Second person nominal and verbal suffixes in Hungarian
(a historical study)

Hungarian second person verbal and nominal suffixing involves the following morphemes: Sg2: *-d, -l, -sz, -∅,* Pl2: *-tok/-tëk/-tök.*

The author considered the explanations that have been offered regarding the origin and history of these suffixes but he accepted them only in two instances: in the case of *-d* and *-tok/-tëk/-tök.* Earlier, linguists unanimously accepted the hypothesis that these suffixes had developed through the agglutination of the Sg2 **tŏ,* and the Pl2 **tŏk* personal pronouns in the era of the Proto-Uralic language. Furthermore, the Sg2 suffix had been created with voicing ($t > d$) to avoid homonyms, e.g. **füle-t* 'füled' (ear; Sg2 possessive) ↔ **füle-t* 'fület' (ear; Sg3. accusative) > *füle-d* 'füled' (ear; Sg2 possessive) ↔ *füle-t* 'fület' (ear; Sg3 accusative), **nézë-t* 'nézed' (to look at; Sg2 present) ↔ **nézë-t* 'nézett' (to look at; Sg3 past) > *nézë-d* 'nézed' (to look at; Sg2 present) ↔ (**nézë-t* >) *nézë-tt* 'nézett' (to look at; Sg3 past). Pl2 did not have homonymous pairs, so *t* was preserved: *füle-tëk* 'fületek' (ear; Pl2 possessive), *néz-tëk* 'néztek' (to look at; Pl2 present). Also, *t* could be preserved in Pl2 suffixes, because Pl2 was much less frequent both in the possessive and in the verbal declensions than Sg2. According to the generally accepted historical explanation, the *-l* and *-sz* verbal suffixes may have developed from a frequentative verbal suffix to a time marking suffix in Sg2, e.g. *néz-ël* (to look at; Sg2 present), *látsz* (to see; Sg2 present). The present paper however suggests that these suffixes originated from the pronoun **tŏ*. The basis for this hypothesis is the fact that an intervocalic **t* (similarly to other stops in the protolanguage) could develop into a fricative, which then could turn into **l* and then to **ϑ* and to **s* (=today's *sz*) through further phonetic changes:

tes-el = tësz-ël (to do; Sg2 present)
*tes-: **tes-et > *tes-ed ≳ *tes-eδ*
 (**tes-eϑ >*) **tes-es = tësz-ësz ≳ téssz* (= *tész-sz*)

The **t > *δ > *l* change had been suggested as early as a hundred years ago first, but those linguists reached the right conclusion on improper grounds (Proto-Uralic/Finno-Ugric consonant gradation has proved to be

wrongly hypothesized since). Balto-Finnic and Samoyedic languages produced similar changes, which supports this explanation.

The -∅ suffix has also got long history in academic literature. Several linguists thought that on the basis of the standard Hungarian *vagy* ’vagy’ (to be; Sg2 present), *mégy* ’mész’ (to go; Sg2 present) or the dialectal *lëgy* (~ standard *lëgyën*) ’legyen’ (to be; Sg3 conjunctive) the personal suffixes were only added to the verbal and nominal stems in the Proto-Hungarian era and until then the singular verb forms and the nouns used to refer to a possession were bare stems without suffixes. In the case of the verb forms *vagy* ’vagy’ (to be; Sg2 present) and *mégy* ’mész’ (to go; Sg2 present) the author suggests truncation (see the dialectal *vagysz* and *mégysz*) while the conjunctive *lëgy* ’legyen’ (to be; Sg3 conjunctive) is truly an unsuffixed form, though this is not a rare case in Sg3. This form is almost completely identical with the Sg2 imperative verb form: légy*!* ’légy!’ (to be; Sg2 conjunctive). Similar examples in German are e.g. *er warte* ’(hogy) ő várjon’ (to wait; Sg2 conjunctive), *er bitte* ’(hogy) ő kérjen’ (to ask for; Sg2 conjunctive). However, these forms are mostly identical with the Sg2 imperative forms: *warte!* ’várj!, vár(ja)d!’ (to wait; Sg2 imperative) *bitte!* ’kérj!, kér(je)d!’ (to ask for; Sg2 imperative).

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