# Contributions to a semantico-contrastive analysis of verb particle constructions in English and verbs with coverbs in Hungarian

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Debrecen, 2011

## I. The objectives of the dissertation, delineation of the topic

The main aim of the dissertation is to examine certain properties of verb particle constructions, such as productivity, aspect and Aktionsart. The productivity of verb particle constructions is one of the central issues of the dissertation since, unlike the majority of views in the literature, I will show that verb particle constructions can be highly productive in their literal, i.e. directional sense as well as aspectual sense and as such should be treated separately from the idiomatic phrasal verbs. Most lexico-semantic analyses of phrasal verbs (cf. Live 1965, Bolinger 1971, Lipka 1972, Fraser 1976) treat them as arbitrary combinations of a verb and one or more particles that have to be learnt or stored in the lexicon. However, there are many analysable and systematic verb particle combinations in English which are highly productive. That is to say that new verb particle combinations can be produced, often with considerable freedom. This is the case, for example, with the particle *up*, indicating movement or position, and the verb particle combinations *rollerskate up, telemark up, skateboard up*, where it is often the verb which is new while the particle remains unchanged. It follows that we should account not only for non-compositional idiomatic phrasal verbs in the literature, but literal compositional or partly compositional as well. Besides completely idiomatic treatments of phrasal verbs in the literature, there are a number of linguists (cf. Hampe (1997), Dixon (2005)), who recognize fully literal and semi-literal phrasal verbs as well, seeing a continuum ranging from syntactically unrestricted non-idiomatic to syntactically frozen idiomatic constructions. The present dissertation gives a detailed semantic analysis of verb particle combinations with the four particles *out, in, up* and *down* all having clear directional meanings. I wish to put forward such a morphological productivity model according to which verb particle combinations are morphologically productive formations if they are morphotactically productive (the particle attaches to verbs in a productive way) and morphosemantically transparent (the meanings of the verb particle combinations can be derived from the meanings of their parts).

The questions to be answered in the present productivity research are the following:

- Having established morphosemantic transparency as the criterion of morphological productivity, to what extent are the spatial (i.e. directional) senses of the four particles under examinations *out, in*, *down* and *up* transparent in verb particle constructions and which combinations are to be treated as fully productive and semi-productive?

- How many semantic classes of verb particle constructions can be set up in which a particle productively attaches to a verb stem?

- Is there a lexical rule(s) that generate(s) the productive the productive word formation pattern for a verb + particle construction?

Another goal of the dissertation is the analysis of aspectual and Aktionsart meanings of verb particle combinations in English and those of verbs with coverbs in Hungarian. The aspectual and Aktionsart meanings of verb particle constructions and those of verbs with coverbs can be investigated within the English-Hungarian framework ant it is an attempt in the present dissertation to carry out such an investigation. While the semantics of the individual particles vary, it has been noted in the linguistic literature (cf. Brinton 1988) that particles often express a resultative meaning by focussing on the place, position or state resulting from the situation expressed by the verb. The post-verbal particles of phrasal verbs have long been associated with the expression of verbal aspect, being seen variously as markers of "perfective", "terminative", "effective" or " resultative" aspect (cf. Poutsma 1926, Curme 1931, Bolinger 1971 among others). They are perhaps best understood as contributing the notion of "goal", or intrinsic endpoint, to an otherwise continuous activity (e.g. *eat/ eat up, cut/cut down, clean/clean out, pull/pull off*, etc.). However, this aspectual meaning of particles can also be understood as an Aktionsart meaning. Brinton (1988) argues that a group of verb particles in English are primarily markers of "telic" Aktionsart, and not "perfective" aspect. Given this confusion of notions, in this dissertation I argue for separating the notions of aspect and Aktionsart in English and examine the verbal particle's impact in English and that of coverb in Hungarian on the event-structural make-up of the event and Aktionsart-formation.

While the notion of aspect and aspect-related phenomena (perfective-imperfective pair, telic/atelic opposition) have been known and properly applied since the 19th century, the notion of Aktionsart has not been so straightforward. In Anglo-Saxon linguistic literature, neither aspect nor Aktionsart have received an important role. Moreover, in the recent studies the two notions are still often conflated, i.e. the term "Aktionsart" has been generally reserved for the description of aspectual notions, such as events versus states, which are not morphologically marked in the language (cf. Pustejovsky 1995). However, in Slavic linguistics, the separation of these two notions is commonly accepted. Agrell's (1908) work about Polish aktionsarten was a significant move towards the distinction between tense, aspect and Aktionsart. In Polish, like in other Slavic languages, the notion of Aktionsart is defined morphologically. In Hungarian, the analysis of morphological aktionsarten has been given an important role in Kiefer's (1996, 2006) works, who discusses the areal-typological properties of Aktionsarten and establishes morphologically expressed Aktionsarten in Hungarian. Following Slavic and Hungarian traditions, in the present dissertation Aktionsart is treated as a morphologically determined lexico-grammatical category. Following the generally accepted view, morphological rules operate in the lexicon. I make an attempt to explore if the morphologically expressed Aktionsarten in Hungarian have parallels in English and whether verbal particles can participate in Aktionsart-formation similar to coverbs in Hungarian language.

