

The Preverb Problem in German and Hungarian

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The preverb problem in German and Hungarian

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This study is an investigation into the phenomenon of ‘tmesis’ (lit. ‘cutting’, Matthews (1991: 99)) in contemporary German and Hungarian.⁰ Both of these languages contain a wealth of preverb-verb combinations which exhibit many properties characteristic of compounds and yet which can be ‘split’ in the syntax. Preverbs, sometimes characterized as separable verbal prefixes, have a number of functions, including those of modification, aspectualization, argument-structure affecting, and derivation. They thus constitute the most productive means for creating new verbs in these languages. Current descriptive practice in German grammar names such preverbs *Verbzusätze* (‘verb adjuncts’, Helbig & Buscha (1989: 538)), whereas similar practice in Hungarian grammar names them *igekötők* (‘verb binders’, Rácz (1988: 65)). Some common examples are the following:¹

- | | | |
|--------|---|------------------|
| (1) a. | <i>an-fangen</i> ‘begin’, <i>auf-geben</i> ‘give up’, <i>zu-teilen</i> ‘allot’, | <u>German</u> |
| | <i>ab-machen</i> ‘arrange’, <i>bei-bringen</i> ‘teach’, <i>ein-führen</i> ‘import’ | |
| b. | <i>el-kezd</i> ‘begin’, <i>be-fejez</i> ‘finish’, <i>meg-ismer</i> ‘recognize’, | <u>Hungarian</u> |
| | <i>ki-javít</i> ‘correct’, <i>le-szól</i> ‘speak ill of’ <i>vissza-hat</i> ‘affect’ | |

In this paper, the term **complex verb** designates the linear combination ‘preverb + verb’, the term **simple verb** refers to any verb without a preverb immediately before it, and **PV** abbreviates ‘preverb’.

The ‘preverb problem’, as I term it, is the problem of reconciling the lexical nature of complex verbs with their syntactic transparency. In particular, tmesis violates Weak Lexical Integrity:²

- (2) **Weak Lexical Integrity:** A morphological object (i.e., an X^0 unit) cannot be discontinuous at surface syntactic structure.

Some version of (2) is widely held to be correct; and yet if it is taken seriously, then the question of what sort of object the complex verb is takes on a new urgency.

In movement theories, part of the complex verb must serve as a target for movement. In theories which recognize only one level of syntactic constituent structure, the complex verb must allow discontinuous lexical insertion. Resolutions of the preverb problem to achieve this result abound. For example, Booij 1990 and Simpson 1983 take the complex verb to be a lexical phrase of category V^* and V' , respectively, with the requirement that Bracket Erasure does not apply to the constituents of phrasal categories in the morphology. Such an analysis is also pursued by Ackerman (1987: 233) for Hungarian. The central difficulty for this type of solution is not only that lexical insertion must now be able to target phrasal categories V' in the lexicon, but also that derivational affixes must be able to attach to both V^0 (head) and V' (phrasal) categories in the lexicon. The issue is not whether this type of solution “works”, but rather whether it is really warranted by the data.

Another type of solution is to maintain that the complex verb is of category V^0 but that it nevertheless is a systematic exception to Bracket Erasure, an analysis

proposed by É. Kiss (1987: 66) for Hungarian. This type of analysis is also 'radical' in that it globalizes the problem, for little understanding is won if the exceptional nature of complex verbs is transfigured into either a morphology which now creates V' objects or one which countenances systematic exceptions to Bracket Erasure.

I propose to localize the preverb problem by locating the exceptional behavior of complex verbs in an exceptional subcategorization property of verbal inflectional suffixes. Specifically, complex verbs are creatable by the morphology as V° constituents, but they are not inflectable as such: verbal inflection wants the simple verb. Once this selectional property of verbal inflectional suffixes is identified, little else about the grammar needs to be changed.

This paper has four central parts. §1 presents evidence for the lexical nature of complex verbs, emphasizing the parallelism between German and Hungarian. §2 reviews the conditions for separability and proposes a syntactic analysis for separation in both languages. Finally, §3 addresses the question of how the morphological integrity of complex verbs can be reconciled with their syntactic transparency.³

1. Lexical properties

Four major arguments can be adduced for the lexical status of complex verbs in German and Hungarian. These arguments do not support the view that such verbs are formed in the syntax.

