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The Lexicographical Concept of the Comprehensive Dictionary of Hungarian, with Special Reference to the Interrelatedness of Semantics and Grammar in Lexicography

Abstract

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In this study I analyse the lexicographical concept of, as well as several entries under A–Á and B in, the *Comprehensive Dictionary of Hungarian* (*A magyar nyelv nagyszótára;* henceforth referred to as *CDH*). Through an analysis of the lexicographical rules and principles of the *CDH* and of the sample entries, the dissertation presents a systematic overview of the most significant results to date of my work on the *CDH*. This work spanning more than a decade has ranged from writing test entries through developing the lexicographical concept of the dictionary to actually writing and editing entries, and finally working as the chief editor of the whole undertaking.

The *CDH* introduces a new type of dictionary into Hungarian lexicography: the corpus-based comprehensive dictionary. The genre, the corpus-based approach, and the electronic format were decided upon when the *CDH* project recommenced in the mid-1980s while the beginning and closing dates of the period from which the corpus's texts are chosen were finalised in the late 1990s. However, when systematic lexicographical work, going beyond test entry writing, was begun, the *CDH* still did not have detailed editorial guidelines in a written form. I formulated those rules and principles, based on the experiences of test entry writing and the elaboration of the first full word family.

This first version of the editorial principles was designed for a dictionary with more detailed descriptions. Their revision be-

came inevitable when the Academy decided for a dictionary that could be written in a shorter period of time and would contain fewer entries than originally planned. The lexicographical rules were influenced by both theoretical principles originating from the comprehensive dictionary genre and practical considerations. Thus the lexicographical concept of the *CDH* must

1. reflect that the dictionary is a system;

2. make it possible to apply a unified approach instead of ad hoc solutions;

3. acknowledge that it is not sufficient simply to determine the main principles and rules: the whole structure of the dictionary has to be worked out;

4. make it possible for new colleagues without experience in lexicography to acquire the requisite lexicographical skills as quickly as possible.

The revised concept differs from the original one in many respects. First, in accordance with the genre and the specificities of the corpus, a new entry structure was developed, thereby strengthening the explanatory nature of the *CDH*. On the other hand, the part-of-speech system used in the *CDH* was put on a new basis, thus the grammatical aspects were also emphasised in addition to the semantic aspects.

The opening chapter of the dissertation analyses the *CDH*'s place among the Hungarian explanatory dictionaries, and also its relation to comprehensive dictionaries in other languages. The *CDH* is unique in Hungarian lexicography not only, and not principally, in the number of its entries, but also in being a dictionary that contains entries with the most detailed meaning structures, demonstrating the grammatical and lexical specification of the meanings, and also giving a historical dimension of the usage of the words. With its corpus-based analyses, the *CDH* represents a new type of lexicographical methodology, and thus bases the semantic and grammatical description of the lexemes on a solid foundation. Despite the limitations of the historical approach and the lack of etymological unity, otherwise so typical of comprehensive dictionaries, the *CDH* is a significant achievement even in international comparison, thanks partly to its emphasis on the grammatical and part-of-speech analysis, which the dictionary employs strictly in the service of semantic description, and partly to its unique reference system, also unparalleled in Hungarian lexicography.

The main chapter of the dissertation discusses the lexicographical rules and principles of the *CDH*, and their application in the dictionary. Two crucial aspects of this concept include the systemic nature, and the semantic approach, both mentioned above, that is, the dictionary as a system is a device of the language

system's description, and the most important role of the comprehensive dictionary as an explanatory dictionary is the description of the meaning and the examination of the meanings' relation system. These two aspects determine the structure of the whole *CDH* and that of its entries as well as the devices of the lexicographical description and their application. The structure of the chapter follows the lexicographical analysis applied in the *CDH*, the methods of which are analysed in the order of the structural units of an entry.

A prominent question discussed in the chapter is the headword. However, since the object of lexicographical analysis in the *CDH* is not simply the word form but the lexeme, further important issues in the dissertation include the definition of the lexeme, the possibility of taking phraseological units as headwords, and their discussion within an entry.

The question of lexicalisation is not restricted to the selection of headwords; it runs through the whole dissertation, further indicating that it serves as a main principle of the lexicographical analysis. The application of the lexicalisation criterion and the priority of the semantic approach in the whole dictionary also determine what those grammatical and lexical attributes, that is, attributes expressing the word's morphological and syntactic behaviour, its sphere of usage and stylistic value, are (in addition to the creation of the meaning structure and the definition

of the word) which must be reflected and analysed in order to explore the meaning (as the relation between the sign and the referent, the function of the linguistic sign). The *CDH* is exceptional in the field of Hungarian lexicography in the degree to which it consistently provides these pieces of information not directly of semantic nature only if and insofar as they are necessary for the description of the semantic structure of the word. It was thus important in developing the lexicographical concept of the *CDH* that the grammatical and lexical information should be applied consistently, in a regulated form, and subjected to the semantic approach.