## II. Research methods

The theoretical background for the present investigation includes different literature: diachronic and synchronic studies on phrasal verbs and verb particle constructions, various productivity theories, aspectual and aktionsart-related literature.

As the starting point of the reasearch, my aim has been to emphasize the significance of a three-way classification of the English verb particle combinations in the sense of Emonds (1985), Jackendoff (2002) and Dehé (2002), i.e. combinations with locative or directional meaning, aspectual verb particle combinations and idiomatic particle verbs. However, I feel it important to further detail this classification proposing a four-way classification. I claim that verb particle combinations can and should be subdivided as to whether the verb but not the particle contributes its simplex meaning (e.g. *hand out the brochures*) and whether the particle but not the verb contributes its simplex meaning (e.g. *fish out the ring*). This detailed classification can be justified on two grounds. First, it might allow us to identify those items which cannot be dealt with by the usual tools of grammar. Second, the detailed classification would aid in observing greater systematicity of verb particle combinations. Furthermore, it might help to recognise not only completely literal (transparent) and completely idiomatic combinations, but semi-literal as well, i.e. to observe that in many cases verb particle combinations are found on the boundary between the different classes. Compositionality is seen as a mandatory prerequisite for the analysis of the morphological productivity of verb particle combinations.

Choosing quantitative or qualitative approach to productivity is one of the most important theoretical questions in every productivity study since it allows us to determine when and under what circumstances the morphological process is available to produce new words. Many scholars (cf. Aronoff 1976, Hay and Baayen 2002) view productivity as a quantitative notion, treated as the ratio of possible to actual words, actual words designate existing established words, and possible words refer to all words that could be morphologically well-formed and produced by the pertinent word-formation rules. Those scholars who have argued that productivity is a qualitative notion (Dressler 1997, Booij 2002, Ladányi 2000), treat productivity as a scalar notion, and the concept itself is defined by the fact whether the given word-formation rule can or cannot operate despite the large number of constraints. In the present dissertation, I follow the qualitative approach to investigating the productivity of verb particle constructions and I claim that the morphological patterns according to which the new combinations are formed can be described in terms of rules. But the concept of productivity can be defined not by the size of the rule scope and domain, and the number of derived words, but by the fact whether the given word formation rule can operate despite the large number of constraints.[1] The larger number of constraints the

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[1] Dressler-Ladányi (2000a) note that the concept of productivity treated as the ratio of possible to actual words is problematic since this concept moves emphasis from competence-level potentiality to performance-level probability, which does not seem satisfactory in rule-governed morphological theories. On the level of the potential system, only the possibility or impossibility of a conceivable derived word can be determined but not

given word formation rule can overcome, the more productive it is. Apart from the rule-scope requirement, class-openness of verb-particle constructions is one of the most significant criteria which I have used to determine the extent to which these combinations are productive.

In order to obtain the productive patterns in verb particle constructions I have used two different sources of information: paper and online learners' dictionaries and Levin's (1993) verb classes. Both printed dictionaries like *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs, Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs* and online dictionaries: [http://www.wordsmith.com](http://www.wordsmith.com) and [http://www.onelookdictionary.com](http://www.onelookdictionary.com) have provided rather extensive coverage of verb particle constructions showing productive patterns. The second source of information has been found in Levin's (1993) classes of verbs. And though these classes were not developed specifically for verb particle constructions, many more productive patterns of verb and particle combinations have been found which correspond to certain classes of verbs. There have been numerous attempts in the literature to establish some productive verb particle constructions on the basis of dictionary data (cf. Fraser 1976), but a comprehensive investigation within the morphological productivity framework aimed at establishing the exact classes of productive verb particle combinations has not been carried out yet. In this respect, the present study of morphological productivity of verb particle combinations can be considered a novel approach.