√ Complex verbs can act as input to both deverbal word formation and compounding. Such examples provide strong evidence for the view that complex verbs are morphological objects from which new morphological objects can be derived.

(3) German

a. <i>an-fangen</i> 'begin'	<i>Anfänger</i> 'beginner'; <i>anfänglich</i> 'initial'; <i>Anfangsbuchstabe</i> 'initial letter'
b. <i>ein-schüchtern</i> 'intimidate'	<i>Einschüchterung</i> 'intimidation'; <i>Einschüchterungsversuch</i> 'intimidation attempt'

Hungarian

c. <i>el-mond</i> 'tell, narrate'	<i>elmondás</i> 'narration'; <i>elmondhatatlan</i> 'unspeakable'; <i>elmondható</i> 'tellable'
d. <i>ki-állít</i> 'put out, exhibit'	<i>kiállítás</i> 'exhibition'; <i>kiállító</i> 'exhibitor'; <i>kiállítási terem</i> 'showroom'; <i>kéпкиállítás</i> 'picture exhibition'

√ Complex verbs are frequently non-compositional units semantically. The meaning of the combination is often only partially motivated by the meaning of its parts. Given the various degrees of semantic unpredictability associated with the meaning of complex verbs, the consequence is that a great many such verbs will have to be listed in some way in the lexicon. Crucially, their meanings are not derivable compositionally in the syntax.

(4) German

- a. *an* 'at, against, by' + *fangen* 'catch' = 'begin'

- b. *ab* 'off, away, down' + *machen* 'make' = 'settle, arrange'
Hungarian
 c. *le* 'down' + *fordít* 'turn' = 'translate'
 d. *el* 'away, off' + *ismer* 'know' = 'acknowledge'

√ The PV often induces changes in the argument structure of the simple verb. Such changes can affect transitivity, case assignment, and selectional restrictions. The fact that PVs have access to a simple verb's argument structure lends further support to the claim that a good many complex verbs are lexical units of some kind. If PVs combined with simple verbs in the syntax, such changes in argument structure would not be expected.

(5) German

- a. *geben* <NOM, DAT, ACC> 'give' BUT *auf-geben* <NOM, ACC> 'give up'
 b. *laufen* <NOM> 'run' BUT *nach-laufen* <NOM, DAT> 'run after, pursue'
Hungarian
 c. *ajándékoz* <NOM, DAT, ACC> 'present, donate' BUT *meg-ajándékoz*
 <NOM, ACC, NP + -vel 'with'> 'present sy. with sg.'
 d. *beszél* <NOM> 'speak, talk' BUT *el-beszél* <NOM, ACC> 'tell, narrate'

√ PVs are like derivational morphemes in that the simple verb sometimes does not exist on its own. Examples like these are overwhelmingly denominalizations, and nonetheless the PV is no less separable than with any other complex verb. In German, such examples are comparatively rare with PVs; much more typical is an inseparable prefix occurring before a non-existent simple verb. In Hungarian, most examples occur with the PVs *meg* or *el*, these having become the least transparent with respect to their original directional meanings.

(6) German

- a. *aus-bürgern* 'expatriate' BUT NO **bürgern* (cf. *Bürger* 'citizen')
 b. *auf-heitern* 'cheer up' BUT NO **heitern* (cf. *heiter* 'cheerful')
 c. *ein-deutschen* 'Germanize' BUT NO **deutschen* (cf. *Deutsch* 'German')
Hungarian
 d. *be-fejez* 'finish' BUT NO **fejez* (cf. *fej* 'head')
 e. *meg-hökkent* 'bewilder, startle' BUT NO **hökkent*
 f. *el-néptelenít* 'depopulate' BUT NO **néptelenít* (cf. *néptelen* 'unpopulated')

In this section I have adduced four arguments for the lexical status of complex verbs. Complex verbs serve as input to deverbal word formation, are frequently semantically non-compositional units, the PV often induces a change in the argument structure of the simple verb, and the simple verb sometimes does not exist on its own; all these observations argue in support of a lexical morphological treatment of complex verbs. Though this is not to say that every single complex verb would resist a compositional, syntactic account, such an analysis would not work more generally.

