

How to multiply words in Hungarian

The Hungarian vocabulary contains over a million words, but we are not using all of them in our daily conversations. Our “word-artists”, the poets use around 70-80.000 words (e.g. Arany János) in their lifetime work, contrary to the 500 words of a dockworker. The words our literary language count certainly several hundred thousands, because different writers use diverse word-collections, but we will never come close to use the million. The one million means that the capability to understand that many words is slumbering inside us. The agglutination is partially responsible for this capability. Everybody knows the word-roots, the first syllable of the words and this is a major advantage of the agglutinative word-creation. This root carries the sense of a word and everything that we glue onto it, will modify or taint the meaning according to our wish. The broad meaning of the root narrows down with every suffix put onto it, step-by-step until we reach the qualitatively specified meaning-area of that root, like a ship its haven. If somebody – who believes that the one million words are not enough for him - could make up new words and use them in his conversation at a party. The people would understand most of his words and not even recognize those as newly built. (Building new words in public used to be a daily mental game of our ancestors.)

How does it come to have so many words? To begin with: this huge vocabulary has been built only on a few basic roots (root morpheme). These are the primordial pictures in our mind, in reality the names of important, visible changes of our surrounding. For this reason, we call this archaic language the “language of pictures”. We think in pictures and the basic roots name these basic pictures. These roots build a whole, closed system. The meaning of each root is radically different, but all together they cover the whole universe. Therefore, everything can be named out of these few basic roots with the help of agglutination. We can say with a little exaggeration that the number of words built by agglutination is limited only by the starry sky, due to the large number of word-building resources. This is a simple consequence of agglutination.

However this is not everything. We further modify the meaning of the produced words by changing pronunciation. We increase our vocabulary effectively by using these possibilities:

1) *Changing front vowels to back vowels (or reverse) suitably, we can increase the number of words without changing anything else. (The real meaning is carried by the consonants.)*

We express with back-vowels (deep sounding) (a, á, o, ó, u, ú) everything, which is:

nagy <nadj> (big), távoli <taavoli> (far away), ódon <oodon> (old), hatalmas (huge), durva (rough) and hátul (in the back)

and with front-vowels everything (e, é, i, í,), which is:

kicsi <kichi> (small), itt (here), finom (fine), elöl (in the front) and fiatal (young).

If somebody is getting ready, we say “készülődik” <kesuelœdik>, but if he does it very slowly, we say “kászálódik”. A little shawl “libeg” but a flag “lobog” in the wind.

Few more examples:

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| the stork | kelepel (clatters) | a smith | kalapál (hammers) |
| the child | tipeg (toddles) | a man | topog (patters) |
| a cloth | feshlik (breaks at seam) | or | foszlik (get tattered) |
| | fergeteg (storm) | | forgatag (wirlwind) |
| | kés (knife) | | kasza (scythe) |
| | sziszeg (hisses) | | szuszog (puffing) |
| | billeg (wobbles) | | ballag (walking slowly) |

There is not only the contrasting use of vowels, but also some words and especially some roots use all the vowels in the row. For example: lik, lék, luk, lók, lak, lák (hole) or the words **csiszol** <chisol> (polishes), **cseszeget** <chɛsɛget> (fucks about), **császkaál** <chaaskaal> (strolling), **csoszog** <chosog> (shuffles), **csúszkaál** <chuuskaal> (sliding), **csusszan** <chussan> (slides), **csihol** <chihol> (striking fire).

All of them meant a movement built on the dialectical variants of the same word-root and listening to the noise they make, we distinguish between them by the fine changes in the pronunciation, by the music of the language. Thus, the word is not born out of characterization. We adjust its pronunciation, using the utmost of our expressive-power, in order to get close to one characteristic feature of the matter to be named.

