Katalin Szili

Data on the question of lexical aspect in Hungarian

The connection between punctuality, iterativity and durativity

1. The inherent phasal factors of verbs: Aktionsart or lexical aspect?

According to cognitive studies, verbs denote processes which are fundamentally characterised by phasal factors.[1] For instance, the meaning of the verb *él* 'live' is conceptualised as a long process consisting of momentary states. However, the verb *megmoccan* 'make a short movement' expresses a brief activity. Research carried out on this characteristic of verbs belongs to the field of aspect. Nevertheless, it poses difficulties to find the appropriate place of phasal factors in this field due to the different terms for and interpretations of this concept.

The concept known in German linguistic studies as Aktionsart, Art der Handlung, Zeitart, has been in use since the 19th century. It was first separated from aspect by Agrell in 1908:

> Unter *Aktionart* verstehe ich […] **nicht** die beiden Hauptkategorien des slavischen Zeitwortes, die unvollendete und die vollendete Handlungsform (das Imperfektivum und das Perfektivum) – diese nenne ich *Aspekte*. Mit dem Ausdrucke **Aktionsart** bezeichne ich bisher fast gar nicht beachtete – geschweige denn klassifizierte – *Bedeutungsfunktionen* der Verbalkomposita […], *die genauer ausdrücken **wie** die Handlung vollbracht wird, die Art und Weise* ihrer Ausführung markieren.[2]

---

[1] Tolcsvai Nagy 2018, 310.
[2] Agrell 1908, 78.

If we examine the subsequent definitions until 1990, we can conclude that on the basis of Agrell aktionsart continues to be identified with the meaning designating the way in which actions and events run their course, so the phasal factors discussed here are present in all of them. Isačenko vests it with **phasal** and **quantitative** features,[3] while Shelyakin speaks of **resultative** and **terminative** aktionsart.[4] In Germanic linguistics the Aktionsart can be phasal, i.e. beginning, continuation, completion; or quantitative, that is: intensity, diminutivity, augmentativity.[5] Relying on the German literature Ferenc Kiefer also mentions these two main types[6], but he does not use this distinction when discussing Hungarian aktionsart types.[7]

The above mentioned terminological and partly content-related shift in the judgement of the meaning components of verbs is a consequence of Smith's two-level theory of aspect. This model differentiates between the notion of viewpoint aspect marked with grammatical elements, especially with syntactic tools in English, and the notion of situation aspect, known as lexical aspect, in verbs and their arguments.[8] Hence lexical aspect is an inherent characteristic of verbs, i.e., it is part of the lexical entry of verbs providing information about the temporal flow of the denoted event. This paper uses this term as well but in the case of references to the literature, this study sticks to the term used by the author at issue. It has to be mentioned, however, that I consider aktionsart and lexical aspect as being two overlapping but at the same time distinct categories. For reasons of space, their relationship is not in the scope of this paper. For the sake of completeness, it has to be noted that my topic, the temporal flow of the denoted event, i.e., whether the particular event is punctual or durative, is only one of the factors on which Vendler's first classification of lexical aspect types and some subsequent theories are based.[9]

---

[3] Isačenko 1962.
[4] Shelyakin 1987, 63–82.
[5] Helbig/Buscha 1986; Flämig 1991.
[6] Kiefer 2006, 139.
[7] Ibid., 149–181.
[8] Smith 1991, 8.
[9] Vendler 1967; Smith 1991.