2. Separability

Certain syntactic contexts require separation of the PV and the simple verb. The appearance of the complex verb in such contexts is ungrammatical. I begin with a comparison of these contexts in both languages.

2.1. Conditions for separation

√ Tensed main indicative clauses in German require the simple verb in second position; this is not so in Hungarian.

(7) German

- a. Heute fäng-t Hans seine Arbeit an.
today begin-s Hans his work PV
'Today Hans begins his work'
- b. *Heute Hans fängt seine Arbeit an.
- c. *Heute an-fängt Hans seine Arbeit.

Hungarian

- d. Ma János el-kezd-i a munkáját.
today John PV-begin-s the work.his
'Today John begins his work'
- e. *Ma János kezdi el a munkáját. [on neutral reading]

√ Yes-no questions with inversion in German require the simple verb in first position;⁴ Hungarian permits neither inversion nor separability here.

(8) German

- a. Fängt Hans heute seine Arbeit an?
'Does Hans begin his work today?'
- b. *An-fängt Hans heute seine Arbeit?

Hungarian

- c. Ma János el-kezdi a munkáját?
'Does John begin his work today?'
- d. *Kezdi el János ma a munkáját?

√ In the imperative the simple verb appears in first position; this is true for both German and Hungarian.

(9) German

- a. Fang Deine Arbeit an!
begin.IMP your work PV
'Begin your work!'
- b. *An-fang Deine Arbeit!

Hungarian

- c. Kezdjed el a munkád!
begin.IMP PV the work.your
'Begin your work!'
- d. *El-kezdjed a munkád!

√ In German separation of the PV is not possible in subordinate clauses with a complementizer; in fact, the complex verb must appear in final position. The main/subordinate distinction plays no role in separability of the PV in Hungarian.

(10) German

- a. Ich weiß, daß Hans seine Arbeit an-fäng-t.
I know COMP Hans his work PV-begin-s
'I know that Hans is beginning his work'
- b. *Ich weiß, daß Hans fängt seine Arbeit an.

Hungarian

- c. Tudom, hogy János el-kezd-i a munkáját.
know.I COMP John PV-begin-s the work.his
d. *Tudom, hogy János kezd el a munkáját. [on neutral reading]

√ In Hungarian a focussed constituent⁵ must occur immediately before the simple verb; in German the presence or absence of a focussed constituent has nothing to do with separability.

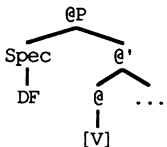
(11) Hungarian

- a. Ma JANOS kezdi el a munkáját. [cf. (7e)]
today John begins PV the work.his
'Today it is John who begins his work'
b. *Ma JANOS el-kezd a munkáját.
c. Tudom, hogy János MA kezdi el a munkáját. [cf. (7d)]
'I know that it is today that John is beginning his work'
d. *Tudom, hogy János MA el-kezd a munkáját.

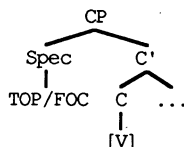
2.2. Analysis of separation

Although initial inspection of the five foregoing contexts suggests that the syntactic conditions for separation of the PV differ quite dramatically in German and Hungarian (they are alike only in the imperative), a significant common feature is nonetheless present. The idea is that the immediately preverbal position in both of these languages is utilized for a constituent bearing the discourse function of either **topic/focus** (German) or **focus** (Hungarian). The claim that the initial position in German is for a topicalized constituent⁶ is well-established (cf. Koster 1975, Haider 1985, Uszkoreit 1987, *inter alia*); that a focussed constituent must appear in immediately preverbal position in Hungarian is similarly uncontroversial (cf. Farkas 1986, Horvath 1986, É. Kiss 1987). The general structure in (12a), then, captures this commonality between German and Hungarian:

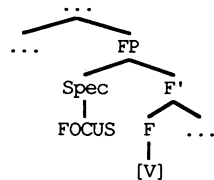
- (12) a. DF = Discourse
Function, @ = α



- b. German



- c. Hungarian



I assume, in agreement with the literature on German, that the simple verb occupies the complementizer position in tensed matrix clauses (cf. (7a)); the value of αP is thus CP, as in (12b). For Hungarian, while the exact categorial structure is more controversial, I follow Brody 1990 in postulating a F(ocus)P(hrase) for Hungarian, locating the focussed constituent in [Spec, FP]. This is shown in (12c).⁷

