

The role of conceptualisation in the expression of aspectual notions in Hungarian

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One of the basic assumptions of Cognitive linguistics is the dynamic nature of conceptualisation which (from this functional perspective) characterises human communication and language use (see Langacker 1987, 2008; Croft–Cruse 2004). It also posits that the dynamic construal of meaning is so fundamental that it permeates every aspect of language and not only the instances of figurative speech are exposed to this phenomenon but even basic grammatical constructions of everyday speech could not be understood without the help of this principle. However it should be noted that dynamic construal does not mean that every aspect of our understanding would be exclusively intuitive or arbitrary. Linguistic signs are highly conventionalised elements but in the actual communicative situation the participants have the opportunity to negotiate their meanings and to extend existing schemata to new phenomena (cf. Bybee 2010, Goldberg 2006). It is assumed that syntax is not autonomous but it is inseparable from other human cognitive abilities and it is also claimed that lexicon and grammar form a continuum (Langacker 2008). On the basis of these assumptions my attempt with the presentation is to highlight the role of conceptualisation in the emergence of aspectual notions in Hungarian.

Aspect is a complex linguistic phenomenon which determines how a situation is represented (viewed) in a given discourse (cf. Comrie 1976, Boogaart–Janssen 2007). The most fundamental aspectual distinction derives from the cognitive concepts of “wholeness” and “continuity” (see Huumo 2009) and the chief function of the different representation of the situations is assumed to be discourse pragmatic as it helps to clarify the relationship between the events in the narrative (Hopper 1982, Wallace 1982). In Hungarian the two basic aspectual categories are the imperfective and the perfective viewpoints (Péter 2008, Kiefer 2006, Pátrovics 2004), but interestingly the marking of which is morphologically asymmetrical. The basic Hungarian verb forms are predominantly imperfective, semantically unspecific forms which focus on the process of the event. However, when the attainment of an inherent boundary (usually endpoint) is elaborated from the semantic structure of the basic verb it expresses perfective aspect because (apart from showing the process) it also refers to the event scheme of the situation and due to that the event is represented as a whole. In Hungarian boundedness is an intrinsic feature of perfectivity (cf. Dahl 1985, Bybee et al. 1994) and in many cases diagrammatical iconicity connects the perfective constructions to the default (unmarked and semantically unspecified) imperfective forms. However, in Hungarian there are no clear aspectual markers which, with morphological or grammatical means, would exclusively and unambiguously indicate perfectivity. It is claimed in the presentation that based on Bybee’s semantic relevance theory (1985) Hungarian verbs differ according to their perfective potential (how central an inherent boundary is in the semantic structure of the verb) and the perfective potential of a verb influences how it can be represented holistically (in a perfective way) in discourse. The elaboration of relevant features and the direction of attention to these components create a wide range of possibilities for the expression of different aspectual values and with the presentation my chief aim is to give an insight into how the semantic characteristic of verbs intermingle with the notions expressed by the tense

of the verb, the elaborated arguments and their definiteness in discourse. The research examined only finite clauses and it used the database of Hungarian National Corpus.

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