8
Rhythmical Secondary Stresses

8.1 Introduction

In the examples of Chapters 6 and 7, minor stresses were derived by reduction (deaccentuation) from major stresses that appeared on the first syllable of words. Now we shall move on to another kind of minor stress, which is not derived from major stress but is assigned to certain unstressed syllables postlexically for rhythmical reasons. This is the kind of stress that, in some renderings at least, can be identified on the third, fifth and seventh syllables of the word *amerikaiakat* when it is pronounced in isolation, see (1). (The numerals below the word show the number of syllables.)

(1) ‘ame,rika,ia,kat ‘Americans-ACC’

Since these stresses can apparently occur in isolated words, they are traditionally referred to as secondary stresses in the literature, and we are not going to deviate from this usage, although strictly speaking, as we shall see, they are not *word-level* minor stresses. We shall call them *rhythmical secondary stresses* in the rest of this chapter.

It has been traditionally assumed that Hungarian non-compound words have rhythmical secondary stresses on certain syllables after the initial syllable, which is primary-stressed; see, for example, Hall (1944: 17), Papp (1966: 159). Such secondary stresses occur on syllables that are not adjacent to primary- or secondary-stressed syllables. Such views may create the impression that these secondary stresses are an inherent property of Hungarian words, and are just as obvious, permanent and
automatic features of the words in Hungarian as they are in, for example, Maranungku. This assumption will be refuted in this chapter.

After reviewing the relevant literature in section 8.2, in section 8.3 we will show that there is a rule, Contour Insertion, that seeks minor-stresses. Contour Insertion will be used as a diagnostic device to help find minor stresses (including rhythmical secondary stresses). Then, in section 8.4, it will be shown that the domain of rhythmical secondary stress placement is not the word but the intonation phrase, and rules will be proposed for the two patterns of rhythmical secondary stress assignment in Hungarian.

8.2 Earlier accounts

Hayes (1995: 330) finds that the literature shows two patterns of rhythmical secondary stress placement in Hungarian non-compound words. In both patterns the primary stress falls on the first syllable. In Pattern A, originally described by Balassa (1890), and made available for English speaking scholars by Kerek (1971), the secondary stresses follow the primary stress on every odd-numbered syllable. In the other pattern, Pattern B, described by Szinnyei (1912: 12), “a secondary stress falls on the third and the fifth syllables or (if the third syllable is light) the fourth and sixth, but never on the last” (translation from Hayes, 1995). Kager (1995: 374), and Roca and Johnson (1999: 347) do not recognize Pattern B and speak of Pattern A as the only possibility. Hammond (1987) also assumes that this is the only pattern, but he differentiates two degrees of secondary stresses. He achieves this by superimposing upon the pattern a special colon layer which assigns greater prominence to odd-numbered feet, as, for example, in ‘fél, mele; teid ‘your mezzanins’ (where I use the semicolon to indicate the stronger secondary stress). But this differentiation of secondary stresses into stronger and weaker degrees has little justification. Native Hungarian speakers simply do not hear the alleged differences and find Hammond’s examples unconvincing.

While Hammond overdifferentiates rhythmical secondary stresses, Kálmán and Nádasdy (1994: 407) deny their existence altogether.

Further uncertainty comes from the modifications that have been proposed to the stress patterns described, on the basis of some, rather vaguely established, morphological criteria. For instance, Szende (1976: 120) claims that so-called “living” (i.e. productive) derivational suffixes may attract secondary stress, even if they are not rhythmically eligible (odd-numbered) syllables; as, for example, the suffix -ság ‘-ness’ has