The difference between (12b) and (12c) accounts for the facts in (7). Since CP is the highest projection of the clause, only one constituent is permitted before the verb, thus ruling out (7b), where two constituents appear there. V in (12) is a

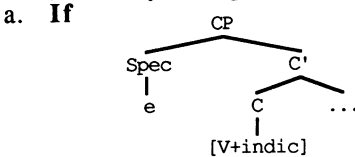
head position, hence V° , and the necessary hypothesis for ruling out (7c) is that the complex verb in German cannot be a morphologically created V° , i.e., it is not a word in the X' -theoretical sense. More explicitly, the required hypothesis is the following one:

- (13) The (finite) complex verb is not a morphologically created V° , hence it is not lexically insertable into a X° (head) position.

(13) is also necessary for Hungarian. Its effect is that the finite complex verb cannot appear in F° . To account for (7d, e) it is sufficient to state that FP is projected iff there is a focussed constituent in the clause. In (7d), a neutral sentence, there is no FP and so the complex verb remains in the VP, no separation resulting. (7e) is bad because the simple verb appears in F° without a focussed constituent occupying [Spec, FP], contra (12c).

The contrast exemplified in (8) can be attributed to the following difference between German and Hungarian:

- (14) German: yes-no questions



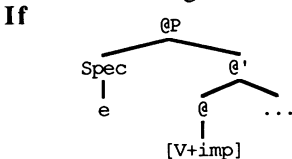
then interpret as yes-no question.
 ['e' indicates that the node is empty,
 '[V+indic]' is a verb with indicative
 morphology]

- b. Hungarian lacks the equivalent of (14a) for the structure in (12c).

In German the topic/focus position can remain empty; (14a) simply states that the structure is then interpreted as a yes-no question. (8a) is therefore good, but (8b), in which the complex verb heads the sentence, does not instantiate (14a) and hence is ill-formed (the PV have to fill the Spec position). Hungarian lacks a syntactic correlate of yes-no questions, as stated in (14b): the syntax of declaratives and yes-no interrogatives does not differ. (8c), syntactically identical to (7d), remains well-formed, and there is no provision for deriving (8d), where [Spec, FP] is empty.

The facts in (9) illustrate a common ground between German and Hungarian. In both languages the relevant Spec position remains empty if the verb is imperative.

- (15) German and Hungarian

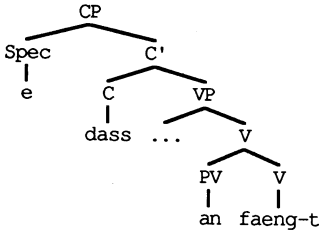


then interpret as imperative.
 ('[V+imp]' is a verb with imperative
 morphology)

Given (15), both (9b) and (9d) are ill-formed because the PV occupies [Spec, αP] and yet precisely this position should remain empty in the imperative mood.

The conventional analysis of German which posits a complementary distribution between the complementizer and the finite verb (cf. Haider 1985) accounts for (10a, b). A clause-final position is available for the complex verb in German, and the verb must appear there if a complementizer is present. In Hungarian there is no such complementary distribution with the complementizer. I attribute the following structure to (10a):⁸

- (16) a. German: the subordinate clause⁹



complementizer in C°, simple verb in V°; PV syntactically (based) adjoined to V°, i.e.,

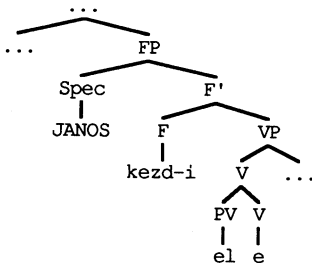


- b. Hungarian: the simple verb displays no complementarity with the complementizer

The ungrammatical sentence (10b) is ruled out because there is no such position for the finite verb between its complements. In Hungarian (10c, d), separability of the PV does not depend on the presence or absence of a complementizer.

