

**MONDÁ – MONDTA. THE CONSTRUAL PATTERNS OF THE IMPERFECTIVE AND THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY HUNGARIAN DIARIES<sup>1</sup>**

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1780-3710>**Abstract**

There is a characteristic distribution of finite verbs in imperfective and simple past tense in five Hungarian diaries written in the 1830s and 1840s. This division demonstrates the last phase in a historical change: these are almost the last spontaneous and regular occurrences of the Hungarian imperfective past before its extinction still in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The present investigation is focused on the verb *mond* ‘say, tell’. This verb is construed in the corpus almost exclusively in the imperfective past tense, usually as the main (matrix) clause, with a reconstructed quotation by the act of saying in a subordinate clause, with the *hogy* ‘that’ conjunction. This highly subjectivized use of *mond* ‘say, tell’ in the entries of the diaries perspectivizes the linguistic activity of a participant with epistemic immediacy. The quoting act is evoked from a participatory, witnessing perspective by the diary writer. This simulative perspective profiles the narrated quoting as an ongoing continuous process through the imperfective past, while the simple past tense expresses events completed prior to the processing time. This type of construal shows the close and dynamic relation between the diary’s communicative situation and the evoked quoting situation, in contrast with other activities described often in the simple past tense in the diaries.

**Keywords:** diary, immediacy, imperfective past, past, simple past, temporality, witnessing

**1. Introduction**

In present-day Hungarian, only one form of past tense is used the past construed with the suffix *-t*. The past with *-t* covers all kinds of epistemic pasts.

- (1) a. A főnök mindig sokat *beszél*.  
‘The boss always speaks a lot’
- b. A főnök tegnap sokat *beszél***t**.  
‘The boss spoke a lot yesterday’

Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, there were also other possibilities to express past time reference. The system of past tenses went through changes during the historical periods from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see E. Abaffy 1992; Mohay 2020). Focusing now on the 19<sup>th</sup> century, besides rarely used complex past tenses (with certain forms of the auxiliary *be*, not discussed here), the imperfective past construed with the suffix *-e/-a* was used quite often in written discourses. The two past tenses were used in a specific distribution, although the imperfective past slowly but

<sup>1</sup> This is the shortened English version of the paper *Mondá – mondtá. A folyamatos és az egyszerű múlt idő konstruálási mintázatai 19. századi naplókban*, *Magyar Nyelvőr* 145. 2021: 432–447.

definitely became extinct by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (as for its use and non-use in contemporary fiction and poetry, see J. Soltész 1957).

The past with *-t*, the simple past tense, expressed past without any immediate experience or witnessing of the speaker about the event put on scene in the clause (see Brisard 2002). With the simple past tense, the speaker construed an event from a perfective view, the event was accomplished before the time of the utterance. The simple past was general in every-day communication, also in rural dialects.

The past with *-e/-a*, the imperfective past, expressed a past event with immediate experience or witnessing of the speaker about the event put on scene in the clause. With the imperfective past tense, the speaker construed an event from an imperfective, though past view, as if the conceived time of the past event were witnessed parallel with the present process of talking (as for conceived and processing time, see Langacker 2008: 79). Thus, with the imperfective past the speaker construed the event in the clause from a continuous perspective. The imperfective past was used in written discourses: essays, scientific works, literary texts, diaries etc.

The distribution of the two past tenses shows that the imperfective past slowly but definitely lost its functional role. The distribution of the two past tenses based on the factors mentioned above was almost never totally consistent, a clear differentiation of the tenses can be found rather in texts written at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, e.g., in the works of Ferenc Kazinczy (see Tolcsvai Nagy 2020). Simple and imperfective past forms are mixed in many written texts seemingly without any systematic functional difference. In other cases, the distribution matches textual patterns, e.g. in the diary of Antónia Kölcsey (1838–1844) many entries start with a one clause summary of a daily event in simple past, then this event is detailed in imperfective past (c.f. Tolcsvai Nagy 2021). Also, in many written discourses in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, imperfective past disappears in the course of the text; while both past tenses are used in the first parts, imperfective past is rarely used in the last sections.

The present paper analyses the distribution of finite verbs in imperfective and simple past tenses in five Hungarian diaries written in the 1830s and 1840s. The investigation is focused on the verb *mond* 'say, tell'. This verb is construed in the corpus almost exclusively in the imperfective past tense, usually as the main (matrix) clause, with a reconstructed quotation by the act of saying in a subordinate clause, with the *hogy* 'that' conjunction. This highly subjectivized use of *mond* 'say, tell' in the entries of the diaries perspectivizes the linguistic activity of a participant with epistemic immediacy. The quoting act is evoked from a participatory, witnessing perspective by the diary writer. This simulative perspective profiles the narrated quoting as an ongoing continuous process through the imperfective past, while the simple past tense expresses events completed prior to the processing time. The second part of the paper presents the analysed data. In the third section the construal features of the diary as a discourse type is outlined from the author's perspective, in the fourth section the focus is on the diary's temporal structure. In the fifth section the imperfective past tense of the verb *mond* 'say', dominant in the entries of the five diaries, is detailed. The paper is closed with the summary.