2. The formal characteristics of marking phasal information on Hungarian verbs – a theoretical starting point

If lexical aspect is regarded as phasal information, which is part of the lexical entry of verbs, it can be seen that in Hungarian it is either unmarked or it is morphologically marked in the lexemes. For instance, in the verb forms *él* 'live', *aggódik* 'be worried', *tanul* 'learn', *olvas* 'read' and *sír* 'cry' there are no grammatical elements encoding the durative nature of these actions but it is a component of their meaning. However, the verbs *csöp**ög*** 'drip continuously', *kop**og*** 'knock continuously', *csöp**pen*** 'drip', *loccs**an*** 'spill' and *legy**int*** 'make a quick movement with one's hand' and the verbs obligatorily used with a preverb ***meg**hal* 'die', ***meg**semmisül* 'perish', ***meg**döbb**ent*** 'stun', ***meg**pill**ant*** 'catch sight of' and ***el**ér* 'reach' contain well-identifiable morphemes (the suffixes and preverbs printed in bold) which convey iterativity and punctuality. They can also be identified if we only experience formal transparency, i.e., the word does not have a free stem (*legy**int**, megpill**ant***), as these words fall into the homogeneous category of verbs ending in a punctual suffix (in our examples: *-Ant, -int*). It has to be mentioned that I have a different view from Ferenc Kiefer regarding the dual (morphologically marked or unmarked) way of realising phasal information. Kiefer's theory conforms to Isačenko and Agrell's system and it ascribes aktionsart only to morphologically complex verb forms which tie the new meaning to free (verba simplica) verbs (*agyon**dolgoz**za magát* 'work himself to death', ***í**rogat* 'write continuously', ***int**eget* 'wave several times':

„Az akcióminőség a morfológiailag összetett ige toldalékolással vagy igekötővel bevezetett járulékos jelentéstani tulajdonsága."[10] It has to be pointed out because his model contains only a limited number of tools expressing aktionsart: only the suffix *-gAt* and the preverbs are associated with this function.[11] This contradicts the findings of previous studies which found that several verb suffixes encode information on aktionsart. For example, Mai magyar nyelv[12] lists 18 iterative and 10 punctual derivatives. If we examine the examples,

---

[10] Kiefer 2006, 144.

[11] Ibid., 149.

[12] Bencédy/Fábián/Rácz/Velcsov 1971, 121–125.

we see that among verbs containing aktionsart derivatives there are some where the meaning of the derivative connects to the meaning of the base word (**köp** + *dös*, 'spit' + iterative derivative, **hever** + *-észik* 'loll' + durative derivative, *dolgoz* + *-**gat***, 'work' + durative derivative), while others (the majority) do not have a "free" root: *ragy**og*** 'shine', *vis**ong*** 'squeal continuously/repeatedly', *cs**eng*** 'ring continuously/repeteadly', *köh**int*** 'give a little cough', etc.

In terms of morphologic categorisation the first mentioned words are clearly derivative, while the latter fall into the passive-stemmed category. However, in Isačenko's or Kiefer's additive (requiring a base word) aktionsart concept, only words with free stems can be aktionsart carriers. We should therefore pretend that the dozens of derivatives are not included in such verbs and state that repetition is an inherent meaning of the verbs *patt**og**, '*bounce repeatedly'*, köh**ög*** 'cough repeatedly' *and ból**og**at '*nod repeatedly'*, in the same way as of the verb *lélegzik* 'breathe'. Or – taking the cultural-semantic approach of A. Wierzbicka – we should indeed attach significance to their frequent occurrence in the Hungarian language, and assume that their presence intimates a system which to the native speaker carries information regarding a given segment of the world:

> While obviously words are carriers of meaning, it is less obvious that grammatical categories of a language also encode meaning. But in fact this is what grammar is all about: certain meanings are so important to communities of speakers that they become not just lexicalized (linked with individual words) but grammaticalized, that is, embodied in the language's structural patterns.[13]

2.1 Methodology

Sharing the views of Wierzbicka, one of my aims is to answer the question as to which properties and priorities the hundreds of verbs with related morphological structures and identical phasal information showcase when it comes to the conceptualisation of reality. My corpus, which served as the basis of my research, consists of events associated with the speech organs, the parts of the human body, the head, the eyes, the feet, the legs and the hands. I also aim

---

[13] Wierzbicka 2006, 171.

at finding the phasal properties of these verbs, i.e., the relations between and the markers of punctuality, iterativity and durativity.