The Hungarian data in (11) are explained by the structure in (12c). (11b, d) are ill-formed because the PV intervenes between the focussed constituent and the simple verb, and yet there is no position for it in FP. In contrast to German, the VP is V initial in Hungarian. Consider the structure of the well-formed (11a):

- (17) a. Hungarian: around FOCUS



focussed phrase in Spec, simple verb in F°; PV syntactically (base) adjoined to V°

- b. German: there is no fixed syntactic position for a focussed constituent

(17a) indicates that Hungarian also shares the V° adjunction structure which German exhibits in (16a).

A comparative examination of the German and Hungarian data yields the following claims:

- (18) a. The simple verb stands in Spec/Head relation with DF constituent.
 b. The (finite) complex verb is not a morphologically created V° unit.
 c. PV is base-adjoined to V°; no base adjunction to functional heads.

(18a-c) do not consist of an arbitrary grouping of properties. If the Spec/Head relation is indeed the correct syntactic characterization, then from (18b) it follows

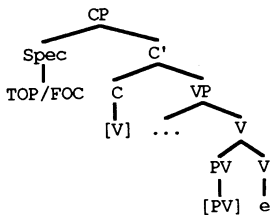
that only the simple verb can fill the head position, for the (finite) complex verb simply is not of category V^0 . Thus, if the morphology produces only X^0 objects, then the two parts of a complex verb must be discontinuously insertable. (18c) ensures that the PV and its host verb will combine immediately in the syntax under V^0 . Crucially, no such base adjunction to the functional heads C^0 and F^0 is available to yield $[PV C^0 C^0]$ and $[PV F^0 F^0]$, respectively.¹⁰

3. The complex verb

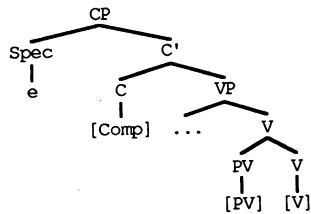
In the previous section I presented a syntactic analysis of separation in German and Hungarian. For explicitness, the configurations which I posit are repeated below:

(19) German

a. Main clause

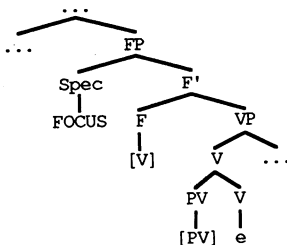


b. Subordinate clause

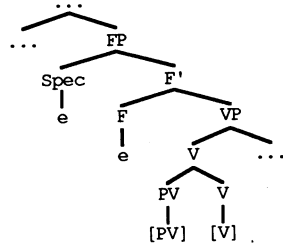


Hungarian

c. Clause with FOCUS



d. Clause without FOCUS



Although I give an empty FP in (19d) for clarity, I assume that technically it is not projected if it is not needed, as stated earlier.

The preverb problem, as described in the previous two sections, constitutes a paradox. §1 adduced evidence in support of a lexical analysis of complex verbs, emphasizing the prefixal behavior of the PV and the word nature of the complex verb. §2 reviewed the syntactic conditions which require a separation of the simple verb from the PV, illustrating the parallels and differences between German and Hungarian in this regard. Any satisfactory resolution of the preverb problem must account for both the morphological integrity and the syntactic transparency of complex verbs. By taking the subcategorizational requirements of verbal inflectional suffixes seriously, I will propose such a resolution.

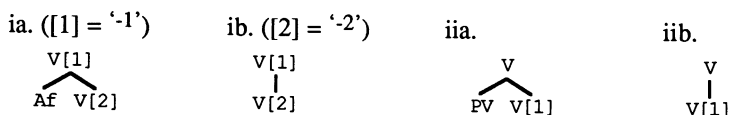
If Weak Lexical Integrity (cf. (2)) is to be respected, then the hypothesis in (13) that finite complex verbs do not constitute morphologically created V^0 s is necessary. In addition, I make a basic assumption, one required by the facts from German.

- (20) In German, inseparable verbal compounds must be distinguished from separable verbal compounds (i.e., complex verbs).

The analogue of (20) is not necessary for Hungarian because all verbal compounds are separable; there are no true verbal prefixes. German inseparable compounds are clearly morphologically formed V°s, stressed on the verb stem, and lexically insertable into second position, thereby distinguishing themselves from separable compounds, which lack these characteristics.

