Manuscript.

Edith Kádár

"Translating" insights of theoretical linguistics into educational settings - with a special focus on resources for Hungarian as L1

Abstract: The article is a contribution to the discussion on the possible benefits L1 education could gain from a linguistically informed approach, and also a reflection on aspects of adapting notions from different theories to classroom needs. I will first present some general problems of approaching language education through a linguistic lens, then the problems raised by attempts to "translate" the results, insights, and key concepts of theoretical linguistics into educational settings will be framed in the context of elaborating educational resources for Hungarian as L1 for the age group 10-14 years. The second part offers two examples with the potential that the approach taken here might be fruitful beyond the language boundaries within which it was conceived. By choosing *focus* and *valency*, I intend to highlight two concepts that benefit from explicit reflection and can be explored based on pupils' linguistic competence and previously grounded experience. In this process, language data is used as a training tool in developing pupils' analytic skills with respect to their vernacular and language in general, while exposing pupils to grammatical structures in different contexts of meaning-making can also enhance their text interpretation and text production skills.

1 Introduction

Science-informed practice and content are something that we expect of school subjects and huge discrepancies in this respect are rare indeed. However, linguistics seems to be a field that has an astonishingly low impact on the content or methodology of the corresponding subject area in many countries. The school subject Hungarian (L1) language and literature, for instance, has a long tradition in a prescriptive approach to language, and language is generally reduced to grammar presented as a set of classes of abstractions (with no insight into the criteria for classification or the problematic aspects of this classification) and rules governing their combination (the nature of these rules not being addressed either). Some of the reasons for this state of the art are external (it

---

Edith Kádár, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, edith.kadar@ubbcluj.ro
ORCID ID 0000-0002-1029-2401

stems from tradition, policy-makers' ideologies, etc.), but some are internal and, perhaps, shared by all fields of science: the elaboration of a coherent framework for education is a huge challenge, some of the reasons being (i) the multitude of different competing theories, all with their own set of theory-internal assumptions and complex terminology; (ii) the lack of consensus within the field on what might be rightfully included in school practice; and (iii) methodological issues of how to transfer research findings into education in an age-appropriate way. All these suggest that small-scale interventions (related to certain topics or confined to several class hours) can have an impact in terms of stimulating interest in a field but cannot reform the pedagogical tradition or lead to science-informed approaches to whole subject areas.

In my paper, I will first present some general problems of approaching language education through a linguistic lens in the context of a work in progress which started in 2009 with a group of MA students, and which later led to a curricular reform backed up by course books, teachers' guides, and teacher training workshops. Second, two examples will aim to illustrate the problems raised by attempts to "translate" the results, insights, and key concepts of theoretical linguistics into educational settings. One is related to *focus* (which is naturally linked to *word order* in Hungarian), the other, to the concept of *valency*. My choice is partly motivated by the fact that both word order and valency are deemed of great importance for educational purposes by linguistic experts (cf. Van Rijt and Coppen 2017), and partly by the assumption that the approach taken here could be fruitful beyond the language within which it was conceived.

2 Difficulties in approaching L1 linguistic education through a linguistic lens

2.1 What linguistics can offer to first language education?
Although among the vehicles of knowledge transfer, school, which serves as the framework of institutional education, is no longer the dominant field, it still plays a major role in providing tools for orientation, critical analysis, and understanding of increasingly high volumes of information coming from various sources, as well as in reflecting not only on scientific results, but also on the way science operates. Therefore, it is not irrelevant to raise the general question of what science can offer to education and the particular question of what linguistics can offer to first language education.

If we look more generally at what linguistics has to offer education, we can think, in particular, of theoretical models of both system and use and the description/analysis of the language system, in addition, maybe, to general principles (such as variability, markedness, etc.), some of which may challenge established ideas (beliefs) and attitudes of the general public. Not much of this can actually be documented to come up in school education. Among theoretical models, for instance, models of the system ('grammars') would be the first to come to mind. However, theoretical models are generally missing, while descriptions of a language mostly cover syntax and

morphology, rarely phonology, typically do not touch on semantics, do not thematize variation and change, synchronic and diachronic perspectives, etc. Models of use such as (pragmatics, psycholinguistic models of language processing, sociolinguistic models of language behavior, etc.) are largely absent. Some stylistic and textological aspects may surface here and there. But why is it that everything that occurs in education is at best only partially informed by linguistics?

Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy's comprehensive reflection (Tolcsvai Nagy 2004) on the multifaceted and complex relationship between linguistics, linguistic description, and L1 education highlights, among other things, the problem that teaching "scientific" content in schools is different from the way science works. Science is in constant change, a multitude of different theories compete at the same time, each with its own set of theory-internal assumptions and complex terminology. Therefore, if we make some observations and generalizations in a certain theoretical framework, our results can presumably be interpreted only within the same theoretical framework. Furthermore, science is discursive and problem-oriented, it is a field of constant inquiry, which advances through trials and errors, constantly rewriting itself, theories and results being launched and disapproved in a recurrent fashion. In contrast, what school expects is some kind of well-defined knowledge, a definite content of knowledge.[2] Up-to-date knowledge, however, can only be offered in a theory-bound and time-shifted way (cf. the path from conferences to the classroom), consequently, the conversion of a theory and its empirical material into school curricula becomes "contemporary" with newer versions of the theory. How can then (i.e. in what form and at which level of "granularity") scientific results (even those conceived in different theoretical frameworks) be introduced into education at different age levels?

The elaboration of an educational model is a challenge in itself, as it involves compromises in terms of the details of the theory, accuracy, complexity etc., otherwise the analyses/descriptions would be too technical, overwhelmingly detailed and incomprehensibly complex for the targeted age group.[3] Furthermore, it is not even trivial to identify what is (more or less) the subject of consensus in the field, which conceptual knowledge from linguistics is relevant to education and is therefore justified to be included in school practice implicitly or explicitly. Additionally, there is the difficulty of linearizing, i.e. devising a learning path that can "untangle" the hierarchical network of concepts and can meet the individual needs of pupils in a way that would sum up into knowledge about language (KAL). And if all these were to be resolved, a further methodological issue arises regarding the ways of transferring research findings into education: what should be,

---

[2] This translates into traditional practices of education suggesting that we have a clear solution, a definition, a category, an answer, etc. for everything, and that virtually all knowledge (including teacher knowledge) is a system of knowledge based on unquestionable facts. Consequently, it offers a very distorted picture of how knowledge actually arises, on what spectrum we can make tenable claims, or what we can treat as fact.

[3] The emphasis on age-appropriateness arises from the fact that it is the age between 12 and 14 at the earliest that children move from the concrete to the formal/abstract operational stage (provided that targeted and domain-specific efforts are invested, cf. Piaget 1972). Understanding and manipulating grammatical concepts and categorizations requires abstract, formal thinking (as opposed to matching type examples with category labels, which can even lead to good exam performance despite being nothing more than a "memory game").

for instance, the division between mere categorical knowledge transfer and problem solving? Problematization itself is quite alien to the (Hungarian) pedagogical tradition, which favors the transmission and reproduction of knowledge, therefore the distribution of categorical transmission vs. problematization inevitably tips the balance in favor of the former. Nevertheless, communication viewed as problem solving (solving situations with language/texts) could be a good starting point.

2.2 The context

In the academic year 2008/2009, with a group of MA students at the Hungarian and General Linguistics Department of the Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), dissatisfied with the current state of the art, we started out searching for new paths in language education mainly to help the group members' own teaching practice. Almost a decade later, unexpectedly and by surprise, this work got a chance to be incorporated into the new curriculum for Hungarian as a mother tongue for grades V–VIII as part of a process (started in 2013 for primary education, continued in 2017 for secondary education) whereby the Romanian education system has witnessed a transition towards a competency-based curriculum. This came with the burden of finding ourselves writing textbooks for language *and* literature,[4] based on the group members' teaching experience with our materials and their work with pupils of different dialectal and social backgrounds. The three course books and two workbooks published so far (targeting grades V, VI, and VII, respectively) were backed up by several teacher training workshops and two volumes meant to fill the gap in terms of a teachers' guide and exercise bank. These guides (Kádár 2017, 2018), informed by generative, functional, and cognitive theories of grammar, provide the teacher with the linguistic background necessary for the interpretation of the new curriculum. Additionally, they function as a support resource that facilitate work with our textbooks (and class work in general), featuring sets of texts, exercises, and activities engaging pupils into a guided discovery of linguistic phenomena in a stepwise fashion.

We decided to adopt no single model or approach to language, partly to avoid the suggestion that there is a unique possible framework for properly analyzing linguistic phenomena, partly because we found that, for the age group targeted, different linguistic aspects could more readily be framed through the insights of one theory than through another.