I chose this verb group and the cognitive approach because of my presumption that actions experienced by humans directly through their sensory organs are the most suitable for tracing how consciousness processes perception-based knowledge and transforms it into actionview. The sensory experiences most helpful when interpreting phasal processes are hearing, seeing and our own motor movements. Accordingly, to establish the temporal features inherent in the verb *megy* 'go' we can rely on our own activity (going is when we put one foot in front of the other, repeating such movement over and over again), on our hearing (using our ears we identify the accompanying noises) and our eyes as well (we see how others are going, i.e., we can visualise the concept of 'going').

I built my hypothesis on the dual ability of human perception: it can perceive the impressions of the outside world in their entirety, as a general impression, while also being able to make flexible selections, that is, to focus on the most important feature, on what is different from the general. (Essentially, both procedures serve the same purpose: to ensure that the brain is served only the necessary amount of information).

If verbalisation procedures correspond to these characteristics, then the above can be discerned in language in the unmarked/marked duality. My work method was simple: first I collected the verbs expressing the actions of the given body part with and without derivatives, then I placed them into semantic groups based on their dictionary-based meaning. Since my grouping is rather different from past classifications, first I shall introduce the phasal categories playing a defining role in my analysis.

1. punctuality: the action or event is not extensive, it is punctual: *elillan* 'slip away', *megdöbben* 'recoil'. Punctual events have two types: semelfactive events are not associated with a preceding span of time, as they are conceptualised as events whose starting and end points fall on the same point in time. (The punctual events I examine belong to this category.) Achievements, on the other hand, express changes of state and, in contrast with semelfactives, are generally

associated with a preceding span of time: *elér* 'reach', *megszületik* 'be born', etc.[14]

2. durativity: the event contained in the verb is extensive in time, i.e., it lasts for a certain amount of time. With regard to their lexical aspect these forms can be states *(aggódik* 'be worried', *gondolkodik* 'be thinking'),* activities *(fut* 'is running', *írja a levelet* 'is writing the letter'),* accomplishments *(megírta a levelet* 'has written the letter').* In my corpus I found activities representing this category. Besides being durative, another important property of these activities is that they have not reached their real or hypothetical end point: *kiabál* 'keeps shouting' or *megy az iskolába* 'is going to school'.

3. iterativity: although it is seemingly simple to describe the iterative nature of events and to find the right place of iterativity in (or outside of) the lexical aspect system, it is not unproblematic. First, it has to be stated that in contrast with punctuality and durativity, iterativity cannot be utilised for the purposes of defining discrete types of lexical aspect because iterativity is a general property which can characterise all of the event types; i.e., repetition taking place at regular or irregular intervals can be connected to all aspect types from states through activities, accomplishments and semelfactives to achievements: *esténként sokat aggódik* 'in the evenings usually she is too worried'*; mindennap futok* 'I go running every day'*; óránként megiszik egy pohár vizet* 'she drinks a glass of water every hour'*; sok-szor meglegyinti* 'he often slaps him'*; gyakran eléri a célját* 'she often achieves her goals'. Despite its aspect neutrality, iterativity is an interesting topic for linguistic discussion, especially in the case of Hungarian where this meaning component can be categorised into grammatical verb classes. This is also proved by my research results shown below. It has to be added that the frequentative and iterative aktionsart types are integral parts of the traditional aktionsart classi-fication.[15] There are several repetition types but I deal only with cases of regular succession, where a series of punctual actions or events (sound- or light effects, movements) follow each other in time in close, regular succession. Thus in this case the repetitions result in durative action: *pattan* 'bounce' *+ pattan* 'bounce' *+ pattan* 'bounce'

---

[14] Smith 1991,40–62.
[15] Kiefer 2006, 150–162.

→ *pattog* 'bounce repeatedly/continuously'. Frequentativity expresses repetition with irregular frequency (*meg-megáll*, '*to stop and go during walking*'), while habituality expresses a meaning of 'frequently' or 'regularly'.[16]

I was able to ascribe semantic subgroups to both the second and third category. In both cases the subgroups are the same: the families of diminutive and distributive meaning. In my model these two distinctive attributes do not refer to separate lexical aspect types. They only allude to information which is connected to iterativity or to durative activities and which depends on a given context or on the meaning and the arguments of the base verbs (which stand without preverbs).