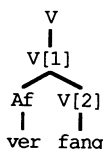
Assumption (20) is accommodated in the present analysis through the X' theory of word structure. I make basic use of Selkirk's (1982) proposal for extending X' theory down into "word syntax", enabling a morphological head to have distinct projections. More specifically, I adopt the idea that there are two bar levels below X° (word level), namely X⁻¹ (stem level) and X⁻² (root level). The general word structure rules I posit and the structures they yield are as follows:

- (21) i. V⁻¹ → (Af) V⁻²
 (An inseparable prefix is of category Af and combines with V⁻²)
 ii. V° → (PV) V⁻¹ (a compounding rule)
 (A preverb is of category PV and combines with V⁻¹)

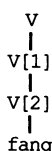


Whereas German has both the rules in (21), Hungarian has only (21i). Consider an example instantiation of each of these structures:

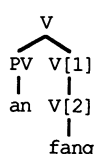
- (22) German
 a. 'get entangled'



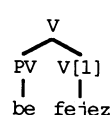
- b. 'catch'



- c. 'begin'



- Hungarian
 d. 'finish'



Independent support from German for the rules in (21) comes from the fact that while a number of verbs have both a prefix and a PV, the ordering between these two is not free. In particular, an old observation about German is that when a prefix and a PV cooccur, the PV is systematically the outermost (Curme (1905: 327)).

- (23) *an-er-kennen* 'acknowledge', *ein-ver-leiben* 'incorporate',
vor-ent-halten 'withhold sg. from sy.', *aus-er-lesen* 'choose, select'

Since prefixes attach at the root level and PVs at the stem level, it follows that a prefix will be embedded more deeply than the PV and not vice versa.¹¹

The structures in (22) remain uninflected forms. If lexically inserted as such into sentence structure, independent syntactic principles (e.g., agreement) will rule out the sentences they appear in precisely because such forms are neither finite nor infinitival verbs. In order to participate in well-formed syntactic structures, they must become inflected.

Suppose, however, that the following statement holds of German and Hungarian morphology:

- (24) Verbal suffixes for person, number, tense, and mood (i.e., verbal inflectional) subcategorize for V^{-1} . They combine with V^{-1} to yield V° :



Given (24), finite verbal inflectional suffixes cannot attach to the structures in (22), as these are all V° s. Rather, they must attach at the V^{-1} level, and yet this has the consequence that there is no way of creating a V° finite complex verb in the morphology. To see this, recall from (21) that PVs combine with V^{-1} s as well:

- (25) German a. 'gets entangled' b. 'catches' c. 'begins' Hungarian d. 'finished'
- $$\begin{array}{c} V \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ V[1] \quad Af \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \quad | \\ Af \quad V[2] \quad t \\ | \quad | \\ ver \quad faeng \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{c} V \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ V[1] \quad Af \\ | \quad | \\ V[2] \quad t \\ | \\ faeng \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{c} V \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ V[1] \quad Af \\ | \quad | \\ PV \quad t \\ | \\ an \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{c} V \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ V[1] \quad Af \\ | \quad | \\ PV \quad t \\ | \quad | \\ be \quad fejez \end{array}$$

Given the rules in (21), the PV cannot combine with the finite simple verb in (25c, d) to create a V° . This, then, derives the result that the PV and finite simple verb must each be independently lexically inserted.

If there is no such morphological object as a finite complex verb, then no such object can ever be lexically inserted. But if no such object can be lexically inserted, then the question of why the finite complex verb cannot appear in a single head position such as C° (German) or F° (Hungarian) never arises. Both the PV and the finite simple verb must fill independent syntactic positions.

Nevertheless, note that nothing prevents the uninflected verb structures in (25) from undergoing derivational affixation in the usual manner. On the present account, derivational suffixes differ from inflectional ones in that they subcategorize for V° . For example, *Anfänger* 'beginner' and *befejezés* 'conclusion' have the

- (26) a. German b. Hungarian
- $$\begin{array}{c} N \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ V \quad Af \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \quad | \\ PV \quad V[1] \quad er \\ | \quad | \\ An \quad V[2] \\ | \\ faeng \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{c} N \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ V \quad Af \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \quad | \\ PV \quad V[1] \quad es \\ | \quad | \\ be \quad fejez \end{array}$$

structures in (26). From this it immediately follows that separation should be impossible with deverbal derivatives of complex verbs. This expectation is borne out. Such derivatives exhibit morphological integrity.