In search of consensual facts in linguistics, we kept our focus on empirically available *form-function pairs*, and we tried to replace the profoundly prescriptive keynote of previous textbooks (cf. Kádár 2020) with a problem-oriented approach to linguistic phenomena. In these resources, the system of the explicit knowledge about language and linguistics is replaced by a rich linguistic environment, in the context of which we offer structured experiencing and experimenting with the

---

[4] In educational structures with tuition in Hungarian, Hungarian is a core subject of the compulsory school curriculum. It goes by the name of *Communication in Hungarian as a mother tongue* in the first two years and *Hungarian language and literature* starting with grade III.

relevant language facts, also putting strong emphasis on pupils' communicative needs and building on their linguistic experiences in familiar communication situations. The aim is to reflect on pupils' unconscious knowledge that underlies their language use and to further develop their implicit linguistic competence by experimenting with a variety of forms, patterns, and structures in meaningful communicative contexts, while avoiding (more precisely: postponing) the detailed presentation of a system of grammar and the related metalinguistic concepts.[5]

More broadly, the central purpose of these resources is (a) to develop/enhance oral and written text understanding and text production skills[6] by enriching pupils' repertoire of choices, refining their sensitivity to both situational and socio-cultural variations in the linguistic make-up of utterances and their effect on meaning, communicative intention, style, etc.; (b) taking advantage of the fact that language data is easily available to pupils both by observation and by introspection, to raise their language awareness, to stimulate their linguistic reflection about certain aspects of language, by introducing them to an exploratory, inquiry-based approach to language (also reflecting on the linguistic diversity within the language as it surfaces in the variation of the data to be observed); and (c) to support pupils' learning of foreign languages by providing a perspective on their mother tongue as being a particular implementation of a possible human language.

Consequently, both the development of skills and knowledge acquisition are targeted. But instead of taxonomies and (the illusion of) a coherent rule system, it is the immediate needs of the text or the speech situation that will define what appears as content and when. This avoids the artificial separation of grammar and other aspects of communication, and by zooming in on choice and effect, it brings to the forefront the role language itself plays in usage-events.[7]

---

[5] Metalanguage is a main focus in the traditional classroom. In contrast, we aim at developing language awareness by building on pupils' intuitions powered by their mental grammar, and by confronting them with tokens of the target structures without explicit metalanguage or textbook rules. Linguistic terminology is not avoided, however, but the process to label (or define) a concept is not considered to be a goal in itself. Labels are taken to be useful "shortcuts" in case we plan to build on the experience resulting from a linguistic activity. (It is somehow similar to the way we introduce the label Bob Smith instead of, "You know, mom, the freckled boy we met at the market yesterday when we were paying for the melon, and who murmured a faint 'hello'" – provided that we plan to have further conversations about Bob with our mother). Just as with language acquisition: labels (words) do not come with a full understanding of a concept, the latter being dependent on consistent and interacting learning experiences. Therefore, the definition of terms (a main focus in traditional deductive teaching contexts) is replaced by a series of activities actively engaging pupils in a guided discovery of different linguistic phenomena. The (possibly different) "working definitions" arrived at by pupils as a result of this process of empirical grounding of linguistic phenomena can be refined and turned into explicit knowledge about language later (e.g. in high school). This approach can avoid the traps of explicit (age-inappropriate, academic or age-appropriate, but inadequate) definitions being offered as "definitive" and ready-to-be-learned "knowledge", and it is more similar to the way we learn outside the classroom, namely by a continued exposure to new contexts and a continuous process of building increasingly schematic semantic structures to accommodate relevant aspects of the new data.

[6] The most comprehensive, systematic review on the efficacy of grammar teaching in enhancing written text production (Andrews et al. 2006) concludes that there is no evidence of such an effect. However, grammar there is defined as descriptions and pedagogic prescriptions about how sentences are constructed, and the effect of the explicit teaching of this is examined.

[7] Langacker's terms is used to refer to "an actual instance of language use, in all its complexity and specificity" (Langacker 2008: 220).

All this is in sharp contrast to the standard practice characterized by a bottom-up presentation of levels of language description (phonemes, morphemes, etc.), where there is a predefined order[8] of content to be "covered" for the narrow scope of providing a formal training in mechanical underlining, classifying, labelling, identifying, etc. Teachers used to this approach find it confusing that our resources cannot be browsed by the usual keywords, that the same linguistic concept will surface in a variety of chapters and contexts, and, conversely, that grammatical elements belonging to different levels of description co-occur due to their functional similarity or grammatical interrelatedness. Frequently, the difficulty perceived as a consequence of the differences in the structuring offered by the current approach and the established structure of teacher's professional knowledge is projected on to pupils (who, on the contrary, do not possess a similar organization of explicit grammatical concepts), and therefore the approach is abandoned before experimenting with it. Accordingly, 6 years later, there still is a huge gap between the approach of the new curriculum (and the course books and teaching aids interpreting it), on the one hand, and traditional classroom practice (reinforced by course books that are confidently ignorant about the approach of the new curriculum), on the other hand. This gap is both a methodological one (including teaching and learning methods, assessment and evaluation methods, some of these lacking a backup from theories of learning) and a professional one (which stems from the fact that the results of modern linguistics and related disciplines have not until now had any significant impact on language education in schools in spite of being part of the training of teachers, or even despite being part of teachers' declarative knowledge). In practice, in the majority of classrooms, grammar still means taxonomies of prescriptive grammar taught for the main purpose of parsing sentences and word forms. What is taught as knowledge about language is often incoherent and contains many spurious rules and other inadequacies. Furthermore, as László Kálmán puts it (characterizing the comparatively similar situation in Hungary):

> The most important problem with the linguistic background of traditional school grammars is that they embody a fundamentally wrong view of language: they make as if language was a conventionally regulated system like legal codes or orthography, the rules of which are not to be discovered but learned. So linguistic structure for them is not a scientific problem but a normative system that may change over time but is something people obey (if they speak "correctly") rather than spontaneously follow. (...) As a rule, each topic is introduced by "defining" the central concepts (the quotes are intended to express that very often the explanations are unsatisfactory), then briefly illustrated, then imprinted on the children through exercises. (Kálmán 2008: 3–4)

In this landscape, the reception of the new curriculum often boils down to a list of new terminology doomed to be "covered", instead of being a guideline for the teacher. Thus, following the tradition of lessons such as, for example, "Pronouns" or "Modal suffixes", lately "Focus" or "Word order" have joined the definition-example-exercises course of a regular language class, causing no time-management problems in teacher-centered classroom practices, and being easy to assess through close-ended exercises.

---

[8] Agreement suffixes, for instance, are taught before the sentence level (or syntactic categories and functions) that would shed light on the function or morphosyntactic context of these morphemes.

As a conclusion, attempts to "translate" the insights and key concepts of theoretical linguistics into educational settings can be difficult due to the factors discussed in Section 2.1 above, and, additionally, the results can be disregarded or maladapted by the main actors of the educational process. However, it is a fact that in more than a century traditional practices of grammar teaching have failed to yield a sufficient level of competence to understand, use, evaluate, reflect on, and engage with texts in order to achieve one's goals, develop knowledge, fulfill one's potential, participate in society and the social practices of language: as the first results of PISA 2022 show (OECD 2023: 3), Romania ranks second to last among EU countries with its 428 points in reading (48 points below the OECD average), the proportion of students scoring below a baseline level of proficiency (level 2) being 42% (OECD average 26%), and only 2% (OECD average 7%) of the students being high-performing (i.e. scoring at level 5 or above). Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore new approaches.[9]

3 Depicting grammatical categories in theoretical linguistics and language education. Two examples

The two examples presented below are meant to contribute to the discussion on how L1 education can benefit from a linguistically informed approach, and also to reflect on aspects of adapting notions from different theories for classroom needs (for the age group 10–12 years). Both examples are an illustration of how we can build on pupils' knowledge and previously grounded experience instead of applying predefined categories to description. The knowledge we can build on is, of course, a practical/applied/implicit knowledge, not one that is reflected upon, but we can discover its rules heuristically (inductively, moving from observation of data to hypotheses and generalizations), provided that we restrict our analysis to those language phenomena that are regular enough to be explored by this age group.

The first example to be considered in Section 3.1 below is the concept of focus (the discussion of which is strongly linked to word order), the second one is related to valency (cf. Section 3.2).

---

[9] Apart from the group members' more-than-a-decade-long teaching experience with different versions of our materials in their work with pupils of various dialectal and social backgrounds and the sporadic informal feedback from other teachers since 2017, we do not possess data that could show the quantified benefits of the approach taken here – which is a huge drawback in the era of data science. Lacking the financial power, infrastructure, and expertise for large-scale research, we should rely on the results of the national evaluation due at the end of grade 8. However, this is not a suitable measure of the outcome of the new curriculum and the teaching materials that interpret it for (at least) two reasons. Firstly, because a certain proportion of teachers and the textbooks used by them disregard the approach of the new curriculum, and secondly, because these tests are compiled by volunteer teachers who are forced to follow a rigid template of several predefined question types and scoring, regardless of the text to which they refer, and are not supported by experts with knowledge of measurement theories and experience in the design, validity, and reliability of the instruments. The novelty of the 2022 PISA survey is that it was conducted in Romania with a representative Hungarian sub-sample, but until the data has been processed, we only have informal expert press reports that Hungarian students performed better in reading than the Romanian average.

Besides the fact that both word order and valency are deemed of great importance for educational purposes by linguistic experts (cf. Van Rijt and Coppen 2017), the first example offers the opportunity to discuss the role of both empirically available form-function pairs (that happen to be shared by all variants of Hungarian) and *negative evidence* in discovering grammatical patterns. The valency-related example is a hands-on tool for visualizing grammatical concepts and relations, which could otherwise be too abstract for the given age group. The *puzzle tool*, as we named it, is a model of native speakers' knowledge regarding the linguistically salient aspects of the structure of eventualities[10] and ways of mapping these to sentence structure. It can be used to reflect on some aspects of linguistic competence regarding, for instance, the distinction between arguments and adjuncts of a predicate, the morphological realization of a predicate-argument relation, constituent structure, etc.