2) *Beside the vowels even the consonants can be changed, helping to create a more accurate picture. We can make to look a happening more accentuated, lasting shorter or longer by making the consonants “longer” (doubling them):*

Examples:

Cserreg <chɛrɛg> (chatters) or csereg <chɛrɛg> (jingles).

kop <> **kopp** (pat <> clap),

zörej <zœerej> (noise) or **zörren** <zœerrɛn> (sudden crackling sound)

3) We often reverse the word-root or change the sequence of the consonants:

Examples:

köp <> **pök** (spit),

mosolyog <moshoyog> <> **somolyog** <shomoyog> (smiles),

sivít <shiviit> <> **visít** <vishiit> (screams, shrieks),

kicsi <kichi> <> **csekély** <chekey> (small – trifling)

Examples for the transposition of consonants:

töpor dött <tœpœrdœtt> (shrunken) <> **törpe** <tœrpɛ> (dwarf),

ugrat <> **rugtat** (make jump - gallop),

keltő <kœltœ> (arousing)- **költő** <kœltœ> (poet - is hatching as well) <>

kotló <kotloo> (brooder),

The word root **bor**, **bur**, **bar** used in **borít** <boriit> (covers), **burok** (cover, coat), and the root **bar**, after transposition, spread as **abr**: **abrosz** (table cloth), **abroncs** (hoop, tyre), **ábrázat** <aabraazat> (physiognomy)

We often change sounds to ease the pronunciation:

szökcsé >> **szöcske** <sœœchkɛ> (grasshopper),

zsákcsó >> **zacskó** <žaaakchoo – zachkoo> (small bag),

peyh >> **pehely** <pœhɛy> (fluff),

terh >> **teher** <tœhɛr> (last)

A word root may act like a chameleon with transposition and vowel-elision as in case of **lap** (surface, page):

lapos <laposh> (flat)

lapát <lapaat> (shovel)

lapul (become flattened)

lepény <lɛpnej> griddle cake)

lappang (be latent)

after transposition:

pala (slate)

palló (plank)

palack (flask)

palást (cloak)

palacsinta <palachinta> (pancake)

after elision:

platán (plane-tree)

plató (platform)

plakát (poster)

placenta (palacsinta)

4) Guest sounds in the words for decoration:

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| lágý <laadj> (soft) | langý <landj> (tepid) |
| mihelyt <mihɛyt> (soon) | mihelyst (soon) |
| sirám <shiraam> (lament) | siralm <shiralm> (misery) |
| cibál <cibaal> (pull) | cimbál (slap) |
| kopács <kopaach> (beat) | kopáncs <kopaanch> (pecker) |
| ilyet | ilyent (this in accusative) |
| aláz <alaaz> (abase) | gyaláz <djalaaz> (defame) |
| egyít <ɛdjiit> (unites) | vegyít <vɛdjiit> (mingles) |

Losing the starting consonant:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| b omol (disintegrates) | ɓ omol (crumbles) |
| b ámul <baamul> (gaze) | ɓ ámul <aamul> (astonished) |
| t erjed <tɛryɛd>(spreads) | ɓ erjed <ɛryɛd> (ferment) |

5) We often just change one of the consonants:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| szív <siiv> (sucks) | szip (sniff) |
| kópé <koope> (rascal) | góbé (highlander) |
| kopasz (bald) | csupasz <chupas> (nude) |
| terep (ground) | telep (settlement) |
| sanyarú <shanjaru> (wretched) | fanyar (acerbic, harsh) |
| főveg <foevɛg> (hood) | süveg <shuevɛg> (high cap, mitre) |
| hentereg (rolls about) | fentereg |
| fodor (flounce) | sodor <shodor> (twirl, current) |
| hápog (quack) | sápog <shaapog> (quack) |
| hervad (whiter) | sorvad <shorvad> (waste away) |
| feslik <fɛshlik> (bursts) | foszlik (frays) |
| terped (get sparrig) | tesped <tɛshpɛd> (stagnate) |

6) A very spectacular change happens in our words, when the second of the double vowel at the end of words becomes a consonant or both of the vowels change into a long vowel. Such double-vowels were regularly used in olden times but they are still in use in the dialect of Kórógy:

a) mainly at the end of a word root:

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| föüd = főd > föld (earth), | hou = hó (snow), |
| tou = tó (lake), | jou = jó (good). |
| föü = fő <foɛ> (head) | köü = kő (stone) |

szou = **szó** (word)

bou = **bú** (sorrow)

b) *but in the middle of the word, the **u** and **ü** change to a **v**:*

hout = **havat** (snow in accusative)

tous = **tavas** <tavash> (covered with lakes)

louos = **lovas** <lovash> (mounted)

c) *The sounds **u** and **ü** change occasionally to **h** and **j**:*

hiu >> **héj** (shell),

sziu >> **szíj** <siij> (strap, belt)

feüer >> **fejér** or **fehér** (the highest level of brightness, white); further derivatives are **fire** in English and **Feuer** in German.

d) *An **I** sound may come into it:*

föüd >> **föd** >> **föld** (earth)

zöüd >> **zöd** >> **zöld** (green)

Let see a word root in detail: **csöü** = slanting, oblique. The agglutinated form **csöür** after losing a vowel became **csúr** <chuer> (wrap), but in other dialectical variation **öü** became a “**v**” and we say **csavar** <chavar> (twists). Turning the “**v**” to “**I**” and using front vowels, we say **csévél** <chevel> (winding a spool).