Further lexical properties examined in §1 indicated that complex verbs are semantic units, even if not

always morphological ones. For example, frequent non-compositionality and PV induced changes on argument structure dictate that there is a level at which complex verbs are represented as semantic units. I propose that this level be argument structure, which is needed independently. More specifically, argument structure is a representation largely independent of structural constituency. A composite predicate at this level may be discontinuous; it need not correspond to a morphological constituent. Consider the foregoing examples in this light:

- (27) a. (*sich*) *ver-fang* < x, y, z > 'get entangled'
 b. *fang* < x, y > 'catch'
 c. *an & fang* < x, y > 'begin'
 d. *be & fejez* < x, y > 'finish'

What representations like (27c, d) indicate is that complex verbs like *an-fang* and *be-fejez* have a meaning and argument structure of their own, quite independent of any potential structural constituency. Although the PV and simple verb form a semantic unit, each part remains structurally independent in representations like (27c, d).

In a strict sense, then, complex verbs may violate the COMPOSITIONALITY requirement for words (cf. Pesetsky (1985: 201)). This is the requirement that semantic units correspond to morphological constituents. In the present analysis, while nothing prevents the PV and simple verb from combining to form a morphological constituent (cf. (21ii)), they are not able to combine in the morphology if the simple verb is inflected. This means that the structural combination is delayed until the syntax, where the base adjunction rule ensures that the PV and the simple verb will be grouped together (cf. (16)).¹²

Recall from (6d) that the verb **fejez* does not exist on its own. I take this to indicate that **fejez* has no meaning and hence no argument structure representation of its own, unlike, e.g., *fang*. That is, although **fejez* is a well-formed morphological V⁻¹, it can be interpreted only in combination with a PV. Thus, there must be some semantic rule of combination which assigns a meaning to the discontinuous sequence *be & fejez*. An analogous account is proposed for the other examples in (6).¹³

The representations in (27c, d) presume some provision for interpreting them. The rule I propose is the following:

- (28) If α is an element of morphological category V (i.e., V⁰, V⁻¹, V⁻²) with meaning α' , and β is an element of category PV with meaning β' , then the combination α & β has the meaning $f^1(\beta', \alpha')$ iff there is a semantic function f^1 which yields a composite interpretation for this pair.

Of course, (28) does not determine the full range of functions f available for any given PV & verb combination in the language. Many such combinations are uninterpretable precisely because there is no f^1 defined for them. Many of the functions are also very idiosyncratic in that they are defined for only a specific PV in combination with a specific verb. In this case, the functions are highly "lexicalized", not being defined for more combinations. It is now clear that both the syntactic rule of base adjunction in (16) and the morphological compounding rule (21ii) conspire to ensure that the PV and simple verb will structurally always be "in combination" for the exigency of interpretation.

5. Conclusion

My fundamental contention is that the preverb problem arises out of the fact that verbal inflectional suffixes in German and Hungarian subcategorize for the verb at the stem and not the word level, as shown in (24). Such a proposal is awkward in conventional theories of morphology (Selkirk 1982, Mohanan 1986) where inflectional affixation applies at the word level, after derivation and compounding. On these views, complex verbs would constitute compound-like entities to which inflectional affixes could attach. And yet if this were so, the possibility of separation would appear totally anomalous and inexplicable. By 'lowering' verbal inflection to the stem level, I derive the fact that the morphological formation of complex verbs is in complementary distribution with verbal inflectional suffixation. Since finite complex verbs are not created in the morphology, there is no choice but to insert both the PV and the simple verb separately. Finally, (28) ensures that the combination PV & verb will be interpretable, even if there is no corresponding morphological constituent.

The analysis proposed is flexible enough to allow for the possibility that German PVs may (with time) come to attach at the root level, i.e., they may become inseparable. Contemporary German actually affords many doublets of this kind, e.g., *über-setzen* 'ferry sg. across' vs. *über-setzen* 'translate', *durch-dringen* 'get through' vs. *durch-dringen* 'pervade, imbue'.