Activities operating on the concept of focus and the related word order phenomena are introduced in grade V (ages 10–11 years), and we provide materials for 31–38 class hours. The puzzle tool appears in grade VI (ages 11–12 years), and 40–48 class hours are covered by the activities proposed. As these exercises and activities are stepping stones in a carefully designed path, which is characterized by concentrated occurrence of the relevant language facts in meaningful contexts, it would be difficult to single out one or two signposts along the road. Instead, some details of the linguistic facts are provided with a highlight on those aspects that could be food for reflection for pupils in the mentioned age groups.

3.1 Structural focus without a focus projection

Students (i.e. prospective teachers) at our department get acquainted with the notion of focus in the context of generative accounts of Hungarian. They learn that the immediate preverbal position is a specific focus projection, and the focused expression appears in this position by virtue of focus-movement. The details of this movement (whether it is feature-driven, whether it is triggered by stress or by the need to create a predicate–subject structure expressing specificational predication) may only emerge in the course of PhD studies, as well as debates about the semantic or pragmatic, obligatory or optional nature of the exhaustiveness effect. All these involve technicalities that are strongly theory-dependent and can be dauntingly complex. Therefore, its application to mass education (for the age group targeted) does not seem a working alternative to traditional grammar.

However, focus is one example that (meta)concepts from modern linguistic theories *can* be used to shape the content of the school curriculum if detached from their original theoretical framework. It is not necessarily something that pupils need to learn about (we do not explicitly introduce it, indeed), but it presents itself as easily accessible through direct observation, therefore, it can be approached through activities that explore the (regular) correspondences between forms and meanings in a context-sensitive way.

---

[10] I follow Bach (1986) in using the term *eventuality* as a cover term for events, processes, and states.

In adult grammar, the structural focus position (i.e. the immediately preverbal focus slot) may be filled by constituents of different categories that will carry the nuclear pitch accent. This form relates to a meaning that can be characterized in terms of contrast and identification by exclusion, indicating the presence of alternatives relevant for the interpretation of the sentence. More precisely, preverbal focus identifies the members of a relevant set (explicitly mentioned, inferred or otherwise contextually available) for which the predicate is valid, excluding the other members of the set (i.e. creating a complementary set).[11]

Both word order and prosody are directly available for perception, and the associated meaning is part of the linguistic competence of a native speaker.[12] Therefore, we can start by observing word order patterns in general and provide a rich linguistic environment in the context of which we can offer structured experiencing and experimenting with the relevant language facts. This comes with a special emphasis on oracy (speaking and listening), an aspect much neglected by the previous curricula and classroom practice. Similarly, word order is not even mentioned in the traditional curriculum, despite the fact that word order variations, being empirically available, are easy to describe by intuitive notions like precedence and adjacency.

Hungarian is a discourse-configurational language exhibiting a rather flexible word order. The order of the major constituents in a sentence is dependent on the way the sentence is incorporated in the discourse. For instance, all possible orders of the words in (1) are grammatical (provided that the determiner precedes the accusative-marked noun).

(1)   *Péter, el, vette, a, kést*
        Peter, verb modifier (VM), take.PST.3SG, the, knife.ACC

However, these 24 linearization variants come with a difference in meaning and prosody, and one string will not be natural in exactly the same context as the other. The least context-dependent of all linearizations is the one in (2a). Consequently, this is the order that seems most natural if there is no context to which we have to accommodate our sentence . (2a) is a *neutral sentence* (cf. Kálmán et al. 1986): the *verb modifier* (VM)[13] occurs in a preverbal slot, and the sentence exhibits

---

[11] While there is a general agreement on focus having a core function of evoking alternatives, the nature of the exhaustive meaning component is under debate. According to the standard analysis (É. Kiss 1998), the exhaustiveness effect is part of the truth-conditional content of these sentences. Others (e.g. Wedgwood 2005, Onea 2007, Onea and Beaver 2011) consider it to be a pragmatic, therefore a strongly context-dependent effect. É. Kiss (2017) proposes an analysis of focus constructions, in which exhaustiveness follows from the properties of specificational predication.

[12] As Pintér's (2018) experimental findings in child language suggest, children's accuracy in focus identification and interpretation lags behind that of adults'. For instance, under certain conditions, exhaustive reading can arise as a conversational implicature in the case of neutral sentences, too. Pintér also finds that preschoolers do not associate an exhaustive reading with the constituent occurring in the structural focus position of the sentence, and that there is a continuous increase of exhaustive interpretations with age. In the case of the age group targeted by us, we can assume that pupils' competency matches adult grammar.

[13] VMs are non-referential complements incorporated into the verb forming a phonological word with it (cf. É. Kiss 2002: 67–71).

level prosody, i.e. no constituent stands out carrying a pitch accent. As opposed to (2a), (2b-c) cannot be uttered out of the blue. In the written sentences (2b-c), there is a syntactic cue (the verb–VM order), while in their pronounced versions we can find both a syntactic and a prosodic cue for the focus interpretation of the definite noun phrases *Péter/a kést*[14] (i.e. we observe the prosodic prominence[15] of the immediately preverbal constituent, while the verb is deaccented, indicating given information).

(2) a. *Péter   el   vette   a   kést.*
Peter.NOM   VM   take.PST.3SG   the   knife.ACC
'Peter took the knife.'
   b. *PÉTER   vette   el   a   kést.*
'It was Peter who took the knife.'
   c. *A   KÉST   vette   el   Péter.*
'It was the knife that Peter took.'

When context is not available, the string identical sentences with no verb modifier in (3a-c) are ambiguous between a neutral and two non-neutral readings. Lexical reinforcement of the focus-reading of a preverbal constituent might be of help in such cases, as in (3d) featuring the exclusive *csak* 'only'. While all three sentences in (3a-c) match the canonical word order, they are structurally different and their pronounced versions are unambiguous: (3a) is a neutral sentence with level prosody, (3b) is unambiguously non-neutral (however, it is an aspectually ambiguous sentence[16]) with the preverbal constituent carrying a pitch accent, and (3c) is a non-neutral sentence with a pitch accent on the verb, i.e. it is a sentence featuring an *assertive focus* (cf. Kenesei 1998: 75), contrasting the implementation of an action with the lack of it.

(3) a.   *Péter   nézte   a   meccset.*
Peter.NOM   watch.PST.3SG   the   match.ACC
'Peter was watching the match.'
   b.   *PÉTER   nézte   a   meccset*
'It was Peter who was watching/watched the match.'
   c.   *Péter   NÉZTE   a   meccset.*
'Peter did watch the match.'
   d. *Csak   PÉTER   nézte   a   meccset.*
only   Peter   watch.PST.3SG   the   match.ACC
'It was only Peter who was watching/watched the match.'

---

[14] Following the practice of the literature on Hungarian focus, in the examples below capitals are used to indicate phonological prominence.
[15] Phrasal stress in Hungarian is assigned to the leftmost phonological word in the phonological phrase, while nuclear stress, to the leftmost phonological phrase in the intonational phrase (cf. Szendrői 2003).
[16] More precisely viewpoint aspect cannot be expressed morphosyntactically in sentences containing structural focus (cf. Kádár and Peredy 2014).

Pitch accent, however, is not a cue in itself, as preverbal focus and prosodic prominence do not always align in Hungarian. Phrases containing the additive particle *is* 'also' (cf. (4)) or universal quantifiers (cf. (5)) show the same prosodic prominence. In the examples below, a VM is also present, therefore, alongside the meaning, we have the VM–verb order to prevent us from identifying a preverbal focus in these sentences.

(4) *PÉTER   is   el   késett.*
     Peter.NOM also VM   be-late.PST.3SG
      'Peter was also late.'

(5) *MINDENKI   el   késett.*
     everyone   VM   be-late.PST.3SG
     'Everyone was late.'

In comparison, sentences like those in (6)–(7) feature syntactic configurations (questions with *wh*-words, sentence negation) that are characterized by the same word order and prosodic cues as sentences with preverbal focus. Exhaustification, however, does not make sense in these cases:

(6) *KIT   ütöttél   meg?*
     who.ACC   hit.PST.3SG   VM
     'Whom did you hit?'

(7) *NEM   jött   be.*
     not   come.PST.3SG   VM
     '(S)he did not enter.'

Preverbal VM and preverbal focus can result in string identical sentences, as in (8). There is no ambiguity in their pronounced versions: (8a) is a neutral sentence featuring a preverbal verb modifier, while (8b) is a non-neutral sentence with a preverbal focus. The written sentences, however, can only be disambiguated by context. In the proper context, no set of alternatives is evoked by the noun *meccset* in (8a) (as opposed to (8b)), consequently there is no implication that Peter did or did not watch something else, too.

(8) a.   *Péter   meccset   nézett.*
          Peter.NOM   match.ACC   watch.PST.3SG
          'Peter was watching a match.'
     b.   *Péter   MECCSET   nézett.*
          Peter.NOM   match.ACC   watch.PST.3SG
          'It was a match that Peter was watching.'