2a. durative-diminutive meaning: the action contained in the verb goes on for a longer period, but takes place slower or with less intensity: *dolgozgat, varrogat*. This meaning is based on our own experience: if we do something for a longer period we are bound to get tired and our pace will slow, while we have a definite picture of the appropriate pace of the work and thus – based on the existence of the formal possibilities – we want to separate the two methods of execution*.* One of its typical markers is the polysemic suffix *-gAt,* which is used to build derivates (which have not been lexicalised) from base verbs by means of a simple semantic selection: *fest + eget* 'he paints with low intensity for a long period of time'*, olvas + gat* 'he reads with low intensity for a long period of time'.

2b. durative-distributive meaning: the action is aimed at different arguments, i.e., the distributive meaning component is expressed with the help of syntactic tools. The arguments can be objects as well as places and dates: *olvasgatja a verseket* 'he reads the poems – one poem after'; *rázogatja a csengőket* 'he rings (repeatedly) the bells – one bell after'; *mindenhova futkosott a beteg gyerekével* 'he ran all over the place with his ill child'*.*

3a. iterative-diminutive meaning: the multiplication of punctual actions can result the weakening of the action's intensity: *köhécsel* 'keeps coughing with low intensity'*, csepereg* 'keeps dripping with low intensity'.

---

[16] Kiefer 1996.

3b. iterative-distributive meaning: the repeating action is aimed at different arguments (*ő kapdosta el a labdákat* 'he was catching the balls – one ball after').

3. A possible system of punctuality, iterativity and durativity in Hungarian

Now let us take a look at the individual verb groups to find the connection between their morphological structure and their phasal properties and to identify the relations between the three phasal categories (punctuality, durativity and iterativity) in Hungarian.

3.1 Punctual – iterative relation: • – ••••: *böffen/böffent* 'belch one-time' – *böfög* 'belch repeatedly'
 I shall begin my analysis with the phenomena of punctuality and iterativity (both effects are a special experience for the senses), not least because their occurrence intimates a systematic quality. According to my data the phasal difference between the actions is most obvious for the sense of hearing: with the overwhelming majority of sound effects we feel it so necessary to distinguish between single-instance, quick sound effects and those following each other repeatedly that we ascribe to them different markers. The suffixes *-An* and *-int* and sometimes the punctual suffix *-ít* are attached to base words in the case of punctual actions, whereas mostly *-Og, -Ol* and *-Ál* are affixed to the end of elements expressing repetition. As the base words are in general onomatopoeia, the derivates are motivated from the perspective of their phonology and their structure as well. (If we added to my corpus the similar word-pairs of natural sounds [*buggyan – bugyog* 'bubble' – 'gurgle/bubble repeatedly', *kattan – kattog* click – click repeatedly, *pattan – pattog,* 'bounce' – 'bounce repeatedly', *loccsan – locsog* 'splash' – 'splash repeatedly/ continuously'] we would get an even richer family*.*)

In the dictionary alone I found approximately 40 such word pairs, without even taking into account the vocabulary of dialects and colloquialisms, rich in such meanings. Kinga Fabó underestimates

their quantity, as – taking into account all activities – she assumes 21 such word pairs.[17]

The common characteristic of such verbs is that they are part of a dual system: that of their own (punctual, iterative) formal and semantic class, as well as of the opposition between the two classes. Their meaning exist in relation to each other. Consequently, the iterative form can be deduced from the punctual form, i.e. – as Fabó notes also – "a két szó közti hangalakbeli különbség, illetve összetartozás grammatikalizált."[18] It is worth noting that when discussing durativity and punctuality Comrie mentions just such verbs (imputing them a grammatical class) as examples from Hungarian language: "In Hungarian, too, there are several suffixes which serve in general to mark verbs of this class, such as *zörren* 'knock, give a knock' (cf. *zörög* 'knock' (possibly repeatedly)."[19]

3.1.1 Punctual-iterative verb pairs connected to the speech organs
The first member of the verb pairs expresses the non-recurring nature of the activity, whereas the second member encodes the meaning 'repeatedly'. The abbreviation *dim.* is the short form of "diminutive" and *distr.* represents the term "distributive".