## 2. The corpus

The main data from the diaries examined in the present study in terms of past tenses are as follows (see the bibliographic descriptions under Sources).

The diary of László Bártfay was published between January 1838 and December 1841. The diary consists of 138,000 words (980,000 characters including spaces). The details of the verb *mond* 'say' are as follows. Verb forms in imperfective past: *mondám* 'I said' 68, *mondá*, *monda* 's/he said' 155, *mondánk* 'we said' 2, *mondák* 'they said' 9. Verb forms in simple past: *mondtam* 'I said' 3, *mondta* 's/he said' (also with a prefix) 4; *mondták* 'they said' 2. Imperfective past figure 234, simple past figure 9.

The diary of Antónia Kölcsey was written between May 1838 and December 1844, with major omissions. The diary has a length of 25,600 words (162,600 characters including spaces). Details of the verb *mond* 'say': *monda* 's/he said' 4, *mondá* 's/he said' 29, *mondám* 'I said' 2. Imperfective past 36. Simple past tense: *mondta* 's/he said', *mondtam* 'I said', *mondták* 'they said', a total of 6 tokens.

The Parliamentary diary of Ferenc Kölcsey was compiled between December 1832 and August 1833. The diary is 65,000 words long (428,000 characters including spaces). Details of the verb *mond* 'say': *mondám* 'I said' 5, *mondád* 'you said' 1, *mondá* 's/he said' (also with a prefix) 12, *mondánk* 'we said' 3, *mondák* 'they said' 22, *mondának* 'they said' 9. Imperfective past tense: 52, simple past tense: 0.

The diary of Etelka Slachta quoted here was written between December 1838 and April 1840. The diary consists of 31,000 words (214,000 characters including spaces). The details of the verb *mond* 'say' are as follows. Verb forms in imperfective past: *mondám* 'I said' 23, *mondá* 's/he said' 120, *mondánk* 'we said' 3, *mondák* 'they said' 5. Verb forms in simple past: *mondtam* 'I said' 2, *mondta* 's/he said' 4, *mondtuk* 'we said' 1, *mondtak* 'they said' 1, *mondták* 'they said' 1. Imperfective past figure: 151, simple past tense figure: 9.

The first parts of Péter Tóth's diary examined here were written between June 1836 and February 1837 (pages 1–152 in the 1984 edition). The length of this section of the diary is 27,000 words (170,000 characters including spaces). The data of the verb *mond* 'say' are as follows. Verb forms in imperfective past: *mondám* 'I said' 35, *mondá* 's/he said' 69, *mond* 's/he said' 4 (form 3PSg), *mondánk* 'we said' 2, *mondók* 'we said' 2, *mondák* 'they said' 1. Verb forms in simple past: *mondtam* 'I said' 5, *mondta* 's/he said' 2, *mondott* 's/he said' 1, *mondtuk* 'we said' 3. Imperfective past figure: 113, simple past figure: 10.

The seemingly simple taxonomy shows a fairly clear picture: the five diary writers, who are very different in their habitus, social status, and relation to writing, uniformly use the narrative past tense in the vast majority of linguistic structures constructed with the verb *mond* 'say'. This ratio is similar for other communication verbs not mentioned here.

In the following, I present the distribution of the two past tense forms of the verb *mond* 'say' and the functions of the imperfective past tense in the context of construal process.

### 3. The text type of the diary

Literary studies, especially the formalist theories, have placed the genre of the diary on the periphery. Yet, in the 19th century, the importance of the diary increased, in the literary processes of Romanticism in particular (cf. Szegedy-Maszák 2002). This development has gone beyond the narrower scope of literature, and forms of activity such as writing, remembering, documenting, and linguistic construction have developed, in line with European processes. These forms address the linguistic construction of personality, events, reflections (e.g. emotional tensions, crises), capture feelings, plans, dreams in real and virtual networks. The diary is the discourse of self-representation and the entry of the persons and events and relationships that come into contact with the diary writer (see Lejeune 2014; Kalff–Vedder 2016).

Diary writing is personal, and therefore partly spontaneous, but at the same time a linguistic action of conscious formation. The diary is a monologic, written and planned text type, i.e., the speaker (the diary writer) speaks alone, and is even alone during the entry, since the act of diary writing belongs to the private sphere. In this solitary situation, the diary writer largely consciously creates his text, and chooses what to record in what language. The diary writer creates his own communication space and form of activity. The basic unit of the diary is the entry. The structure of entries by date is chronological, usually in daily units. An important feature is continuity, the sequence of entries. "[D]iaries can usually be placed between the extremes of a purposefully advancing confession and the fragments of a fragmentary set of records" (cf. Szegedy-Maszák 2002).

