expresses a deontic speech act; in other words, these utterances are always used in speech situations where ‘deontic’ conditions are all met. This is exemplified in (19a–b).

- (19) (a) *Elmehetsz.* ‘You can go now.’
 (b) *Elmehetek?* ‘Can I go now?’

It is to be added here that deontic modality, in the case of action verbs, cannot in general be told apart from other kinds of modality at the semantic level. The utterance in (18a), for instance, may also mean that the listener will have an opportunity to go to the cinema (circumstantial modality, cf. Kiefer 1981). Given that deontic speech acts are directed at actions, a modal utterance containing a state verb like *Okos lehetsz* ‘You may be clever’ cannot be deontic. In general, however, the various kinds of modality can only be told apart on the basis of the speech situation.

But the morphopragmatics of the modal suffix *-hat/-het* is by no means exhausted by deontic speech acts.

Although the invariant lexical meaning of *-hat/-het* is ‘possibility’, in some circumstances it may also express ‘necessity’. Here are a few examples:

- (20) (a) *Nemcsak a rangnak, hanem a tanult foglalkozásnak is búcsút mondhattak.*
 ‘They had to say goodbye not only to their position but also to their profession.’
 (b) [...] *legalább öt évig dolgozhatom éjjel-nappal, amíg kiheverem valahogy ezt a sikert.*
 ‘[...] I will have to work night and day at least for five years before I recover from the effects of this success.’
 (c) *Elrontottam, most kezdhetem az egészet előlről.*
 ‘I’ve messed it all up, now I have to start it all over again.’

In all three utterances, we have to do with necessity: the profession has to be given up, the speaker will have to work night and day, and

to be its starting points (Wright 1971). The intention that the various kinds of modality should be given a unified treatment was what led to the insight that deontic possibility/necessity and deontic speech acts have to be kept distinct (Kratzer 1978). The distinction between the two also entails that a deontic sentence may express, as an utterance, some other—not deontic—speech act. For example, the utterance *Este elmehetsz moziba, én vigyázok majd a gyerekre* ‘You can go to the cinema tonight, I will look after the baby’ does not express the act of giving permission: it simply expresses a possibility.

he has to start it all over again. The suffix *-hat/-het* can be replaced by the appropriate form of the modal verb *kell* ‘must, have to’ without the meaning of the utterance being lost or altered. What causes that change in the meaning of *-hat/-het*? Observe that all three utterances refer to states of affairs that are in some sense negative: in (20a) people were deprived of their positions and professions; in (20b–c), negative context is signalled by *kihever* ‘recover from the effects of’ and by *elront* ‘mess up’, respectively. The negative context restricts the number of possibilities to just one. But if we can only choose to do a single thing, this amounts to necessity. This is obviously not logical necessity but rather deontic necessity or circumstantial necessity (one that is dictated by the circumstances).

If we remove the negative context from (20a–c), the possibility cannot be interpreted as necessity in them. The utterances below simply refer to possibility:

- (21) (a) Időben érkeztek, s így búcsút mondhattak barátaiknak.
 ‘They came in time, so they could say goodbye to their friends.’
 (b) Hála Istennek, még legalább öt évig dolgozhatom.
 ‘Thank God, I can go on working at least for five more years.’
 (c) Kezddhetem bontani a falat?
 ‘Can I start demolishing the wall?’

As in other languages (e.g., German, English), modal forms of *kér* ‘ask for’ and *kap* ‘get’ in the indicative or in the conditional can be used to express polite requests.

- (22) (a) Kérhetek/Kérhetnék még egy szelet kenyeret?
 ‘Can I/Could I ask for another slice of bread?’
 (b) Kaphatok/Kaphatnék még egy csésze kávé?
 ‘Can I/Could I get another cup of coffee?’

It is only first person forms (singular and plural) of these verbs that can fulfil that function. Though other verbs, too, can be used with the suffix *-hat/-het* in polite requests (e.g., *Megkérdezhetném, hogy hány óra van?* ‘Could I ask you to tell me the time?’, *Kinyithatnám az ablakot?* ‘Could I open the window?’), the forms of the verbs *kér* ‘ask for’ and *kap* ‘get, obtain’ in examples (22a–b) are fully conventionalised means of conveying polite requests. In other words, the pragmatic meaning is not deducible from the semantics of these forms. This, in turn, means that polite requests cannot be connected with the rule introducing the modal

suffix; consequently, it cannot belong to morphopragmatics. (22a–b) are conventionalised polite formulae that lexical pragmatics is entitled to account for.

The modal forms of some verbs, including *mond* ‘say, tell’, *tud* ‘know’, *akar* ‘want’, *lát* ‘see’, *gondol* ‘think’, *csinál* ‘do’ have a very rich pragmatics. Let us see a few examples.