The data presented above paves the way for conceiving educational materials organized around the concept of focus. In the competency-based framework of the present curriculum, attention to focus constructions could have (at least) two benefits: (a) it can contribute to the development of

"sensitivity" to different aspects of communication (such as speaker intention, the mutual influence of context and word order, the role of certain linguistic forms in communication, etc.), and by this enhance text production and text comprehension skills; and (b) by observing the syntactic and prosodic cues of the preverbal focus together with the specific meaning displayed and the contexts these are/can be embedded in, it can serve as an introduction to an exploratory, inductive, and inquiry-based approach to grammar in relation to one of its subsystems, where there is no dialectal variation, therefore all speakers of the age group targeted can build on their own linguistic experience and communicative competence with the same results.

For these ends, it is safe to ignore those aspects of the focus construction that are nonexistent or marginal in pupils' linguistic environment (and in the literature on Hungarian, for that matter). As illustrated in (9) (from Horvath 2005), if structural focus (*Marit* 'Mary.ACC') is preceded by, for instance, a universal quantifier, it can lack primary stress; instead, the main stress of the clause falls on the universally quantified phrase *minden fiú* 'every boy' (specifically on *minden* 'every'). (9) would be plausible as a corrective reply to an assertion about Mary's boyfriend being the one who asked only Mary to dance.

(9)	*MINDEN*	*fiú*	*[Marit]*	*kérte*	*fel*	t	*táncolni,*	*nem*
	every	boy.NOM	Mary.ACC	asked	up		dance.INF	not
	csak	*a*	*barátja.*					
	only	a	friend.her.NOM					

'for all x, x a boy, it was Mary that x asked to dance, not only for her boyfriend (was it Mary that he asked to dance)'
Horvath (2005: 143 (9a))

As (9) illustrates, with a structural focus anaphorically given, we lose the cue of prosodic prominence. This, however, does not interfere with the attempt to shed some light on observable linguistic phenomena of information structural relevance, or even to implicitly introduce the concept of focus in contexts where systematic form (word order and prosodic cues) and meaning associations are easily observable. This introduction can later be refined through consistent and interacting learning experiences (which may include marginal examples as well), and (at the earliest in high school) can be turned into explicit knowledge about language.

The implicit introduction of the concept of focus can be achieved by abandoning the traditional decontextualized approach to language phenomena and replacing it with more meaningful, context-based and usage-centered methods. We spend much time on the interrelatedness of word order and context enhancing input so as to facilitate observing how the choice of form impacts on meaning. The general context of misunderstandings,[17] for instance, permits a concentrated

---

[17] Sentences with preverbal focus typically occur either as answers to questions or as reactions/corrections. Misunderstandings are speech events where something can go wrong because of the inadequate choices a speaker makes of his/her linguistic repertoire, not taking into account the interlocutor's knowledge, language variant, etc., or

incidence of focus constructions in everyday conversational settings. Minimal pairs (of neutral sentences and sentences with a preverbal focus) can also occur naturally, and these can provide additional help in recognizing the effect of grammatical choices one makes on meaning (more precisely on the audience's meaning-construal). It is not the case that pupils will get to learn new grammar, but they will be able to use more effectively what they already know (implicitly). This process allows, for instance, observations on focus-background partitions as anaphoric devices carrying an existence presupposition, which are easy to exploit in manipulative discourse.[18]

Pupils can reflect on the interrelatedness of word order and the way the sentence is incorporated in the discourse, on the effect of certain formulations in relation to the linguistic devices applied, and gradually develop an understanding of how to manipulate the syntactic structure of sentences to achieve different effects. More broadly, a closer observation in meaningful contexts of the finer shades of meaning encoded through grammar adds up to a training in noticing: they can observe patterns or even formulate and test hypotheses. Their insights regarding the constraints on word order can develop their analytic skills and can distill into realizing that grammar matters, and that they all have expertise in such an important area of human condition.

At the end of the process, pupils will be able to establish a generalization on the basis of their own observations. At this age, both the process and the generalization arrived at is on a "sandbox level". However, it is a huge step forward if, in exploring patterns, pupils can go beyond generalizations such as "we emphasize the new/most important information" and identify the relevant factors that seem to play a role in these form-meaning correspondences. In this process, the use of negative evidence (a type of evidence completely ignored in traditional grammar and classroom practice) can play an important role. This can occur, for instance, in (simulated) ungrammatical texts produced by non-native speakers of Hungarian. Pupils are able to distinguish between well-formed and ill-formed sentences, and thereby discover the features that make grammatical correctness and those, the absence of which results in ungrammatical forms. In search of the simplest way to help non-native speakers, pupils compare grammatical and ungrammatical sentence patterns, and, at the end of all this directed experimenting and experiencing, they will eventually be able to come up with a rule that refers to constituents (instead of words) and their relative position (instead of their linear position) in relation to prosodic cues and meaning.

As a step further, rules regarding the position of the *wh*-expressions and negative markers can easily be revealed using the insights gained in the process of exploring focus constructions.

3.2 The puzzle tool

---

the addressee being unaware of the "meaning spectrum" of different words/expressions, or being unsuccessful in trying to reconstitute ellipsis, etc.

[18] Here this simply refers to the act of influencing the interlocutor in the course of interpersonal communication (mainly oral presentation of information) using certain grammatical forms and syntactic constructions with the intention of molding certain perceptions (e.g. *So you don't answer. Are you covering for YOUR BROTHER?*).

In the previous example, word order and prosody had a prominent role. The second example will bring into play our knowledge about the linguistically relevant aspects of event structure through a model that shows the structure behind the various word order possibilities and the general behind the particular. In using this model, we strongly build on pupils' L1 competence, but the tool itself might be adapted for L2 classes, too.

The puzzle tool (developed between 2011–2012) is a tool for visualizing grammatical concepts and relations that could otherwise be too abstract for the given age group (11–12 years). It can be used to reflect on aspects of our linguistic competence regarding the distinction between arguments and adjuncts of a predicate, the morphological realization of predicate-argument relations, constituent structure, or thematic roles. Actually, out of the 26 meta-concepts suitable for enriching school grammar presented in Van Rijt and Coppen's (2017) Delphi study[19] conducted among linguistic experts from different theoretical backgrounds, at least 12[20] can be discussed having the puzzle tool as a starting point.

The puzzle tool was the result of our search for ways to "prime" children for later analytical endeavors by starting with small steps towards the hierarchical structures behind the apparent linear structure of sentences, and, more generally, to lay the foundations for deeper linguistic inquiry, while avoiding, as far as possible, to limit the range of theoretical approaches that can be implemented later (in high school or university) based on this introduction. Thus, the puzzle tool is not the implementation of a theory, but a hands-on tool that builds on children's intuitive knowledge of their language and their previous linguistic experience in various usage-events.

Speakers at this age have a very good intuition about the structure of events or states of affairs of everyday life (*scenes*,[21] as we call it in our textbooks), and they are competent users of linguistic forms that can label or describe them. Following the principles of the ERR learning cycle (evocation, realization of meaning, reflection), we start with several exercises that build on pupils' previous knowledge and experiences regarding the ways resources of language and images are deployed in meaning-making, and we focus on the similarities and differences in the possibilities offered by visual and verbal representation, respectively. One of the motivations for this linking is that both verbal and visual representation can be conceived of as a "map" in relation to a "landscape": i.e. both are based on mental representations of the external world. As for verbal representation, the peculiarities of the speakers' perception and conceptualization (along, of

---

[19] Van Rijt and Coppen (2017) interviewed linguistic experts regarding concepts of the syntax-semantics interface essential to linguistic theory and their importance in education. In addition to *form* and *meaning*, which apply to all formal linguistic concepts and which are the two main meta-concepts, 24 other meta-concepts were listed in the three rounds of the study.

[20] Besides *form* and *function*, these (theory-neutral) meta-concepts are (in alphabetical order): agreement, aspect, case (marking), complementation/modification, constituent structure, definiteness, idiomatic connections, main syntactic categories (NP, VP, AP, PP), predication, semantic roles, syntactic functions, and valency.

[21] A scene is a language-independent, perceptible event or state of affairs (typically) along with one or more participants.

course, with speaker intention, the point of view chosen, the language variant employed, the speaker's idea about the addressee's knowledge or beliefs, etc.) will determine the choice of lexical and grammatical forms. This mapping also depends on the toolkit offered by a particular language, therefore cross-linguistic comparison can be brought into the discussion in the process.

In one of the introductory exercises, we ask pupils to observe the similarities in sets of pictures and the details they differ in, and then to try to come up with a single word for the sets that would be a suitable label for the eventualities presented visually. Two such sets are presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below.

Figure 1: Set of pictures for eliciting the verb *olvas* ('to read')

The activity displayed in the particular scenes in Figure 1 differs in the setting in which they unfold (i.e. different locations, or while sitting/walking), the type of object on which attention is focused (a printed book, a newspaper, text on a tablet, tiny bumps on a piece of paper), and the sensory organ involved. Still, all these can be taken to be representations of *someone reading something*.

