

Moving beyond the verb-satellite duality. A constructional analysis of path-incorporation in Hungarian

It seems consensual that Hungarian belongs to the group of satellite-framed languages (Slobin 2000: 115, Talmy 2007: 72). The basic tendency is that the verb refers to the motion and its manner: *fut* ‘run’ expresses the velocity of the movement, while *elfut* (VPFX.run ‘run away’) specifies the path (the vector in Talmy’s term) with a preverb. Our paper aims to refine this categorization by providing a corpus-based analysis of constructions that can be characterized by path-incorporation. One of these target constructions is a motion verb used without a preverb but with a nominal complement specifying the path of the motion as a direct object: $\emptyset V_{\text{MOTION}} N_{\text{ACC}}$ (where \emptyset represents the lack of any satellite).

- (1) *És a Latyi mért fut csak félkört?* (#6977270)¹
and the Latyi.NOM why run.PRS.3SG.INDEF only semicircle.ACC
‘And why does Latyi run only a semicircle?’

In (1), the path component of motion is expressed by the nominal complement *félkört* (‘semicircle’ in the accusative case), thus, there is no satellite component in the sentence. As Talmy (2007: 139) claims, a nominal complement cannot function as a satellite. However, it is also claimed that “[p]robably also deserving satellite status are such compound-forming verbal adjuncts as the first element in English (to) *test-drive*.” (2007: 139). In Hungarian, similar structures have recently been created in an increasingly productive way based on nominal compounds (Palágyi 2024): *erdő-járó* forest-walker ‘walker in the forest’ > *erdő-jár* forest-walk ‘to walk in the forest’. The nominal compounds, however, can be traced back to the use of the “accusative motion construction” (see in 1), *járja az erdőt* walk.PRS.3SG.DEF the forest.ACC ‘someone walks in the forest’, respectively.

The present research conducts a corpus-based analysis on a network of constructions in which the ground or path is increasingly incorporated into the meaning of the verb. According

¹ The source of the example is the Hungarian National Corpus (Oravecz–Váradi–Sass 2014). The number after # refers to the identifier of the hit *fut* ‘run’ in the corpus.

to our hypothesis, the “accusative motion construction” is the first stage of “path-incorporation”, in which the “manner-incorporating verb” (Talmy 2007: 92) is completed with the semantic component of the path as the result of processing the meaning of the construction as a whole. In other words, the nominal complement referring to the ground/result of the motion provides the verb with an implicit reference to the path of motion, therefore there is no need for any satellite element in the context of the verb. The entrenchment of “accusative motion construction” (as a multi-word clausal core, see Imrényi 2017) can motivate components to elaborate a compounding pattern, then nominal compounds may become compound verbs by back-formation, forward-formation, or cross-formation (Palágyi 2024).

The corpus-based analyses explore the use of accusative case expressing path or ground with the prototypical Hungarian motion verbs *jár* ‘walk’, *megy* ‘go’, *fut* ‘run’, and the research ranges over the motion verbs that show distributional similarity with these three according to the Thesaurus tool of SketchEngine applied to Hungarian Web Corpus. We also investigate the network of constructions from the other direction, looking for compound verbs in which the path or ground is already incorporated as a satellite. By examining further connections between the components of the instances found, we can get to additional structures that incorporate the path or the ground to a certain level. The acceptability (and hence the conventionality) of path-incorporation is examined with a survey using a sample of constructs found in the corpus and testing the scalarity of their comprehensibility by 50 informants.

Our conclusion is that the consensual and rigid typology of Hungarian as a satellite-framed language needs to be revised, either modelling a “parallel system of conflation” (Talmy 2007: 104–105) in the case of Hungarian or describing the use of the “accusative motion construction” as an interim stage of the emergence of a new satellite.

References

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