Changing “**r**” to “**I**” in **csúr**, it comes to **csál(é)**, which means after agglutination: your hat stands **csárén** or **csálén** (twisted). **Csálén** (chaalen) is a dialectical variant of **scoliotic**.

Csöür has the variant **csör** (bill), which is in reality a **csöü** = **cső** <chœ> (pipe, tub), has a **csöves** <chœvësh> (pipe-like) form.

Further variants of **csöür** are: **csörlő**, **csürlő** <chuerlœ> = **tekerő**, **csavaró** <chavaroo> (winder). A double-dealer “**csúri-csavarja**” <csueri-chavarya> is twisting the words fort and back.

A man **csavarog** <chavarog> (saunters), if he is not taking the strait route.

The “**v**” in **csavar** can become an “**f**” as in **csafar** and after transposition the consonants **facsar**. We **facsar** (squeeze) a lemon to get the juice out of it. The word-root **csaf** is in the words **csúf** <chuuf> (putrid) and **csúfol** <chuufol> (mocking). With the last word we **facsar** or **csavar** (twist) the truth, because we speak by telling pictures. Further **csavarása** <chavaraasha> (turnings) or dialectical variations of the word **csúf** are the Italian **ciofa** and **zuffa** as well as the German **Schimf**. All these are further supported by the [**cs** <> **t**] change in “**csúr**” into **tor**. Its derivatives are:

torz > **torzít** (deformed > **distores**)

torta (cake, **tart**), it was originally a **csúrt-csavart** (twisted) cake

tortúra (torture) with tormenting (csűrő-csavaró) instruments

torna (tourney, gymnastic, **training**) is **tormenting** the own body

The baker fel**csúri**, felt**úri** – fel**gyúri** (rolls up) the shirt sleeves before he starts to **csúri** > **gyúri** > **túri** > **gyúrja** (kneads) the dough. Therefore, we could say instead of “**gyúró-deszka**” <djuuroo-dɛska> (moulding- or kneading-board): gyűrő-, csűrő-csavaró- or túró-deszka <tuerœ-dɛska> (torturing or endurance-board) by telling pictures.

We have seen the connection of the words csúfol <chuufol> (ridicul), csavar <chavar> (twisting) and torzít <torziit> (distort). The word-root, the picture, was the same in all of them. We could see a common picture connecting the words in each of the word-clusters of our vocabulary.

The word-roots and the uncountable dialectical variants of each were not created at once. This process needed endless time, many tens of thousands of years, until our vocabulary could grow that big. The heaping up, the accumulation is a fact, seeing our vocabulary. We demonstrated how this has happened: new pronunciation-variants were born again and again. Most of them became independent by refining a nomination. By the law of nature – it has to be continuous -this is a non-stop procedure. Furthermore, this kind of word-building produces more than just a compensation for fallen off words, otherwise, the vocabulary wouldn't have grown that big. Our vocabulary is the storage of ten thousands year's word-creation. Thus, the “ever lasting - never ending” word-creation process provides us with a very powerful help, when going for the examination of the so-called “nostratic” language or of its later successors. In the case of words as “csöü-csöv”, mentioned previously, we can even estimate the chronological order of the dialectical changes with high probability.

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There is no need to mention more word-creating possibilities. Each word cluster (they contain most of our words), is in reality a dialectical-variation around a theme. I demonstrated that we are able to extend our vocabulary, independent of the number of words already in use, due to the agglutinating system supported by our worldview. There is no upper-limit. We are able to express every thought as precisely as we wish, by varying the dialects and the pronunciation. It is a question of demand for perfection.

Once again: the word-building sense of the Hungarian-speaking people is still alive. This depends partially on their view of the universe as a whole and of their sensation as being an organic part of it. How much the one cracks, will the other fall for decay and vice versa.