The examination of the aspectual role of verbal particles has been important in this research for the following reasons: first, it is clear that the linguistic literature should account for a separate class of verbal particles, aspectual particles or particles expressing perfective meanings, that lie on the boundary between completely literal and idiomatic combinations; second, evidence for the aspectual meanings of particles contradicts the view that the vast majority of verb particle combinations in English are idiomatic cohesive units; third, the telic event in English is most often introduced by the object that follows the verb (e.g. *write – write a letter*), but the very same role can be played by particles (e.g. *write* [- telic] – *write down* [+ telic], *write up* [+ telic]), the aspectual particles typically express a telic notion, they may add the concept of a goal or an endpoint to durative situations which otherwise have no necessary terminus.

Kiefer's (2006) study on aspectual meanings of verbal particles and Aktionsart-formation in Hungarian has inspired me to investigate Aktionsart-formation possibilities by verbal particles in English. Aktionsart is assumed to belong to derivational morphology. While aspect has to do with the internal temporal constituency of events, Aktionsart is described as the modification of verb meaning by morphological means. Morphology adds one or two semantic features to the meaning of the base verb (e.g. ingressivity, terminativity, iterativity, etc.). An Aktionsart has always compositional meaning and

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its probability, since this latter category depends on the norm and performance factors and not those of competence.

its derivation follows a general pattern (it is rule-governed). Consequently, simple verbs whose meaning is noncompositional, do not express any Aktionsart. The verbs with coverbs express new lexical meanings, coverbs serve lexical enrichment. But not all verbs with coverbs with compositional meanings can be used to express Aktionsarten. For example, verbs of motion with coverbs expressing the direction of motion are compositional yet do not express any Aktionsart. While investigating the possibilities of Aktionsart-formation in English, I have been pimarily interested to see if the verbal particles can productively participate in Aktionsart-formation in English and whether the verb particle combinations are morphological constructs, because if they are not, they cannot be considered Aktionsart-formation means.

## III. Research findings

In the present dissertation I have made an attempt to give a detailed analysis of verb particle constructions in English examining their certain properies such as productivity, aspect and Aktionsart. The latter two properties of aspect and Aktionsart have been examined within a contrastive English-Hungarian framework. Though the present research of verb particle constructions cannot be treated as exhaustive and completed, still I believe that the results achieved provide enough evidence that both an English particle and a Hungarian coverb contribute to the composite meaning of the verb particle combinations in English and that of the verbs with coverbs in Hungarian.

**1.** I have examined the morphological productivity of verb particle constructions with the four directional particles *out*, *in*, *up* and *down*. I have suggested that verb particle constructions are morphotactically productive and morphosemantically transparent formations. The analysis carried out has been based on the following assumptions: first, a verb + particle is a morphologically productive combination if the meaning of the given particle can be inferred from its original directional meaning; second, the meaning of the particle is derivable from its directional meaning if it can be considered the metonymical extension of the latter. It has been shown that the criterion of morphosemantic transparency does not hold only in the case of aspectual particles. On the basis of criteria of morphological productivity and suggested hypotheses I have shown that the verb particle combinations with the directional and aspectual particles are highly productive formations in contrast with their prefixed counterparts, which are not. The presented analysis has justified the observation made by Fraser (1976) and Lipka (1972) that prefixed verb combinations should be regarded as frozen formations which are subject to a high degree of lexicalisation. Among the verb particle constructions with the four directional/aspectual particles, the particle which has appeared to be the most productive in its directional sense was *OUT*, the one involved in the largest number of combinations throughout the largest number of classes (**7 classes, more than 178 combinations,** e.g. *creep out, gallop out, crawl out, flee out, pluck out, drag out, pop out, peek out, squint out ,peer out, bore out, bulge out, bed out,*

*carve out, roll out,* etc.). It is followed closely by *UP*, which is equally productive in its directional and aspectual sense (**6 classes of verbs with the directional particle and 6 classes with the aspectual particle, more than 113 combinations,** e.g. **directional combinations –** *speed up, leap up, creep up, draw up, pluck up, gaze up, pile up, slice up, belt up, nail up,* etc; **aspectual combinations-** *eat up, drink up, guzzle up, stir up, mash up, sweep up, clog up, lock up, gather up, hoard up*, etc.). In fact, *UP* has turned out to be the most productive particle in the aspectual function of all the particles, as it can form the largest number of systematic verb particle combinations. As for the particle *DOWN*, it has displayed the lowest degree of productivity in its directional sense of all the particles (**98 combinations**),but it has appeared even less productive in its aspectual sense (**53 combinations**).The particle *IN* has manifested a little lower degree of productivity than the particle *OUT* in its directional sense (**7 classes, around 135 combinations**, e.g. *rush in, race in, break in, hit in, stare in, dent in, block in, weld in, dine in,* etc.). However, *IN* has failed to occur with verbs in its aspectual meaning, no systematic aspectual combinations with **IN** have been found.