> *böffen, böffent – böfög, csettent/csetteg, cuppant/cuppog, horkant/ horkol/hortyog, hördül – hörög, hörpint – hörpöl, hümment – hüm- get/hümmöget, jajdul –jajgat/jajong, kiált – kiabál – kiáltozik, kor- tyint/kortyant – kortyol, kurjant – kurjong/kurjongat, köhint – köhög, köhécsel (dim.), köhicsél (dim.), nyekken/nyikkan –nyekeg, ordít – ordibál (dim.), pisszen, pisszent – piszeg,szisszen/szisszent – sziszeg, prüsszen/prüsszent – prüszög, rikkant/rikolt – rikoltozik/rikácsol, sercint – sercintget, sikít – sikong/sikítozik/sikongat, szippant – szi- pog, szisszent/sziszeg,szusszan/szusszant – szuszog, szólít – szólon- gat, tüsszen/tüsszent – tüszög, visít – visong/visongat.*

---

[17] Fabó 1989, 41.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Comrie 1976, 43.

3.1.2 Punctual-iterative verb pairs expressing movements of the legs, the feet, the hand and the head.

In the case of the limbs, mostly activities associated with a sound effect form a regular verb pair. On the rest of the verbs expressing movement, only repetition is marked grammatically, mostly with the suffix *-gAt: ad – adogat, ver – vereget*.

> **movements of the legs and feet**: csosszan – csoszog, dobbant – dobog, lép – lépeget (dim.), lépked, lépdel, lépdegél (dim.), ugrik – ugrál, ugrándozik, rúg – rugdos, rugdal, rugódozik (dim.), szökell, szökik – szökdel, szökdécsel (dim.), (meg)támolyodik – támolyog, (meg)tántorodik – tántorog, toppan/toppant – topog/toporog.

> **movements of the hands:** ad – adogat (distr.), állít – állítgat, bök – bökdös (distr.), csap – csapdos (distr.), csettint – csetteg, csíp – csipeget, csipdes (distr.), csuk – csukogat (distr.), dob – dobál (distr.), dönt, döntöget (distr.), emel/emelint – emelget (distr.), érint – érintget (distr.), fordít – forgat (distr.), húz – húzogat, huzigál/húzgál (dim., distr.), int – integet, kap – kapdos (distr.), legyint – legyintget, lök – lökdös (distr.), hajít – hajigál (distr.), márt – mártogat, nyes – nyeseget, nyit – nyitogat (distr.), nyújt – nyújtogat, ránt – ráncigál, sutytyant/suhint – suhogtat, szúr – szurdos, szurdal (distr.), tapint – tapogat (distr.), taszít – taszigál (distr.), tör – tördel (distr. is), üt – ütöget (distr.), vág – vagdos, vagdal, ver – vereget.

> **movements of the eyes and the head:** biccent – biccentget (distr.), bólint – bólintgat/bólogat, fintorít – fintorog, hunyorít – hunyorog/sunyorog, kacsint – kacsintgat, pislant/pillant – pislog/pillog, tekint – tekintget.

3.2 On the multi-faced nature of iterativity

As we have seen in subsection 2.1, iterativity can be conceptualised as the repetition of relatively quick single-instance effects. However, we may perceive permanent repetition as one continuous action: •••• = ——. The fact that durativity and iterativity may fade into each other, i.e. that the semantic category of iterativity is open towards durativity, is proven by dozens of forms having transient, interim features. In addition, the functions of the suffix *-gAt* also account for their relatedness: the verb in the sentence *János nyáron utaz**gat**ott*

'János travelled a lot in the summer' can have an iterative-diminutive and a durative-diminutive reading as well.