The scenes in Figure 2 could have different "labels" such as *to date, to kiss, to inject, to penalize*, etc. However, for Hungarian speakers, if they need to find the "greatest common divisor", i.e. a single verb for all these scenes, the verb *to give* may come to mind first (in spite of the fact that the red card is not really transacted, the injection is the act of administering a liquid, and a kiss is, in fact, a special kind of touch).
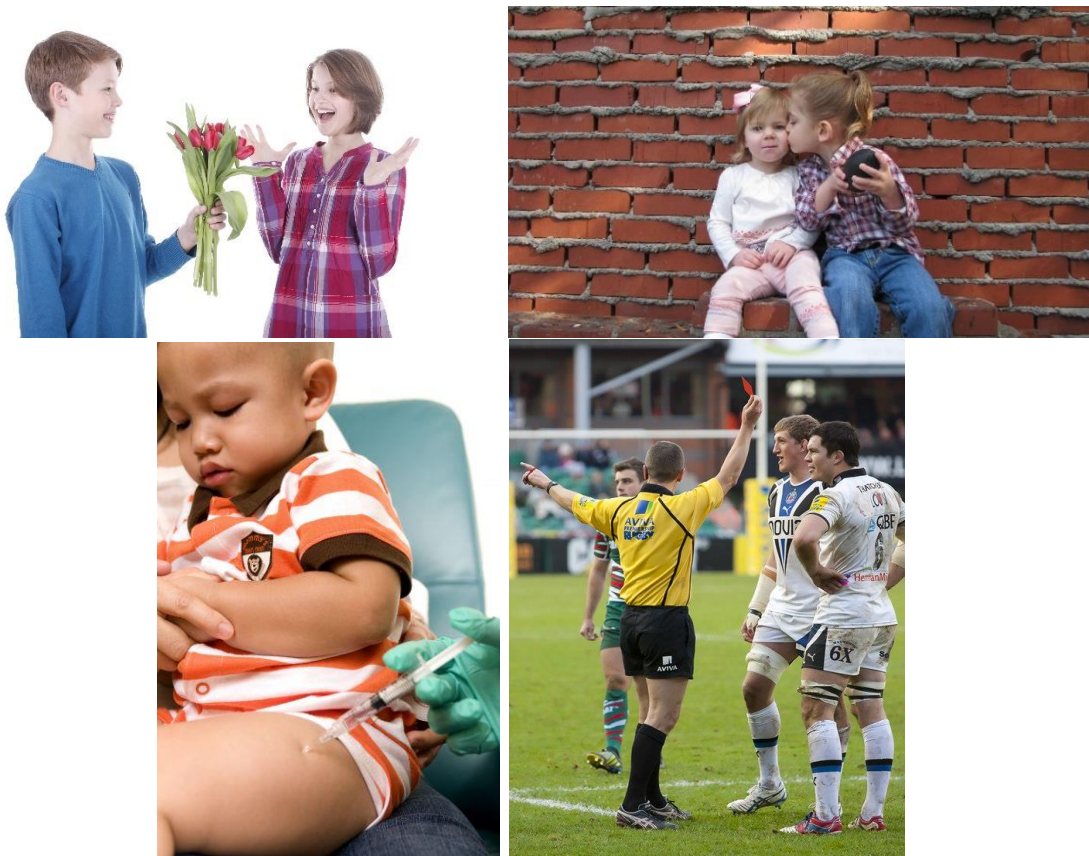
Figure 2: Set of pictures for eliciting the verb *ad* ('to give')

We chose to introduce the puzzle tool through typical transactional scenes, as these have a very clear structure for speakers of the age group targeted. In the most prototypical representation of the act of giving (cf. the image of a boy giving tulips to a girl), we can clearly identify (and delimit) the three *participants*[22] of the scene (cf. Figure 3). Accordingly, in the verbal representation of the scene, we can also identify the phrases corresponding to the components of the scene.
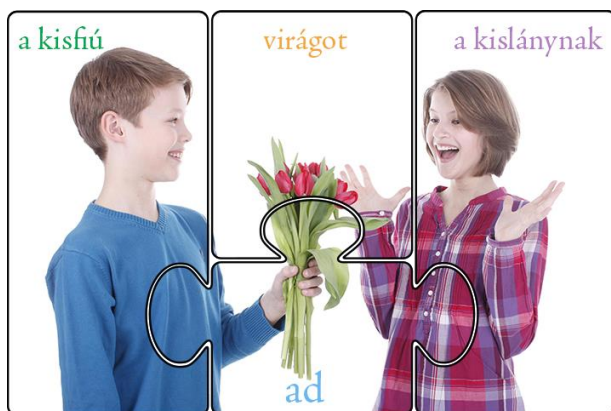
Figure 3: The "core" of the giving scene and the participants involved: *a kisfiú* ('the boy'), *virágot* ('flowers'), *a kislánynak* ('to the girl')

---

[22] *Participant* is used here in a very wide sense, to also include inanimate objects like Tool, for instance (cf. *to cut*).

As speakers, we also have an implicit knowledge regarding the semantic relation each participant has with the verb: in an act of giving there is a giver, a receiver/beneficiary, and something that is given (i.e. the given thing). At this stage, we limit ourselves to the specific manifestations of these roles instead of the general concept of semantic roles (this is similar to Perini's second level of schematization, cf. Perini 2015: 75). At a more schematic level (grammatically relevant), semantic roles like Agent, Patient etc. can be introduced, but we do not consider this to be adequate for this age group.[23] In addition, based on this introduction, we would postpone it to high school (together, maybe, with the debate on the necessity or achievability of a satisfactory inventory of thematic (proto-)roles). Our decision comes with the price that each verb will have its own set of semantic relations. This, however, does not mean that the comparison of verbs is impossible. As speakers, we have implicit knowledge about different semantic relations being coded in morphosyntactic elements in a similar fashion (e.g. a volitional actor and a nonvolitional natural force, or the initiator of transitive *break* and the undergoer of intransitive *break* are marked identically, and both are mapped to the subject). The puzzle tool is a model of speaker knowledge about form-meaning associations, and building on these associations, a general expression of valency can be achieved.

By choosing the verb *give* for "labeling" this particular scene above, we opted for a verb with the basic transfer sense. *Offer*, for instance, would additionally involve the giver's willingness to present something for the recipient to accept or reject as desired. Conversely, foregrounding the recipient of this same scene may result in the choice of the verb *to get* or *to receive*. And the examples could go on.[24] Such observations can stimulate inquiry into and reflection on pupils' own intuitive knowledge regarding the type of eventuality profiled by a verb, the set of roles displayed by the participants of these eventualities, and even the syntactic patterns to which these are mapped.

Abstracting away from the specific participants of the scene in Figure 3, we are left with verbal expressions (cf. Figure 4) that can conjure a variety of referents within the limits of their extensions.

---

[23] To reach a level of generalization where semantic roles can be introduced, one has to understand what it is, for instance, that a giver (i.e. someone who begins in possession of something and causes it to be in the possession of someone else), an eater (i.e. someone who ingests something for feeding purposes), or a reader (i.e. someone who attends to a text to process its information) have in common. This seems to be more challenging than the generalization related to vastly different scenes being labelled with the same verb (consider, for instance, the images evoked by sentences like *A barber cut my hair short.*, *Cut my pizza, please!, My father is outside cutting wood.*, which differ in several important details).

[24] Put it in terms of Frames Semantics (Fillmore 1982), different lexical units evoke different or shared frames (script-like conceptual structures) and profile various aspects and components (i.e. frame elements, roles that are likely to get a linguistic expression in sentences instantiating that particular frame) of these.
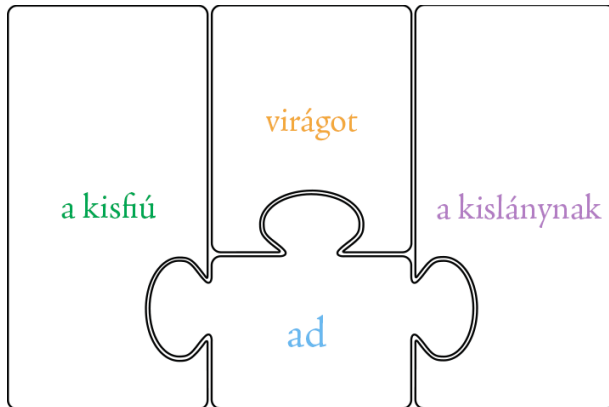
Figure 4: Verbal representation of different scenes of a boy giving flowers to a girl

Deconstructing Figure 4, we get to the lexical verb *ad* ('to give') (cf. Figure 5), which is represented by a central puzzle with three tabs corresponding to its argument structure. To this, we can explicitly add some (idiosyncratic) morphological information. The case markers appearing in the tabs will necessarily accompany all the phrases that can possibly occur as descriptions of participants of a giving scene: the accusative marker *-t* will indicate the participant that is the undergoer of the unfolding action, while the oblique case marker *-nAk* marks the phrase expressing the recipient. In contrast to the markedness of these two expressions, a lack of morphological marking on the phrase representing the giver translates into the unpredictability of the ending. For the age group targeted, we do not introduce invisible suffixes (or empty categories) at any point.
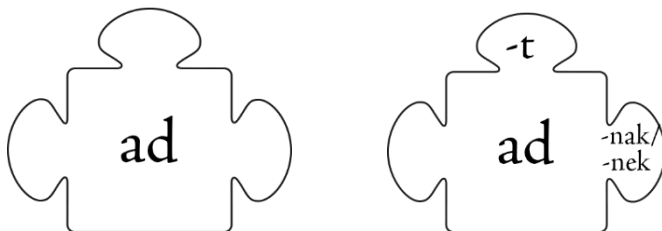
Figure 5: Puzzle of the lexical verb *ad* ('to give')

In Figure 5, the verb can be conceived of as a linguistic head assigning certain form and meaning properties to other elements, or the structure arrived at can simply represent speaker knowledge about form-meaning associations:[25] when we become familiar with the verb *give* (in highly contextualized, therefore highly specific situations) and learn its meaning (through the repeated co-occurrence of linguistic configurations across context, actively adapting our schemas to new experience), we get to understand that *give* can be used to describe a scene with three participants (a giver, a thing given, and a recipient), and we also learn the (language-specific) morphosyntactic coding of these participants (i.e. case endings/postpositions and the grammatical function to which

---

[25] One can also think of these as constructions, i.e. learned pairings of form and function. (For a usage-based constructionist approach, see Goldberg 2019.)

these will have to be mapped).[26] We also understand at this stage that any of these participants can be left without verbal elaboration (i.e. implicit), in which case all that is conveyed is that someone gave/something was given/someone received something – these *someone*s/*something*s being limited by the context or by our world knowledge.