- (23) (a) Hát akkor hogyan mondhattad a többi embernek, hogy csak az összetartásban az erő?
‘How could you tell the others then that unity was strength?’
(b) Hogy mondhatsz ilyet, Rózsika?
‘How can you say that, Rosie?’

Uttered with an exclamatory intonation, *hogy(an) mond+hat* ‘how say/tell+can’ is a conventional formula of reproach, hence its description is the task of lexical pragmatics rather than that of morphopragmatics. The utterances below are different:

- (24) (a) Mondhatták az öregasszonynak, hogy a fia rossz, ő tudta, hogy jó.
‘In vain did they tell the old woman that his son was bad, she knew he was good.’
(b) Mondhatta ő, hogy beteg, nem hittek neki.
‘In vain did he say he was ill, nobody believed him.’

In these utterances, *mondhat* ‘say/tell+can’ is equivalent with *hiába mond* ‘say/tell in vain’, that is, (24a–b) mean the same as (25a–b):

- (25) (a) Hiába mondták az öregasszonynak, hogy a fia rossz, ő tudta, hogy jó.
‘In vain did they tell the old woman that his son was bad, she knew he was good.’
(b) Hiába mondta, hogy beteg, nem hittek neki.
‘In vain did he say he was ill, nobody believed him.’

It appears that this interpretation is possible if two conditions are met: (a) the verb *mond* ‘say, tell’ has to carry main stress, and (b) the context of the utterance has to be negative. If, for instance, main stress falls on the personal pronoun, the utterance turns into one with a deontic (or epistemic) meaning:²⁷

²⁷ It should be noted that if the subject *ők* ‘they’ is pronounced with contrastive topic intonation and *mondhatták* ‘could tell’ with focus intonation, only the deontic reading is available.

- (26) (a) *Ők* mondhatták az öregasszonynak [...] / 'They were allowed to tell the old woman [...] / 'It may have been them who told the old woman [...]'
- (b) *Ő* mondhatta [...] / 'He was allowed to say [...] / 'It may have been him who said [...]'

The 'say/tell in vain' reading can only come about if the context precludes the deontic meaning. In (27a–b) the negative context is not there, hence the deontic reading is not excluded:

- (27) (a) *Mondhatták* az öregasszonynak, hogy a fia rossz, ő nem sértődött meg. / 'They could tell the old woman that his son was bad, she was not offended.'
- (b) *Mondhatta*, hogy beteg, nem bántották érte. / 'He could say he was ill, nobody discomfited him for that.'

The utterances in (27a–b) also show that the required negativity of the context is not simply based on the presence of a negative particle or other lexical means of negation. The listener can only take the context to be sufficiently negative on the basis of his knowledge of the world and of the lexical meanings included in the utterance.

The modal verb forms in the examples below play a role similar to that of pragmatic particles:²⁸

- (28) (a) *Szép divat, mondhatom.* / 'A nice custom, I daresay.' (= I think it is dreadful.)
- (b) *Gondolhatjátok, nem volt se ebéd, se semmi.* / 'You can imagine, there was no lunch, nothing.'

Mondhatom 'I can say so' (in the ironical sense seen in (28a)) has been lexicalised in this form, other inflected forms of *mond* 'say, tell' (like *mondhatjuk* 'we can say so') do not have a similar function. Therefore, the interpretation of this use of *mondhatom* cannot be a morphopragmatic problem; it has to be accounted for by lexical pragmatics. On the other hand, *gondolhatjátok* 'you-pl. can think' is not a lexical item since *gondolhatod* 'you-sg. can think', *gondolhatja* 'you-sg. can think' (polite address), *gondolhatják* 'you-pl. can think' (polite address) also have the same function. With these forms, the speaker wants to prepare the listener to some consequences that seem to be natural given

²⁸ The term 'pragmatic particle' is used here in the sense of Abraham's and others' 'discourse particle' (Abraham 1991).

what preceded. The speaker wants to involve the listener in drawing the appropriate conclusions.

This concludes our survey of the major pragmatic meanings of the modal suffix *-hat/-het* that can be spotted in our corpus. In addition to speech acts based on deontic possibility, *-hat/-het* can express deontic necessity as well as lack of possibility (cf. *hiába* ‘in vain’+ *V*), and it can occur with some forms of *gondol* ‘think’ by which the speaker wants to prepare the listener to some consequences. Epistemic *-hat/-het* does not have a special pragmatic meaning. Semantically, the meaning of the suffix is clear: it expresses possibility in all cases. All that is added by the speech situation belongs to the realm of pragmatics.