3.2.1 Iterative forms only: ••••: *krákog* 'harrumph repeatedly'
Among the verbs where repetition is signalled by markers we find – albeit in small numbers – verbs where the punctual counterpart is "missing": *buffog* 'belch repeatedly', *csámcsog* 'chomp', *csemcseg* 'munch', *hákog* 'hawk', *hüppög* 'mumble', *kákog/krákog* 'gurgle', 'harrumph', *nyafog* 'whine', *szortyog/szörtyög/szotyog* 'squelch', *vacog* 'shiver'. (It is worth noting that verbs expressing animal sounds are almost exclusively without a punctual counterpart: *hápog* 'quack', *gágog* 'honk', *nyávog* 'meow', *csicsereg* 'chirp' 'twitter', etc.) A common trait of these verbs is the iconic nature of the connection between the onomatopoeic root – reflecting the single (punctual) sound effect (e.g. the Hungarian stems *"nyám", "krák", "hüp"),* – or the sounds just imitating the sound and the real sound effect, i.e. these are motivated words in a Saussurean sense as well.

Among verbs expressing non-vocal effects we can find similar words, but in smaller numbers: *biceg* 'hobble'*, tipeg* 'toddle', 'waddle', *cirógat* 'caress', 'fondle', *lapogat* 'pat'. In my view these forms are passive rooted, but regularly derived iterative verbs. This is confirmed by the fact that no new phasal markers can be affixed to them: the possible diminutive or distributive meaning is only a semantic element tied to the iterativity.

3.2.2 Between iterativity and durativity
There are forms which – similarly to what we have seen above – contain the iterative marker, but in which the once-existing iconic connection between the onomatopoeic/evocative root and the current form is now weaker for the language user, as evidenced by the fact that new (iterative-diminutive) meanings can be formed from them similarly to the durative forms: *cseveg → cseverészik* 'chat' → 'chat continuously', *kacag → kacarászik* 'laugh' → 'laugh softly/gently', 'titter', *kuncog* 'titter continously'; *fecseg → fecserészik* 'babble' → 'babble continuously', *nyög → nyögdécsel/nyöszörög/nyöszög* 'groan', 'moan' continuously/softly/gently', *röhög/rötyög/röcög → röhécsel/ röhigcsél/rötyörészik* 'guffaw', 'haw-haw'

continously → 'guffaw', 'haw-haw' repeatedly/softly, 'snicker'; *vihog* → *vihorászik* 'giggle' → 'giggle continuously/softly, cackle, 'snicker'.

Due to the dual, i.e., generalising or individualising (emphasising) nature of perception, it is not a coincidence that a given activity can be expressed both with a derivate containing an iterative suffix and an unmarked durative form. *Beszél* 'speak' refers to the activity of a person who is continuously saying words one after the other, but at the same time, short pauses can be experienced in his speech. The recurring cycles of speech and pauses can also be expressed by motivated onomatopoeia ending in a frequentative suffix (see the endings printed in bold). The following examples illustrate this pattern.

> **beszél** 'speak': csacs**og**, csacskál**kodik**, csáng**ál**, cserfel, csev**eg**, dad**og**, doh**og**, fecs**eg**, fröcs**ög**, locs**og**, karattyol, puf**og**, sus**og**, sustor**og**, sutt**og**, sutyor**og**, társal**og**, tereferél, ujjo**ng**, zsibo**ng**, zajo**ng**.

It is also the case with 'going' and a lot of other activities which are not discussed here for reasons of space. So, the highlighted iterative suffixes form an iconic link with the movements which become continuous but consist of recurrent submotions.

> **megy** 'walks slowly, with less intensity': andal**og**, baktat, ballag**,** balla**gdál**, balló**kál**, bandikál, banduk**ál**, banduk**ol**, batty**og**, kull**og**, camm**og**, kutya**gol**, kuty**og**, slatty**og**, tip**eg**, toty**og**/töty**ög**, vánszor**og**.

> **vándorol, kóborol** 'roam, wander': csász**kál**, csavar**og**, csámbor**og**, cselle**ng**, kódor**og**, kóvály**og**, kujtor**og**, léze**ng**, lődö**ng**, lődör**ög**, mász**kál**, ögyel**eg**, sompoly**og**, sunny**og**, ólál**kod**ik, ténfer**eg**, teker**eg**; ücsör**ög**, ődö**ng**, sette**ng**, te**ng**-le**ng**.

