

Expressivity and productivity in the Hungarian *-hAtnék* construction

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Introduction

- Many languages have constructions that express *willing desire* with a fully agentive subject → **voluntary desiderative**
- A lot fewer languages have a dedicated construction to express *involuntary desire* → **impulsive**
 - the subject is less agentive
 - semantically characterized as “having an urge/impulse to do something” (Leiwo 1977; Zepeda 1987; Cathcart 2011)

Turning to Hungarian

- Hungarian has both the voluntary desiderative (1) and the impulsive construction (2):
 - (1) in-ni akar-ok
drink-INF want-1SG.INDEF
'I want to drink'
 - (2) küzd-ött-em az i-**hatnék**-kal
fight-PST-1SG the drink-URGE-INS
'I was fighting against an urge to drink'
- The derivational suffix *-hatnék* or *-hetnék* (depending on vowel harmony) forms a noun meaning 'an urge to VERB'

The productivity of *-hAtnék*

- Originally, this construction denoted basic bodily impulses, as in (2)
- Now it is fully productive: speakers extend it to increasingly complex uses:
 - (3) akkor még ön-ök-nek nem volt **repülőgép-vásárol-hatnék-juk**
then still you-PL-DAT not be.PST.3SG airplane-buy-URGE-3PL.POSS
'then you did not yet have an urge to buy an airplane'
 - (4) aki-nek **Mass Effect 3-az-hatnék-a** támad-t,
who-DAT Mass Effect 3-VBLZ-URGE-3SG.POSS arise-3SG.PST
'if anyone has gotten the urge to play Mass Effect 3'
- **Our goal:** creation of a semantic profile using collostructional analysis

Collostructional analysis

Analysis 1: base verbs

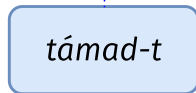
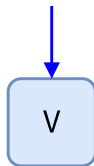


e.g.



cry-URGE-1SG.POSS

Analysis 2: matrix verbs



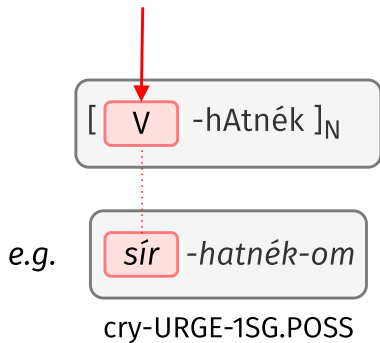
arise-3SG.PST

'an urge to cry came over me'

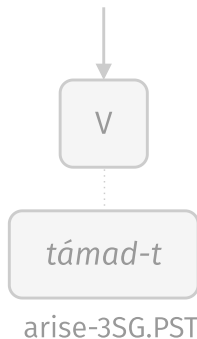
Data and method

- Corpus: Hungarian Gigaword Corpus (Oravecz et al. 2014)
a dependency-parsed and cleaned version, 929M tokens (Kalivoda et al. 2022)
- 2002 attestations of the *-hAtnék* construction
- Two independent simple collexeme analyses: base verbs, matrix verbs
- Extracting the collexemes attracted at the highest level of significance
($p < .0001$, log-likelihood ≥ 20)
- Sorting them into semantic groups manually

Analysis 1: base verbs



Analysis 2: matrix verbs



'an urge to cry came over me'

Analysis 1: base verbs

Labels: Semantic group, verb types / tokens.

Bodily functions
21 / 286

eat
drink
sleep
vomit
spit
piss

Emotional release
7 / 193

laugh
cry
howl
giggle
smile

Motion & escape
14 / 331

go
wander
run
flee
escape

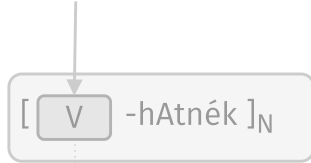
Other
19 / 78

self-sacrifice
womanize

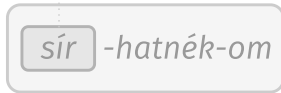
Speech
15 / 106

tell a story
talk

Analysis 1: base verbs

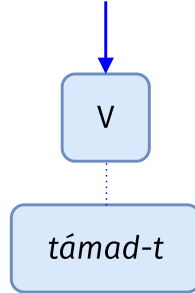


e.g.



cry-URGE-1SG.POSS

Analysis 2: matrix verbs



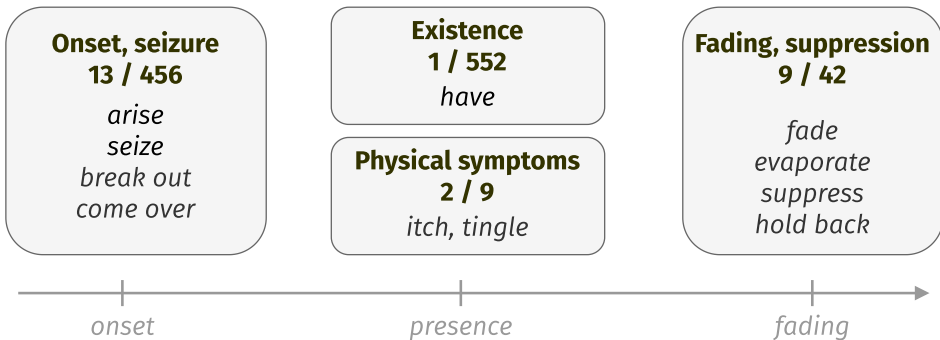
támad-t

arise-3SG.PST

'an urge to cry came over me'

Analysis 2: matrix verbs

The most strongly attracted matrix verbs trace the temporal arc of an urge.
Labels: Semantic group, verb types / tokens.



Conclusion

- This construction continues to attract verbs that denote bodily or low-agency (often emotional) experiences
- How does 'the urge to buy an airplane' fit into that?
- Expressivity is the engine for productivity (Gyselinck 2018):
 - The -hAtnék construction is a playful, vivid way of expressing an urge
 - Speakers keep slotting new verbs in for the rhetorical punch
 - Hyperbole wears down with repetition
 - So fresh coinages keep arriving to renew it