Syntactic functions are not introduced for pushing a traditional agenda either. Reflection on syntactic functions is useful if it contributes to the description of observable phenomena having grammatical relevance. In Hungarian, verbal agreement involves both subject and certain types of objects. Therefore, subject and object are syntactic functions worth introducing. For pedagogical purposes, this leaves us with a division of subject and object arguments, on the one hand, and the rest (i.e. oblique arguments and adjuncts), on the other.

The morphological case markers and postpositions (or the lack of these) attached to names or descriptions of participants are indicative of their syntactic function, i.e. the syntactic functions on which the semantic roles are mapped also depend on the choice of lexical verb. Therefore, this information is also included in the tabs of the central puzzle and we use color-coding for them (green for subject, orange for object, and purple for the rest, i.e. oblique arguments), as in Figure 6.
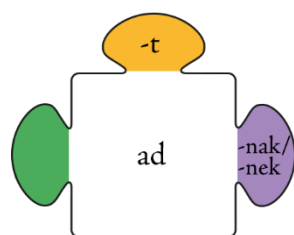

Figure 6 Color-coding of syntactic functions

Instead of color-coding, we could have used the established terminology of syntactic roles such as *subject*, *object*, etc. Colored tabs, however, will force us to think of these syntactic roles in a relational perspective (similarly to the relations expressed by *subject of, object of*, etc.). This can be more difficult to achieve systematically by verbal means: *What is the subject?*, *Underline the object!*, etc. are familiar ways of speaking in language classes.

An additional benefit of color-coding is that there is no urge to define a color in the same way as grammatical terms call for a definition, consequently we can escape the traps mentioned in fn 5., and we can also avoid teaching terminology *before* pupils have an understanding (achieved through a series of activities with language data) of the phenomena (i.e. linguistic content or insight) to be labelled. In addition, color-coding can help to break away from the tradition of asking "audit" questions to find different syntactic roles.

---

[26] In English, this is a ditransitive construction. In Hungarian, the giver (Agent) is mapped to the subject, the 'thing given' (Patient) is elaborated by the object, and the Recipient is coded as an oblique argument.

Furthermore, this can also help pupils make a distinction between lexical categories and phrases on the one hand, and syntactic functions, on the other (a terrain of permanent confusion at all levels of education). In our model, noun phrases, for instance, are white puzzles with a blank which can attach to one of the tabs of the central puzzle.[27] This triggers the spreading of the tab's color through the puzzle (cf. Figure 7). This is a visual representation of the idea that these noun phrases acquire a certain role in a scene, they end up as parts of a sentence.
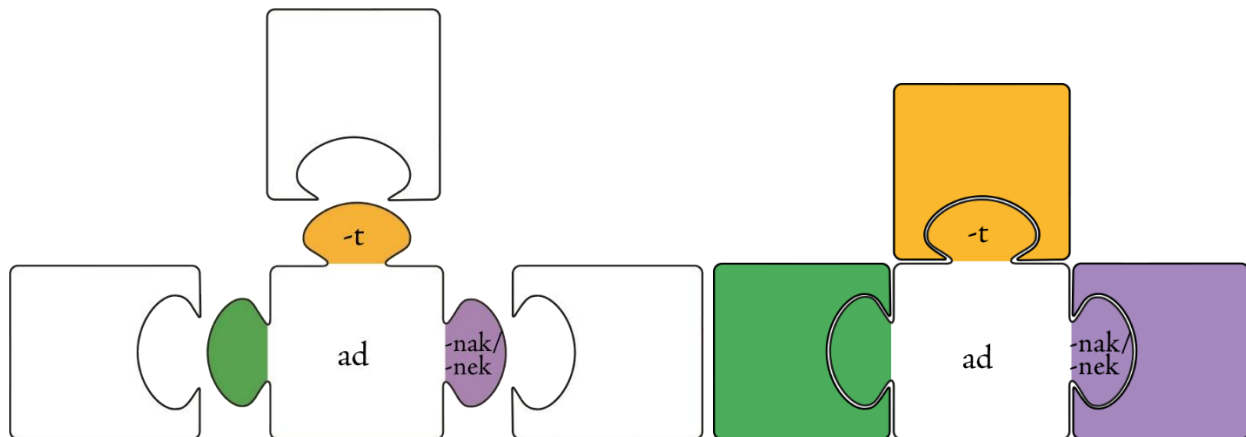
Figure 7: Noun phrases getting syntactic roles

The description of the three participants can be very concise or more elaborate, depending, among other things, on the discourse context or our belief about the knowledge of the addressee. As illustrated in Figure 8, the giver and the receiver can be referred to either by proper names (e.g. *Bence, Anita*), or by DPs of any complexity (e.g. *a szomszédunkban lakó kisfiú* 'the boy living next door', *az épp nálunk nyaraló unokatestvérem* 'my cousin who is on a summer holiday with us'). Similarly, the thing given can be a bare noun like *virág* ('flower') or a complex noun phrase, e.g. *egy csodálatos csokor tulipán* ('a magnificent bouquet of tulips'), this difference implicating different linearization patterns for the utterances that are based on this puzzle structure. This form of presentation reinforces a constituent-based approach to grammar (as opposed to the traditional word-based approach) and helps pupils stay afloat in a sea of words by navigating between several (smaller or larger) phrases, instead of getting lost in the multitude of individual words. Getting a quick sense of who did what to whom boosts pupils' performance in text comprehension.

---

[27] As opposed to *give*, with verbs like *to introduce*, for instance, any of the three participants of a scene can be, in turn, the introducer, the introduced, or the one someone is introduced to, i.e. the noun phrases referring to these participants can attach to any of the tabs of the central puzzle resulting in different "casting" and, correspondingly, in different syntactic functions and morphology.
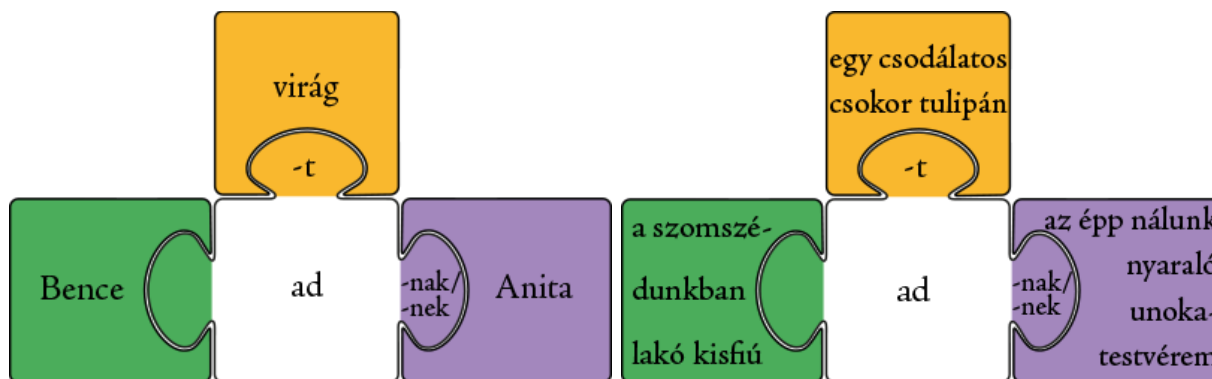
Figure 8: Complexity of expressions denoting the participants of a giving eventuality

On a more analytical note, in later years, the structure of a noun phase can be discovered as being anything from a proper noun or a pronoun to a common noun with a determiner and a number of different premodifiers or even with an embedded relative clause. In a functionally-based approach, it is natural to treat all of these as units of the same type, as they all have the same role of describing/identifying the referent of a participant in an eventuality. A structural approach can highlight the distributional properties of these phrases (and proceed towards observing distributional patterns to determine which categories our grammar works with). All these are in sharp contrast to traditional grammar, where words take up syntactic roles, and where these roles include adjectival/nominal modifiers on a par with subjects, objects, and obliques.