3.2.3 Inherently iterative forms: iterative ↔ iterative diminutive/distributive relation ••••↔••••. *teker – tekerget* 'wind' – 'wind repeatedly'

This grouping is tied to the previous sub-group only by its meaning. It describes repeating actions, but without a marker, as with *teker*: "To wrap or encircle repeatedly in a ring-like fashion something onto or around something". The lessening of intensity or the distributivity, or possibly both at the same time, are expressed by the attached *-gAt* derivative, which is a typical durative, iterative marker:

rakosgatta a könyveket a polcra 'he was putting the books (one book after another) onto the shelf'.

> kavar – kavargat, kever – keverget, ken – keneget, ráz – rázogat, rak – rakogat/rakosgat, simít – simogat, szed – szedeget, teker – tekerget, tép – tépdes, vakar – vakargat.

In connection with the verbs listed above it can be asked whether it is possible to capture the momentary elements of the repeating series of activities, i.e., whether the iterative – iterative-diminutive – punctual relation exists. The answer is: yes. The non-recurring nature of activities can be expressed by syntactic tools, preverbs (*megrázta, tekert egyet rajta*) and suffixes (*csavar – csavargat – csavarint, habar – habargat – habarint, pödör – pödörget – pödörít/pödörint, sodor – sodorgat – sodorint/sodorít*).

3.2.4 Durative → durative-diminutive/distributive relation

Intimating the lessening of intensity which goes together with the phasal extension of durative actions (*olvas – olvasgat* 'read' – 'read on and off, browse') seems general and is – at first glance – unproblematic from a formal point of view. To quote Kiefer: "Úgy tűnik, a deminutív akcióminőség minden duratív igekötőtlen cselekvésigéből képezhető." [20] Due to the rigorous productivity-conditions Kiefer vests the *-gAt* morpheme with this role.

Based on my data the above derivative attaches almost exclusively to verbs of the hand, as actions of other body parts have a more colourful set of formal tools: *néz – nézelődik, nézdegél, nézeget* (distr.) 'look' – 'look about, look around, gaze about (distr.)'; *megy – megyeget/mendegél* 'go – go about, saunter/stroll along; run – run along (distr.). (Due to their large number I shall forego listing the verbs.) Even more important is the observation that semantic incompatibility can prevent the creation of the given meaning: such a decrease in the intensity of fast actions or events would be senseless, as it would strip the meaning of its most basic element *(*sietget, *loholgat, *roboggat, *trappolgat*). Even though we have the forms *futkos* 'run along', *rohangál* 'run to and fro, run hither and thither';

---

[20] Kiefer 2006, 162.

these can be ascribed a distributive-diminutive meaning. (In the dictionary the sense of 'to and fro', 'with less speed' is included in their meaning.)

4. Conclusion

Based on my analysis, my findings can be shown as follows. Durativity is our most common time experience, which is confirmed by its unmarked nature. The over-extension of durative actions or events, and the lessening intensity accompanying the above, such actions/event being aimed at more than one argument, is an additional meaning of this group, i.e. this meaning is achieved by derivation: *énekel – énekelget* 'sing' – 'sing on and off, sing continuously'. The counterpole is represented by punctuality, as a singular perceptive experience and marked category: *toppant* 'stamp [one's foot] one time'*.* Iterativity, being the multiplication of punctual actions, is also an experience highlighted by markers: *top**og*** 'patter', 'stamp' many times or continuously'. "Transit" between the two groups is regular, that is, they form grammatical categories which can turn into each other: *toppant – topog, koppant – kopog*. Since durativity and repetition have a similar effect on the senses, iterativity is a category open towards durativity as well. The connection between the two phasal categories is ensured by the verb class bearing the marker of repetition (*tip**eg*** 'waddle, toddle', *ciró**gat*** 'caress') as well as the inherently iterative verbs (*ráz* 'shake', *teker* 'wind'). The latter behave in a way similar to their durative counterparts, i.e., diminutivity and distributivity are attached to them as separate semantic elements.