The use of Levin's (1993) verb classes has provided the opportunity to obtain more productive verb particle combinations, i.e. to extend the established verb classes further with the four directional /aspectual particles. The most productive classes of verbs which allow free attachment of directional particles turned out to be Levin's (1993) **Roll verbs** (51.3.1), **Run verbs** (51.3.2), **Skate verbs** (51.4.1), **Pedal verbs** (51.4.2), **Waltz verbs** (51.5), **Rush verbs** (53.2), **Slide verbs** (11.2), **Drive verbs** (11.5), etc. Levin's (1993) classes of verbs that can form productive aspectual combinations with the particles are **Wipe verbs** (2.3.3 ), **Clear verbs** (10.3), **Chase verbs** (51.6), **Split verbs** (23.2), **Eat verbs** (39.1), **Chew verbs** (39.2), **Gobble verbs** ( 29.3), **Cook verbs** (45.3), **Prepare verbs** (26.3) and **Talk verbs** (37.5). The two most extensive classes below (**Run verbs** (51.3.2) and **Wipe verbs** (2.3.3)) demonstrate the full or partial productivity in combination with all the particles in the directional and aspectual meanings:

*amble, backpack, bolt, bounce, bound, bowl, canter, carom, cavort, charge, clamber, climb, clump, coast, crawl, creep, dart, dash, dodder, drift, file, flit, float, fly, frolic, gallop, gambol, glide, goosestep, hasten, hike, hobble, hop, hurry, hurtle, inch, jog, journey, jump, leap, limp, lollop, lope, lumber, lurch, march, meander, mince, mosey, nip, pad, parade, perambulate, plod, prance, promenade, prowl, race, ramble, roam, roll, romp, rove, run, rush, sashay, saunter, scamper, scoot, scram, scramble, scud, scurry, scutter, scuttle, shamble, shuffle, sidle, skedaddle, skip, skitter, skulk, sleepwalk, slide, slink, slither, slog, slouch, sneak, somersault, speed, stagger, stomp, stray, streak, stride, stroll, strut, stumble, stump, swagger, sweep, swim, tack, tear, tiptoe, toddle, totter, traipse, tramp, travel, trek, troop, trot, trudge, trundle, vault, waddle, wade, walk, wander, whiz, zigzag, zoom.* (**Run verbs combine productively with the directional particles** *OUT, IN, UP, DOWN* **– total 125 verbs 100% full productivity**)

*bail out, brush out, buff out, comb out, distill out, dust out, erase out, *expunge out, file out, filter out, flush out,?hoover out, hose out, iron out, leach out, lick out, mop out, pluck out, prune out, purge out,*

*rinse out, rub out, \*sandpaper out, scour out, scrape out, scratch out, scrub out,?shave out, shear out, shovel out, siphon out, smooth out, soak out, sponge out, squeeze out, strip out, suction out, swab out, sweep out,\*towel out, trim out,vacuum out, wash out, wear out, weed out,?winnow out, wipe out, wring out.* (**Wipe verbs combine productively with the aspectual particle *OUT* – 42 verbs of 48 combine productively with *out*, almost full productivity**).

The present productivity study of verb particle constructions underpins the fact that the semantics of verb particle constructions are not arbitrary, in contraction to most previous analyses, which have viewed them as closer to idioms. The meanings of verb particle constructions are directly related to the individual meanings of the component verbs and particles by metonymical or metaphorical extension.

**2.** I have also examined the aspectual impact of perfectivizing verbal particles on the event-structural make-up of the event in English and that of coverbs in Hungarian and I have shown that verbal particles in English and coverbs in Hungarian may alter the telicity value of the verb or verbal predicate in different event classes. It has turned out from the analysis that the telicity marking in Hungarian by different coverbs is more systematic and consistent than in English.

**2.1** Particles normally cannot act as telicizers with the event class of stative verbs since states represent non-dynamic situations, have no internal structure and do not result in a change of state. Still, in the case of stative verb predicates, the subclass of locatives (e.g. *sit, lie, stand*) can occur with the perfectivizing particles in English and coverbs in Hungarian due to the neutral character of stative predicates (cf. Mufwene 1984). The particles/coverbs in this subclass bring about a change of state in the sense that verb particle combinations and verbs with coverbs denote the beginning of a state, but never the termination of a state (e.g. *sit down, stand up, lie down*). In Hungarian, the perfectivizing coverb *meg-* with the base verbs of emotion, perception and cognition expresses a process or an instantaneous change in emotional, perceptual and cognitive state (e.g. *megszeret* 'come to love', *meghall* 'come to hear', *megtud* 'come to know').

