

MAPPING THE MEANING OF HUNGARIAN IMPULSATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

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1. Introduction

- **Impulsive:** a construction expressing *involuntary desire*
 - the subject is less agentive
 - semantically characterized as “having an urge to do something” (Leiwo 1977, Zepeda 1987, Cathcart 2011)
- Hungarian has a **dedicated derivational suffix** for the impulsive:
 - its form is *-hatnék* or *-hetnék*, depending on vowel harmony
 - it takes a verb and creates from it a noun meaning ‘an urge to VERB’

2. The productivity of -hAtnék

- Originally, this construction denoted **basic bodily impulses**:
 - küzd-ött-em az *i-hatnék-kal*
fight-PST-1SG the drink-URGE-INS
‘I was fighting against an urge to drink’
 - *sír-hatnék-om* *támad-t*
cry-URGE-1SG.POSS arise-3SG.PST
‘I got an urge to cry’
- Now it is fully productive: speakers extend it to **increasingly complex uses**:
 - 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’
 - 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’
- This trajectory raises a **distributional question**:
Is the semantic expansion reflected in, or constrained by, the statistical associations between the construction and its lexical fillers?

**Our goal:
creation of a semantic profile
using colostruational analysis**

3. Text source

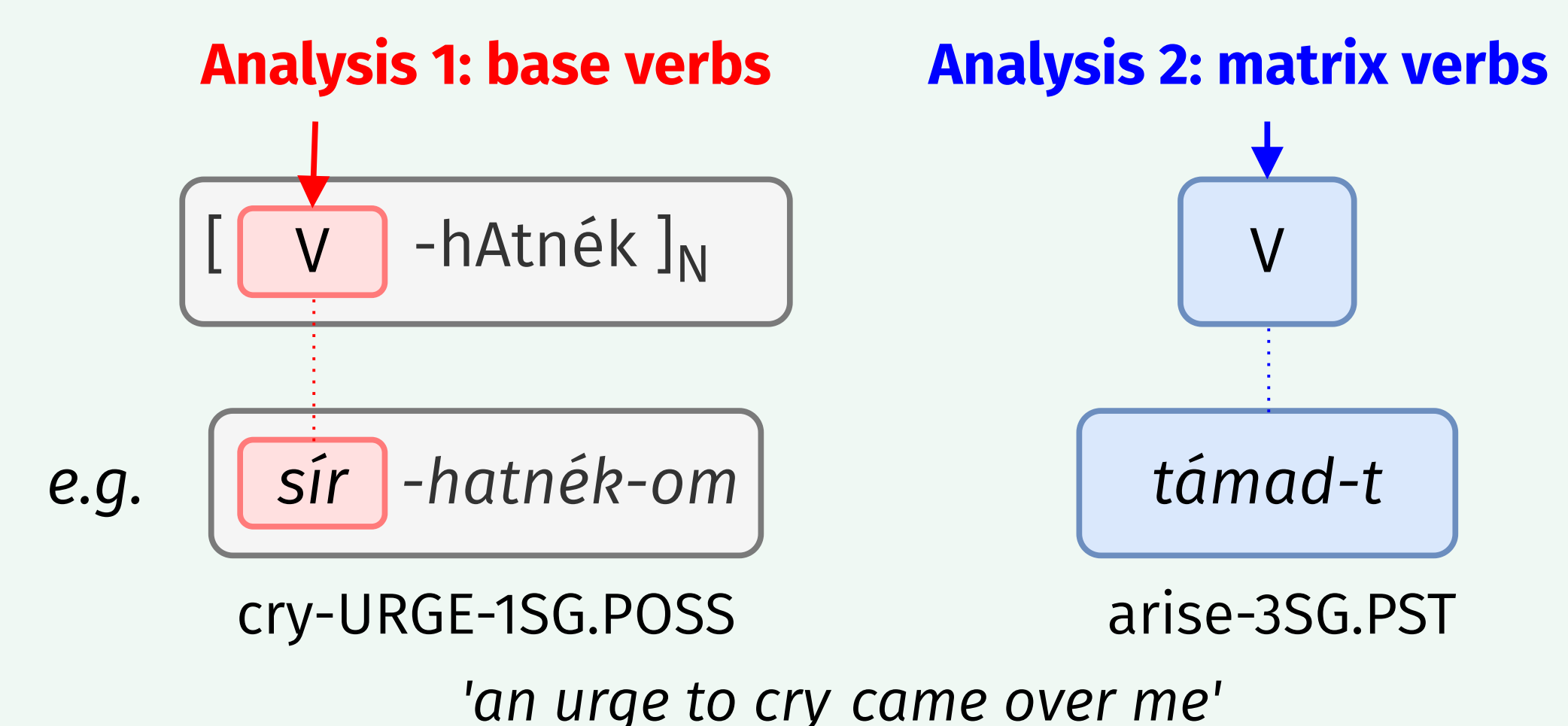
- HPLT Monolingual Datasets 3.0 (Aulamo et al. 2023)
- a large-scale multilingual corpus covering 198 languages
- derived from web crawls spanning 2012 to 2024
- the Hungarian subset totals 731 GB of uncompressed raw text

4. Data collection

1. Parse a **16 billion token subset** of the Hungarian corpus using HuSpaCy (Orosz et al. 2023) to obtain dependency structures
2. Query the dependency parses with the Tresearch tool (Malouf 2025) to identify ca. **12,000 impulsatives** and their head predicates
3. Obtain detailed morphological analyses of the impulsatives using emMorph (Novák et al. 2016), separating the root verb from the *-hAtnék* suffix
4. Collect corpus-wide frequency counts for each root verb and head predicate – needed for the colostruational analysis (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003)

5. Data analysis

- Colostruational analysis uses measures of association to identify lexical items that fill slots in a construction with greater than chance frequency
- Two independent simple collexeme analyses: base verbs, matrix verbs



- Extracting the collexemes attracted at the highest level of significance (log-likelihood ≥ 30)
- Sorting them into semantic groups manually

6. Results: Base verbs

Labels: Semantic group, verb types / tokens.

Bodily processes
59 / 1969

eat, drink
sleep, nap
vomit, spit
piss, fart
poop

Emotional release
33 / 3081

laugh
sob, cry, howl
throw a tantrum
giggle, smile
chuckle

Motion & escape
39 / 2397

go, wander
go forest-walking
run, flee
escape

Intimacy
17 / 343

kiss, fuck
have sex
marry

Other
94 / 925

self-sacrifice
kill

Speech
47 / 548

tell a story
talk

Creative
21 / 633

draw, paint
sew, crochet

7. Results: Matrix verbs

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

Onset, seizure
37 / 4096

arise
seize
break out
come over

Existence
19 / 6142

have, be, live

Physical symptoms
2 / 11

hurt, tingle

Fading, satisfaction, suppression
29 / 273

fade, evaporate,
satisfy, live out,
suppress,
hold back

onset

presence

fading

8. 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, fresh coinages keep arriving to renew it