To summarise the above, we can state that the formal structure of verbs describing the actions of body parts corresponds to our essential experiences regarding the course of these actions in time, since the different, other-than-average element is placed into the marked category. There are two ways in Hungarian to realise the phasal properties discussed. There are verb groups which form structurally motivated grammatical classes characterised by well-defined formal properties (see the punctual and iterative verb pairs). However, in special cases, iterativity and durativity can be expressed by derivations resulting in forms which are not lexicalised (they have

no separate dictionary entries), as with the durative and iterative functions of the polysemic suffix *-gAt*.

My examinations outline several tasks to serve as subject for further studies. Among others, it should be decided whether my findings can be extended to the whole system of verbs; we should give a more precise explanation for the polysemy of derivatives having diminutive/distributive and iterative/durative functions at the same time and for their decoding-mechanism.[21]

References

Agrell, Sigurd: *Aspektänderung und Aktionsartbildung beim polnischen Zeitworte; ein Beitrag zum Studium der indogermanischen Präverbia und ihrer Bedeutungsfunktionen.* Lund 1908.

Bencédy, József et al.: *A mai magyar nyelv* [The Hungarian language today]. Budapest 1971.

Bertinetto, Pier Marco/Lenci, Alessandro: Iterativity vs. habituality (and gnomic imperfectivity). In: *Quaderni del Laboratorio di Linguistica* 9 (2010), 1–46.

Boneh, Nora/Doron, Edit: Habituality and the habitual aspect. In: Susan Rothstein (ed.): *Theoretical and crosslinguistic approaches to the semantics of aspect.* Amsterdam 2008, 321–347.

Comrie, Bernard: *Aspect. An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems*. Cambridge 1976.

Dressler, Wolfgang U.: *Studien zur Verbalen Pluralität. Iteratitivum, Distributivum, Durativum, Intensivum in der allgemeinen Grammatik, im Lateinischen und Hethitischen*. Wien 1968.

Fabó Kinga: A gyakorító és mozzanatos igék morfológiája és szemantikája [The morphology and semantics of the iterative and punctual verbs]. In: *Általános Nyelvészeti Tanulmányok* 17 (1989), 31–48.

---

[21] Dressler 1968; Haiman 1980; Regier 1998; Boneh/Doron 2008; Berzinetto/ Lenci 2010.

Haiman, John: The iconicity of grammar: isomorphism and motivation. In: *Language* 56 (1980), 515–540.

Helbig, Gerhard/Buscha, Joachim: *Deutsche Grammatik*. Leipzig 1986.

Isačenko, Aleksand V.: *Die russische Sprache der Gegenwart. Teil I. Formenlehre*. Halle 1962.

Kiefer, Ferenc: *Aspektus és akcióminőség különös tekintettel a magyar nyelvre* [Aspect and Aktionsart. With special regard to the Hungarian language]. Budapest 2006.

— Az ismétlődés fajtái, nyelvi kifejezőeszközei és szemantikai ábrázolása [The kinds of iteration, their expression and semantic representation]. In: *Néprajz és Nyelvtudomány* 37 (1996), 111–119.

Regier, Terry: Reduplication and the arbitrariness of a sign. In: Morton A. Gernsbacher/Sharon J. Derry (eds.): *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*. Mahwah, NJ 1998, 887–892.

Shelyakin, Mikhail A.: Sposoby deistviia v pole limitativnosti [Aktionsarten in the field of limitativity]. In: A. V. Bondarko (ed.): *Teorija funkcionalnoj grammatiki*. Moscow 1987, 63–209.

Smith, Carlota: *The Parameter of Aspect*. Dordrecht 1991.

Tolcsvai Nagy, Gábor: Az ige jelentése [The meaning of the verb]. In: id.: *Nyelvtan*. Budapest 2018, 310–352.

Vendler Zeno: *Linguistics in philosophy.* Ithaca, NY 1967.

Wierzbicka, Anna: *English. Meaning and Culture*. Oxford 2006.