The analysis also allows for the possibility that verbal inflection in both German and Hungarian will eventually 'normalize' by applying to the word level as opposed to the stem level. Once this happens across the board, separation will no longer be possible. I know of no examples from Hungarian that exhibit this. From German, however, some fluctuation in this realm is apparent with certain PV-prefix-verb combinations (cf. (23)):

- (29) German
a. Hans er-kenn-t den Widerstreit der Meinungen an.
Hans acknowledge-s the clash of the opinions PV
'Hans acknowledges the clash in opinions'
b. Hans an-er-kenn-t den Widerstreit der Meinungen.

One way of interpreting the fluctuation in examples like (29) is that the verbal inflectional suffixes optionally at the word level for certain forms. Such forms are invariably those with both a PV and a prefix. Why there should be separability fluctuation with exactly these more complex verbs remains an open question. Nonetheless, the present lexical analysis leads one to expect certain fluctuation, given that the exceptionality of the preverb problem resides in the exceptional subcategorization frames of verbal inflectional suffixes.

Endnotes

⁰ I am grateful to Joan Bresnan, Eve Clark, Cleo Condoravdi, Peter Sells, Elizabeth Traugott, and Tom Wasow for useful comments on an earlier draft. This work was supported by a Dorothy Danforth Compton graduate fellowship.

¹ In (1) '·' separates the preverb from its host verb, contrary to orthographic practice which would write them together. Though Dutch is like German in all the relevant

respects, I do not discuss the Dutch data in this paper (see Booij 1990). German, unlike Hungarian, also has inseparable prefix-verb combinations. These, where cited, are divided with a hyphen.

²There are various versions of the Lexical Integrity Hypothesis. The one I give is similar to Neeleman & Weerman's (1990: 2) statement, which they usefully contrast with Strong Lexical Integrity. For other statements, consider Selkirk's (1982: 70) Word Structure Autonomy Condition and Di Sciullo & Williams' (1987: 47) principle of 'syntactic atomicity'.

³Although I do not discuss English verb-particle combinations in this paper, I believe that the analysis to be presented can be extended to cover this phenomenon as well.

⁴Unintroduced conditional and concessive clauses as well as exclamations also trigger verb-initial order in German. Hungarian has no structural equivalents of these either.

⁵I mark focussed elements with SMALL CAPITALS. There are actually several types of elements which effect separation of the PV, e.g., Wh-phrases, the negative marker, exclusive adverbials, *only*-phrases, etc. (See E. Kiss 1987 for details.)

⁶The fact that the fronting process has become known as 'topicalization' does not mean that the fronted constituent is semantically always a topic. Indeed, inherently focussed phrases (e.g., *only*-phrases) can also occupy this position in German.

⁷It is not crucial that FP be chosen. The important parallel that I wish to emphasize is that the constituent bearing the discourse function immediately precedes the simple verb in both languages.

⁸I follow Haider 1989 in analyzing German as non-configurational, i.e., the subject is not external to the VP. I differ from him in not positing an IP in German; here I follow Neeleman & Weerman (1990: 8), who do not postulate an IP in Dutch. The crucial point is that the PV and (finite) simple verb form a V° constituent via syntactic (base) adjunction. In this latter detail I follow Groos' (1989) proposal for Dutch.

⁹[Spec, CP] cannot be filled by a topic/focus in the presence of a complementizer. Syntactically, the position is there, but (12b) states that the verb must m-command the topicalized constituent, this being impossible if a complementizer fills C°.

¹⁰This statement should follow from the theory of base adjunction. For example, it would follow from a general prohibition against base adjunction to functional heads. For now, however, I have to stipulate this restriction.

¹¹There are a few apparent counterexamples to this claim: *ver-ab-reden* 'agree upon', *be-auf-tragen* 'commission', etc. The first point to note is that these behave like inseparable compounds; the second point is that the prefix is most plausibly analyzed as deriving a verb from a noun, i.e., *Abrede* 'agreement', *Auftrag* 'orders, commission'. Thus, such cases are not real counterexamples.

¹²Since I assume a single-level syntax with direct lexical insertion, some mechanism has to guarantee that the separated simple verb locally combine with its PV. One can imagine how this might be achieved, either with filler/gap percolation features as in GPSG, or with functional uncertainty as in LFG. I leave such details open.

¹³Booij (1990: 10), in a study of complex verbs in Dutch, writes of the necessity to posit possible but non-existent verbs which have meaning only in conjunction with a PV.

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