5. Summary

In this paper, I have discussed some pragmatic aspects of Hungarian morphology. The subject-matter of morphopragmatics is the investigation of types of pragmatic meaning that can be seen to be connected with morphological rules. My assumption was that semantics comes first; pragmatic meaning can be derived on the basis of semantic meaning, the wider sentential context, and the speech situation. Following Dressler–Merlini-Barbaresi (1993), I have drawn a distinction between lexical and morphological pragmatics. The former looks at pragmatic aspects of individual lexical items, while the latter investigates those of morphological rules. Therefore, the study of pragmatic aspects of lexicalised morphological derivatives is also part of lexical pragmatics. Pragmatic meaning primarily arises in cases of competing or non-prototypical morphological rules. Prototypicality has been defined on the basis of Dressler (1989). I have investigated the excessive, the diminutive suffix, and the modal suffix *-hat/-het* since all three of them exemplify non-prototypical derivation.

The excessive is semantically identical with the superlative that expresses the highest degree of the property denoted by the adjective; they only differ in terms of pragmatic meaning. Words that unambiguously determine (endpoints of) spatial order or temporal sequence are exceptional in that they are semantically ungradable, hence their superlative also carries an exclusively pragmatic meaning. The semantic meaning of the diminutive suffix is ‘small, a little’; that meaning can be modified or added to by the speech situation, or even be turned into the feature ‘insignificant’ in the case of names of functions or occupations. The modal suffix *-hat/-het* semantically expresses possibility; utterances containing

it can be used to convey various speech act meanings or other pragmatic meanings. In all three cases, all that goes beyond semantic meaning due to the speech situation is the concern of pragmatics.

A pragmatic investigation of a number of other morphological phenomena of Hungarian is a task for future research.

References

- Abraham, Werner 1991. Discourse particles in German: how does their illocutive force come about? In: Werner Abraham (ed.): *Discourse particles*, 203–50. John Benjamins, Amsterdam.
- Crystal, David 1994. *An encyclopedic dictionary of language and languages*. Third edition. Penguin Books, London.
- Dressler, Wolfgang U. 1989. Prototypical differences between inflection and derivation. In: *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung* 42: 3–10.
- Dressler, Wolfgang U. – Ferenc Kiefer 1990. Austro-Hungarian morphopragmatics. In: Wolfgang U. Dressler – Hans C. Luschützky – Oskar E. Pfeiffer – John R. Rennison (eds): *Contemporary morphology*, 69–78. Mouton de Guyter, Berlin & New York.
- Dressler, Wolfgang U. – Lavinia Merlini-Barbatesi 1993. *Morphopragmatics*. Mouton de Guyter, Berlin & New York.
- Fónagy, Iván 1975. [A] hiperbola [Hyperbole]. In: István Király (ed.): *Világirodalmi lexikon* 4 [An encyclopaedia of world literature, vol. 4], 480–6. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest.
- Kearns, Kate 2000. *Semantics*. Macmillan, Houndmills & Basingstoke.
- Keckés, István 2003. *Situation-bound utterances in L1 and L2*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin & New York.
- Kiefer, Ferenc 1981. What is possible in Hungarian? In: *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 31: 147–85.
- Kiefer, Ferenc 1983a. A kérdő mondatok szemantikájáról és pragmatikájáról [On the semantics and pragmatics of questions]. In: Endre Rácz – István Szathmári (eds): *Tanulmányok a mai magyar nyelv szövegtana köréből* [Papers on the textology of present-day Hungarian], 203–30. Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest.
- Kiefer, Ferenc 1983b. Szemantika vagy pragmatika? [Semantics or pragmatics?]. In: *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* 86: 5–22.
- Kiefer, Ferenc 1985. A *-hat/-het* képző jelentéséhez: az episztemikus *-hat/-het* [On the semantics of the modal suffix *-hat/-het*: Epistemic *-hat/-het*]. In: *Általános Nyelvészeti Tanulmányok* 16: 131–53.
- Kiefer, Ferenc 1998. Morphology and pragmatics. In: Andrew Spencer – Arnold M. Zwicky (eds): *The handbook of morphology*, 272–79. Blackwell, Cambridge MA & Oxford.
- Kiefer, Ferenc 1999. La modalité et la pragmatique. In: *Revue d'études françaises* 3: 25–31.

- Kiefer, Ferenc 2000. Jelentélmélet [Semantic theory]. Corvina, Budapest.
- Kiefer, Ferenc – Mária Ladányi 2000. Morfoszintaktikailag semleges képzések [Morpho-syntax-neutral derivation]. In: Ferenc Kiefer (ed.): Strukturális magyar nyelvtan 3. Morfológia [A structural grammar of Hungarian 3. Morphology], 165–214. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest.
- Kratzer, Angelika 1978. Semantik der Rede: Kontexttheorie – Modalwörter – Konditionalsätze. Scriptor, Königstein.
- Lyons, John 1977. Semantics I–II. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Swart, Henriëtte de 1998. Introduction to natural language semantics. CSLI Publications, Stanford CA.
- Wright, Georg Henrik von 1971. Explanation and understanding. Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY.

Address of the author: Ferenc Kiefer
Research Institute for Linguistics
Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Benczúr utca 33.
H-1068 Budapest
Hungary
kief@nytud.hu