Just like subordination, coordination can be dealt with using the puzzle tool. Depending on the level of the constituents to be coordinated, it can result in adding a new dimension to our model. Based on the observation that coordinated nouns or noun phrases will each bear the case marker, pupils themselves can come up with the upgrade of the model from 2D to 3D as in Figure 9, corresponding to a scene where Bence gives both tulips (*tulipán*) and chocolate (*csoki*) to Anita.
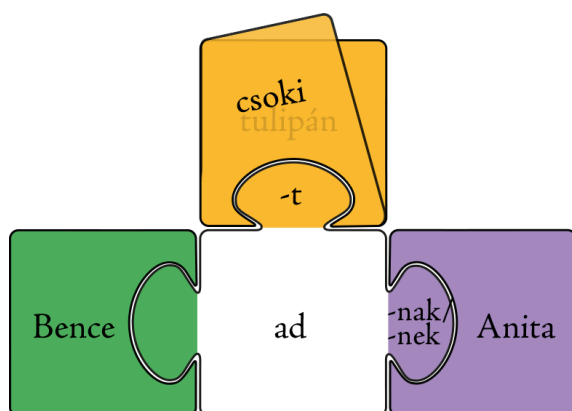

Figure 9: Representation of coordination on the level of the main constituents

Leaving behind the example of *ad* ('to give'), we can broaden our perspective through various exercises to include all possible types of eventualities and the corresponding predicates. In this process, pupils can discover that in Hungarian 0 to 4 participants are encoded in the lexical

meaning of a predicate (cf. Figure 10), alternative syntactic-semantic schemata of certain verbs will come up on the way (e.g. *ellhallgat₁* 'go silent', *elhallgat₂* 'keep something from somebody', cf. Figure 11), and also non-verbal predicates will naturally fit into the picture (cf. Figure 12).
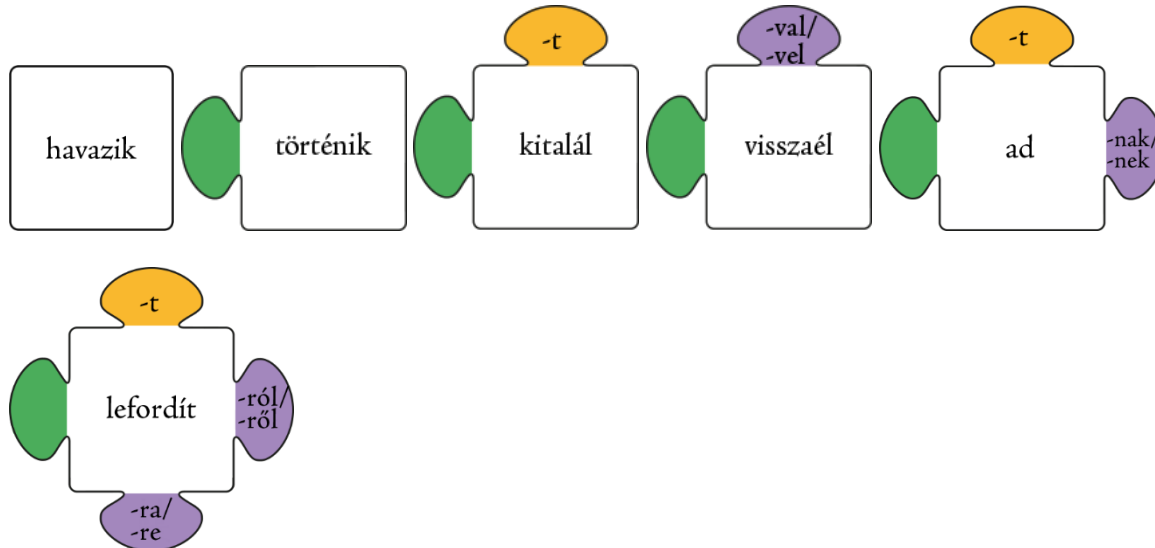
Figure 10: Puzzles of the verbs *havazik*[28] 'to snow', *történik* 'to happen', *kitalál* 'to guess', *visszaél* 'to abuse', *ad* 'to give', *lefordít* 'to translate'
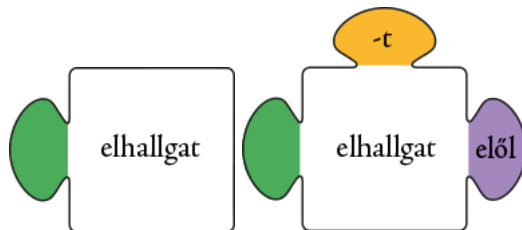
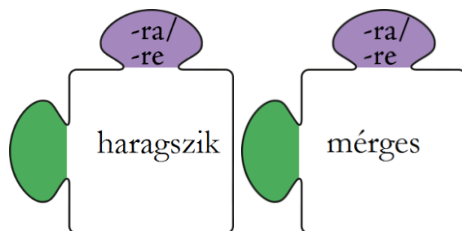Figure 11: Puzzles of the verb *elhallgat* ('to go silent'/'to conceal')

Figure 12: Puzzles of the verb *haragszik* and the adjective *mérges* (both 'to be angry')

In this process, usually two main points have to be clarified for teachers. Firstly, the puzzle tool is not a substitute for the word-based syntactic trees familiar from L1 language classes, i.e. it is not meant to represent a sentence. Secondly, the difference between arguments and adjuncts is not necessarily categorical, i.e. the purely structural distinction of the generative framework might not

---

[28] As a rule, Hungarian sentences with a weather verb have no overt subjects, not even expletive ones. The example given here can be analyzed as having a lexically incorporated subject: *hav-* is an allomorph of *hó* 'snow'. For a brief discussion of the derivation of weather verbs from an adjectival or nominal base, see Komlósy (1994: 159–161).

be the best approach for our purposes, given the age group targeted. Instead, sentences may be regarded as morphosyntactic forms that realize a schema, while possibly also elaborating details of the particular situation the schema is applied to. Consequently, sentences may contain elements that depend on the verb for their semantic role (we refer to these as "participants") along with what we call in our materials (retaining the theatrical vocabulary) "scenery" (circumstances), "costumes" or other "appurtenances", i.e. modifiers or adjuncts that can appear without a subcategorizing head. However, it might be the case that an oblique is required by the information organization of the sentence,[29] or that the semantic role is assigned by the verb, but the morphosyntactic realization is not specified (as, for instance, in *He lives in Romania/on the first floor/at home, etc.*).

One of the exercises that helps pupils in understanding the role of participants in a scene as opposed to the role of sentence constituents denoting non-participants is linked to the series of pictures in Figure 13. A possible sentence corresponding to the first image is given in (10). The rest of the images depict scenes with the referents of one of the sentence constituents missing. The task is to determine which images can still be labelled by the verb *beletölt* ('to pour into'), and whether there are other labels for the rest of the images. As we can see, extracting the location or the helper preserves the scene as a scene of 'pouring into', while a missing agent or recipient location will ask for labels like *beleömlik* ('to flow into_refl') and *kiönt* ('to spill'), respectively. A missing patient makes the scene difficult to interpret.

(10) *A   laboratóriumban   Lokuci   Illokuci   segítségével   tölti   bele*
      the   lab.INESS   Lokuci   Illokuci   help.POSS.3SG.INSTR   pour.3SG   into
      a   kólát   a   szódabikarbónába.
      the   Coke.ACC   the   baking-soda.INESS
      'In the lab, Lokuci is pouring Coke into baking soda with the help of Illokuci.'

---
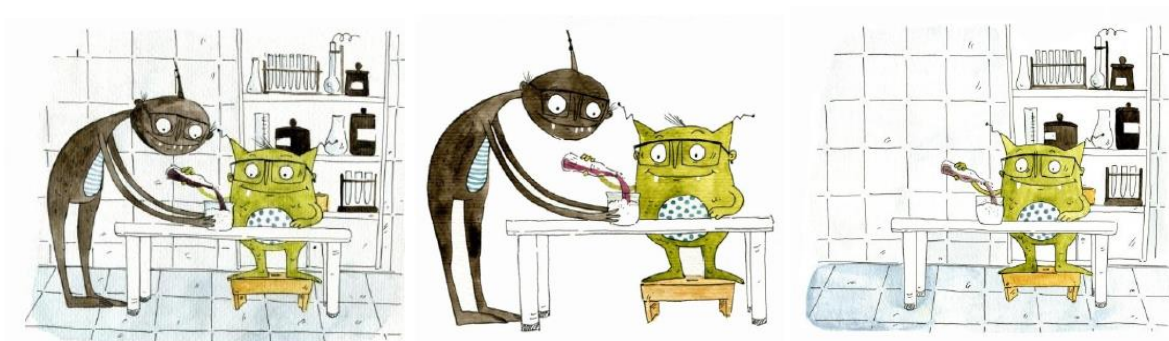
[29] E.g. *He was born *(in Hungary/to old parents/with long hair/in 1986, etc.*), cf. Peredy 2007 on "obligatory adjuncts" in Hungarian.

Figure 13: Essential elements in identifying the schema *beletölt* 'to pour into'

In this case, the elements invariably evoked by the use of the verb *beletölt* ('to pour into') are fairly distinct from those that may elaborate particular aspects of a random scene of 'pouring into'. However, generally speaking, the distinction between arguments and adjuncts is subtle and frequently argued over in the literature, thus it is not our aim to suggest a clear-cut distinction or seek a single right answer. Instead, we intend to build on the speaker's understanding of lexical items and to stimulate reflection on pupils' own intuitive knowledge, guiding them to observe that certain words are more central to the verbal coding of different eventualities, and these words pre-determine (in different degrees) their syntactic and semantic environment, some of these being predictable on different grounds, some being completely idiosyncratic.