**2.2** The class of activity predicates has proved to be the most 'productive' in the sense of accepting telicizing particles. I have shown that in those cases where telicizing particles occur with activity predicates, the particles bring about a change of state or a change of location of the event and convert the atelic activity verbs either into telic accomplishments or achievements, focussing on the goal or endpoint of the event. The contrastive analysis of telicity marking of activity verbs in English and Hungarian has shown that while in English in the majority of cases it is the lexical entries of verbs that may encode telicity, in Hungarian the verb predicate's telicity value is always brought about compositionally, by means of perfectivizing coverbs. The following English and Hungarian sentences exemplify this fact:

(1) a. *Julia **wrote / wrote down her essay** in an hour.*

b. *Júlia egy órán belül (**meg-**)\***írta** az esszéjét.*

(2) a. *John **cleaned/ cleaned up his room** in a minute.*

b. *János egy órán belül (**ki-**)\***takarította** a szobáját.*

**2.3** Achievement verbs are inherently telic events introduced by a subset of simple verbs in English. I have shown that in those rare cases when the particle is used, its function is simply to emphasize the end state of an inherently telic event in English (cf. example 3). From the contrastive analysis it has turned out that in the majority of cases the telicity value of achievement verb predicates is introduced via lexical specification of verbs. In Hungarian, all achievement verbs obligatorily take coverbs if telicized (cf. examples 4 a, b and 5 a,b ). Degree achievements in English containing particles have appeared to be insensitive to telicity due to their gradable properties. Again in Hungarian, degree achievements can be telicized only compositionally, i.e. through the addition of coverbs (cf. example 6).

(3) *The Trojans are hoping their experienced lineup will **win out** over the Longhorns' youth (your freshman starters).* (Denver Post, March 18 2007, Sports, Pg.B- 12)

(4) a. *A plane **landed** at Ferihegy.*

b. *A gép **le-szállt** Ferihegyen.*

(5) a. *Zoltán **reached** the top.*

b. *Zoltán **el-érte** a csúcsot.*

(6) a. *The soup **cooled down** for an hour/ in an hour.*

b. *\*A leves öt percen át **ki-hűlt** /A leves öt perc alatt **ki-hűlt.***

**2.4** Semelfactive verbs introduce punctual events lexically in English, they do not take perfectivizing particles. I have argued that the class of semelfactive events should be treated as a class distinct from Vendler's (1967) and Dowty's (1979) achievements and activities because semelfactive verb predicates express punctual events which involve a single occurrence of an event. I have also shown that punctual events are not all semelfactive in Smith's (1997) sense. Among the established subclasses of a semelfactive verb class I have pointed out a subclass the verbs of which are change of state verbs and yet not achievements. In Hungarian, the majority of semelfactive verbs are brought

about compositionally, e.g. with the help of the coverb *meg-*, while in English, semelfactive events can be introduced only lexically (cf. example 7).

(7) a. *Susan **stirred** the soup at five o'clock.*
    b. *Zsuzsi **meg-kavarta** a levest öt órakor.*

**3**. In the framework of Hungarian-English contrastive analysis, I have investigated the possibility of Aktionsart-formation in English. On the basis of the analysis carried out, I have managed to point out only one Aktionsart, the resultative Aktionsart in English expressed by means of different verbal particles in contrast with eleven Aktionsarten in Hungarian which are expressed by at least ten coverbs and the suffixes *-gat/-get*. I have also provided arguments that verb particle constructions in English are not morphological constructs and concluded that the notion of morphologically expressed Aktionsart does not exist in English. On the basis of the assumption put forward in the dissertation, Aktionsarten cannot be formed by monomorphemic verbs and different verbal expressions either. The relatively rich Aktionsart-formation system has been contrasted with an English system, where, as it has appeared, the morphologically expressed Aktionsart is virtually a non-existing phenomenon deriving from a poor inflectional morphology in English. Hungarian is an agglutinative language in contrast with English which is inflectional but tends towards becoming isolating with little or no morphology. The morphological system of agglutinative languages is always richer than that of inflectional languages in the fields of both inflection and derivation. And since the notion of Aktionsart is a morphologically determined lexico-grammatical notion it is quite natural to claim that not all languages have morphological Aktionsarten. It could be the subject of future research to further examine how Aktionsarten that exist in languages with richer morphology can be expressed in inflectional languages, and thus in English.

The analysis of verb particle constructions from the above-mentioned viewpoints has been additional support of the view that semantically compositional verb particle combinations deserve to be treated separately from idiomatic phrasal verbs.

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