Of the grammatical characteristics, the part-of-speech labelling emerges as the most general indication of a word's grammatical meaning. Since the *CDH* both introduces new part-of-speech categories not used in earlier dictionaries (the Hungarian particle and adverbial modifier) and gives new corpus-based part-of-speech analyses of all headwords (in most cases, naturally, with the same results as earlier dictionaries), of the grammar-related lexicographical problems, the dissertation pays closest attention to the questions of the part-of-speech system and the part-of-speech description. It is generally important when writing such a dictionary, but in the case of the *CDH*, with its corpus-based part-of-speech analysis and application of new part-of-speech categories, it is absolutely imperative to consider

1. whether the dictionary is able to reflect the part-of-speech system of grammars in its full complexity, and how the dictionary's part-of-speech system should relate to that of the grammars;

2. what kind of practical solutions can be found to the paradox that, although it is not the task of a dictionary to decide in controversial issues of grammar, by its categorisations it still has to take a stand on them;

3. whether it is always possible to apply specific part-of-speech categories as part-of-speech labelling, or in what cases it is necessary, on the basis of practical considerations, to substitute them or to use part-of-speech subcategories;

4. how and to what extent a given word's syntactical and morphological behaviour, closely related to its part-of-speech, influences its lexicographical description, meaning structure, and definition.

The dissertation also discusses the question of usage labelling in detail. The role of these categories is clarified conceptually and functionally: these classifying labels, reflecting the lexical elements' position in the lexicon and the lexicalised features of their usage and stylistic value, are regarded as a means of semantic description, and it is clearly stated that usage labelling in a corpus-based dictionary cannot be regarded as an instru-

ment of prescription but serves a descriptive function. It must be nonetheless emphasised that however detailed the dictionary's editorial rules for usage labelling are, their application, the actual assignment of usage labels, is one of the most difficult lexicographical task in the praxis of dictionary writing, given the *CDH*'s corpus ranging far beyond the synchronic state of the Hungarian language.

The dissertation presents four further elements of the comprehensive dictionary concept and, consequently, of the dictionary structure which are unique in the field of Hungarian explanatory dictionary writing and have methodologically renewed lexicographical description.

One of the most important novelties of the *CDH* is that it is a corpus-based dictionary. Thus the lexicographical description is based not on the mental dictionary or the findings of earlier dictionaries but on the analysis of the data from the corpus, a specially compiled collection of texts. Since the *CDH* illustrates every defined meaning with sample sentences from retrievable sources which reflect the given word's meanings, contextually bound nature, grammatical behaviour, and lexical determination and also shows the first occurrence of the word in the period covered, the dissertation also discusses the principles of proof-texting, considerations behind the selection of sample

sentences, and the bibliographical and philological problems deriving from the differences of the three database types.

The *CDH* differs from explanatory dictionaries also in its treatment of phraseology. Largely for practical reasons, it does not examine stable phraseological units of clausal value. However, the *CDH* strives to analyse phraseological units, just like complements, in detail and as consistently and systematically as possible. The dissertation discusses the concept of the phraseological unit, the criteria of becoming an idiom, the question of the distinction between subtypes of idioms, and the rules of the definition of their central words, and their inclusion in the *CDH*.

In addition to the regular entry types of earlier dictionaries (simple entries and reference entries), the *CDH* applies a new entry type, the complex entry, in which shared stems of compound words become the headwords, and these compound words are included in the appropriate meaning of the entry. The dissertation discusses, in addition to the conditions of becoming a subentry in such a complex entry and the peculiarities of such complex entries, the possibility of and rules for processing coverbs and words with common derivational or inflectional suffix-like posterior constituents in an analogous way, esp. as regards proof-texting.

Another novelty in the *CDH*, and one of the most important indicators of its systemic approach, is its rich and ordered reference system that serves two functions. References, on the one hand, compress information about the headwords that cannot be included in the entry because of the limitations of the lexicographical description and the limited number of entries. On the other hand, they help the reader find the desired information in the complex structure of the *CDH*. The dissertation also analyses two types of reference entries (variant reference and head reference). It also discusses the references used within the entries which help the reader find the derived word forms that have not become headwords and certain other word forms, and describes the types of references at the end of the entries, referring to headwords that occur in the *CDH* and the corpus.

In addition to providing an overview of the *CDH*'s part-of-speech system, and summarising the principles behind it, the dissertation devotes a separate chapter to the detailed analysis of entries that demonstrate the methodological novelty of the *CDH*'s grammatical and part-of-speech descriptions. The lexicographical analysis with a functional emphasis is illustrated by the entry for the dual class word *az* 'the; that' (article and demonstrative). Obviously, it is not the dictionary's task to decide the theoretical question whether the demonstrative is a separate part-of-speech category. However, these pronominal parts

of speech can provide data for answering such questions. The words *alig* 'hardly' and *bizony* 'c. surely, indeed' and their word families demonstrate the emergence of new parts-of-speech through part-of-speech shifts and compounding. The entry for derivational suffix-like posterior *beli* 'in' (which illustrates, on the one hand, the simple entry with its structure, and, on the other hand, the complex entry with its proof-texting) does not only exemplify the description of a transitional category but also provides novelties from a semantic point of view.

These entries and the studies accompanying them partly illustrate the semantic/part-of-speech analysis of a large amount of data, and partly—and this can result in findings of general lexicological-lexicographical significance—introduce the methods of the application of grammatical categories, especially that of the meaning-bound usage labelling. It is also important to emphasise that the corpus-based dictionary—especially in these types of entries—can confirm or challenge perceived tendencies by the analysis of a significant amount of (valid) data. On the other hand, since the genre necessitates classification and decision in every question, the *CDH* reveals and articulates numerous issues which, though grammatical in nature, may not yet have occurred to grammarians.

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