Building on pupils' linguistic competence also means that we have to allow for variation. Dialectal differences in the morphological marking of the dependencies modelled here are not frequent. One such example is given in (11), corresponding to the puzzle in Figure 14.
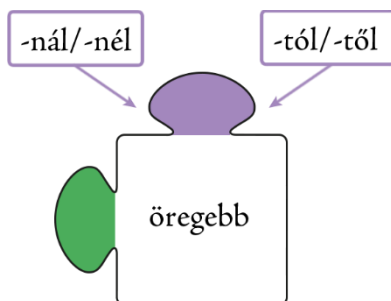

Figure 14: Puzzle of the comparative adjective *öregebb* ('older')

(11) a. Dialect 1: *Öregebb   Péternél.*
                      old.COMP   Peter.ADESS
      b. Dialect 2: *Öregebb   Pétertől.*
                      old.COMP   Peter.ABLAT
                      '(S)he is older than Peter.'

Variation is encountered not only in relation to dialects, but also in cross-linguistic comparison. Differences among languages can be touched upon in different comparative exercises. The aim is to draw children's attention to the linguistic solutions and patterns featured by their native

language as a specific implementation of the possible choices of a language, thus helping them with their second language and other foreign languages they learn. Most exercises and activities focus on Romanian, which is different from Hungarian both from a genealogical and a typological point of view. (As a "by-product", this can enhance pupils' chances for better mastering this language, which is otherwise taught to them in a decontextualized way using an arsenal of grammatical metalanguage with no anchoring.) Other exercises involve languages that pupils most probably learn as foreign languages. Several of these build on the fact that languages may differ in their toolkit, so even if humans universally have the same mental representation/conceptual structure of, for instance, a transaction event, there are language-specific ways in which this can be expressed. Table 1 below shows a snippet of such an exercise, which was meant to draw attention to the differences in the morphosyntactic coding of grammatical relations and the inventory of relation markers (also exemplifying the possible lack of correspondence of these markers across languages).

Table 1: Fill in the table with the literal translation and the Hungarian equivalent of the different expressions in the first column!

Foreign language expression	Literal translation	Hungarian equivalent
Example: *to meet someone*	* *találkozni valakit* (meet.INF someone.ACC)	√ *találkozni valakivel* (meet.INF someone.COMIT)
sorgen für jemanden		
a participa la concurs		
...		

Insights into the argument realization in different languages can, additionally, be helpful from the perspective of the language learner, and, eventually, it can also lead to discussions on language typology.

4 Summary

As a contribution to this volume related to sharing useful ways of implementing theoretical notions and visual representations in application-oriented areas of grammar and language teaching, the present article frames the discussion of focus and valency in the general endeavor of "translating" insights of theoretical linguistics into educational settings. This is something that our working group has been experimenting with in the process of elaborating educational resources for Hungarian as L1 for 10-14 year olds. Focus and valency are two aspects of grammar that benefit from explicit reflection and can be explored based on pupils' linguistic competence and previously grounded experience. In this process, language data is used as a training tool in developing pupils' analytic skills with respect to their vernacular and language in general, while exposing them to grammatical structures in different contexts of meaning-making can also enhance their text interpretation and text production skills.

References

Andrews, Richard, Carole Torgerson, Sue Beverton, Allison Freeman, Terry Locke, Graham Low, Alison Robinson & Die Zhu. 2006. The effect of grammar teaching on writing development. *British Educational Research Journal* 32(1). 39–55.

Bach, Emmon. 1986. The Algebra of Events. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 9(1). 5–16.

É. Kiss, Katalin. 1998. Identificational focus versus information focus. *Language* 74(2). 245–273.

É. Kiss, Katalin. 2002. *The Syntax of Hungarian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

É. Kiss, Katalin. 2017. Deriving the properties of structural focus. In Chungmin Lee, Kiefer Ferenc & Manfred Krifka (eds.), *Contrastiveness in information structure, Alternatives and scalar implicatures* (Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 91), 47–61. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Fillmore, Charles. 1982. Frame semantics. In Linguistic Society of Korea (ed.), *Linguistics in the Morning Calm,* 111–137. Seoul: Hanshin Publishing.

Goldberg, Adele E. 2019. *Explain Me This: Creativity, Competition, and the Partial Productivity of Constructions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691183954

Horvath, Julia. 2005. Is "Focus Movement" driven by stress? In Christopher Piñón & Siptár Péter (eds.), *Approaches to Hungarian 9. Papers from the Düsseldorf Conference*, 131–158. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Kádár, Edith & Peredy Márta. 2014. Discourse meets grammar. The case of Hungarian verbal particles. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 61(2). 153–176. DOI: 10.1556/ALing.61.2014.2.2

Kádár, Edith. 2020. Standard language and non-dominant varieties in education. Curricular reform and teaching Hungarian as L1 in Romania. In Rudolf Muhr, Ildikó Vančo, István Kozmács & Máté Huber (eds.), *Hungarian as a Pluricentric Language in Language and Literature,* 197–210. Wien et. al.: Peter Lang Verlag.

Kádár, Edit (ed.). 2017. *Feladatbank az anyanyelvi órák tervezéséhez V–VIII. osztályban* [Exercise bank for in-class teaching design of Hungarian as a mother tongue, grades 5–8]. Vol. 1. Kolozsvár: Ábel Kiadó.

Kádár, Edit (ed.). 2018. *Feladatbank az anyanyelvi órák tervezéséhez V–VIII. osztályban* [Exercise bank for in-class teaching design of Hungarian as a mother tongue, grades 5–8]. Vol. 2. Kolozsvár: Ábel Kiadó. (A revised version is available online: http://hunlang.lett.ubbcluj.ro/data/Feladatbank_2.pdf)

Kálmán, László, Prószéky Gábor, Nádasdy Ádám & Kálmán C. György. 1986. Hocus, focus, and verb types in Hungarian infinitive constructions. In Werner Abraham & Sjaak de Meij (eds.), *Topic, focus and configurationality: Papers from the 6th Groningen grammar talks 1984* (Linguistik Aktuell/Linguistics Today 4), 129–142. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/la.4.07kal

Kálmán, László. 2008. "A new linguistic curriculum and teaching materials in Hungary." Ms. http://www.budling.hu/~kalman/arch/overview.pdf (accessed 15 April 2022).

Kenesei, István. 1998. Adjuncts and arguments in VP-focus in Hungarian. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 45(1–2). 61–88.

Komlósy, András. 1994. Complements and Adjuncts. In Kiefer Ferenc & É. Kiss Katalin (eds.), *The Syntactic Structure of Hungarian* (Syntax and Semantics. Vol. 27), 91–178. New York: Academic Press.

Langacker, Ronald W. 2008. *Cognitive grammar.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

OECD 2023. *PISA 2022 Results Factsheets. Romania*. https://www.oecd.org/publication/pisa-2022-results/webbooks/dynamic/pisa-country-notes/cfe329e8/pdf/romania.pdf (accessed 25 January 2024).

Onea, Edgar. 2007. Exhaustivity, focus and incorporation in Hungarian. In Maria Aloni, Paul Dekker & Floris Roelofsen (eds.), *Proceedings of the 16th Amsterdam Colloquium*, 169–174. Amsterdam: ILLC/Department of Philosophy University of Amsterdam ILLC.

Onea, Edgar & David Beaver. 2011. Hungarian focus is not exhausted. In Satoshi Ito & Ed Cormany (eds.), *Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 19*, 342–359. Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications.

Pintér, Lilla. 2018. The acquisition of asserted, presupposed, and pragmatically implied exhaustivity in Hungarian. *Acta Linguistica Academica* 65(2–3). 353–383. DOI: 10.1556/2062.2018.65.2–3.5

Peredy, Márta. 2007. Obligatory adjuncts in weak accomplishments. In Ville V. Nurmi & Dmitry Sustretov (eds.), *Proceedings of the Twelfth ESSLLI Student Session*, 209–220. Dublin.

Perini, Mário A. 2015. *Describing Verb Valency. Practical and Theoretical Issues*. Cham, Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht, London: Springer.

Piaget, Jean. 1972. Intellectual evolution from adolescence to adulthood. *Human Development* 15(1). 1–12.

Rijt, Jimmy van & Peter-Arno Coppen. 2017. Bridging the Gap between Linguistic Theory and L1 Grammar Education – Experts' Views on Essential Linguistic Concepts. *Language Awareness* 26(4): 360–380. DOI:10.1080/09658416.2017.1410552.

Szendrői, Kriszta. 2003. A stress-based approach to the syntax of Hungarian focus. *The Linguistic Review* 20(1). 37–78. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/tlir.2003.002

Tolcsvai Nagy, Gábor. 2004. A magyar nyelv leírása és iskolai oktatása [Description and teaching of the Hungarian language]. In Tolcsvai Nagy Gábor, *Nyelv, érték, közösség* [Language, value, community], 296–322. Budapest: Gondolat.

Wedgwood, Daniel. 2005. *Shifting the focus. From static structures to the dynamics of interpretation.* Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Source of images
Figure 1d. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_person_reading_a_braille_book.jpg, @antonioxalonso, CC BY 2.0
Figure 2a. https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/boy-gives-girl-bunch-tulip-flowers-137225369?src=e6nH6OPa9_TN9FKOuHmIhA-1-20, © Shutterstock, # ID:137225369

Figure 2d. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tim_Wigglesworth_red_card.jpg, @
    Graham Wilson, CC BY 2.0