The diary is typically perspectivized: it is not the taxonomy of events that is decisive, but the mention of what is important to the diary writer. Diary writing is a referential and factual linguistic activity (not imaginary; see Z. Varga 2020: 330). In the viewpoint structure of the diary, on the one hand, the speaker's own point of view (the reference centre; cf. Sanders–Spooren 1997; Tátrai 2017: 940) is constantly present, the diary writer speaks, mostly in first person singular. On the other hand, within this viewpoint structure, the subject of consciousness is emphatically the diary writer, he is the source of information, he is responsible for the credibility of what is written.

The diary writer speaks in the first person, decides what is to be entered from this reference center. This mode of talking amplifies several features of the monologue. A diary writer basically speaks to himself when he writes about himself. The diary entries in the corpus examined here show different degrees of self-reflection, in addition to the direct objective and reflexive recording of events and relationships. The distance between the narrator and the narrated self varies; for example, in Etelka Slachta's diary, the relationship seems very close, as in László Bártfay's text; while in the diary of Péter Tóth or Ferenc Kölcsey the larger distance is also marked due to the strong personal reflections.

The diary entry is usually subjectivized (as all 1st person singular speech to some extent), but at the same time objectified, insofar as it writes about itself as a participant in events and processes (see Langacker 2006; Kugler 2013). The frequency of subjectivizing parts (such as first person singular entries and the presence of an implicit evaluative speaker) is usually the result of the short, concise nature of the diary entry: the text also contains unspoken, implicit, suggested contents that become available in subjectivization structures (if at all), for the external reader of the diary.

It is emphatically part of the above brief description that, at the same time, the diary is not primarily intended for publication, and the diaries discussed here, written in the 1830s and 1840s, are certainly not. The diary writer speaks to himself, turns inward, speaks confidentially in the private and even intimate spheres, but knows that this is inevitably outward, and others can read it. It is personal, and therefore partly spontaneous, but at the same time carefully crafted writing.

Already in the first half of the 19th century, diary writing was not a mere listing of events, but the construction of an autonomous personality, with cultural improvement, the personal cultivation of writing, in a consciously discursive order. In the period examined here, in one of the initial significant stages of the establishment of the Hungarian middle classes, this moment is emphatically present.

The textual characterization of the diary summarized here combines the two perspectives that have developed in text research, more specifically in text typology studies, over the past few decades. The first perspective is the functional linguistic description of the structure of the text, more precisely the vehiculum and the processing (i.e. comprehension) structure of the text. The second point of view is the genre-based approach, which approaches the discourse type from the contextual, situational side and scripts of communication activity (cf. Stukker–Spooren–Steen 2016; Simon 2017; Taavitsainen 2004).

#### **4. The temporal structure of the diary**

The diary writer always does the entry writing in the present time of this action. Of course, this circumstance is not limited to the diary. However, the default position of the diary entry already evokes the temporal relationship in which the present of the speaking in the diary (the entry) is the day on which the writer records previous events.

The diary is characterized by quasi-simultaneity (Z. Varga 2020: 332), temporal proximity to the daily experiences. The diary writer knows this, and it is clear to the reader of the diary that the now as a single day includes the events of the whole day and at the end of it the action of the entry writing itself. In the entries as units of the discourse, however, the diary writer divides this closeness in time: the linguistic marker of the temporal grounding of daily events is the deictic past tense of the verbs. The act of entry, on the other hand, is emphatically continuous in the present time in relation to the time narrated, and this is profiled, even if the present is mostly unmarked linguistically.

The sequences of entries are multi-temporal. There is no teleology in the structure of the diary, there is no final closure (Z. Varga 2020: 332), at the time of entry writing it is not necessarily possible to know what will come next day or in the following days. The entry as a unit of time is restarted with every day, the events of the immediate past are narrated in the present of the end of the day. The writer is included in the event(s), and the perspective and the temporal structure are re-construed in each entry.

The act of recording has the effect of simultaneity of the entered event and the recording event, as well as their succession in time, at the same time. The temporal varieties of the five diaries examined here show their characters here. In the default discursive relationship, the writer speaks in the present of the writing, usually unmarked, with no explicit reference to the temporal act of recording the described event. In the diary of László Bártfay, on the other hand, there are many present references to the weather conditions at the time of the entry, always at the end of the entry, for example, "The weather is muddy, sloppy. The evening is starless and foggy." (Bártfay, 19 February 1839). Ferenc Kölcsey often discusses the conditions of his accommodation in Pozsony (Bratislava), the capital of the Hungarian Kingdom at that time, as well as the mental and atmospheric conditions at the time of the registration.

For the diary writer, the continuous but intermittent writing of a diary, along with the narration of events, is the narration of time and the existential experience of time, broken down into daily units, but at the same time extending beyond. The recorded events provide the essential components of the space experienced, at the same time always opening the horizon of expectations for the still unknown (cf. Koselleck 1988).

All this takes place in an interactive and intersubjective situation: the diary writer knows that in his text he is the subject of consciousness, the information comes from him, he is the source of authenticity, in the context and sequence of his own earlier and expected later entries. He is also the reader of his own diary, even if he only remembers the details he wrote earlier, and this inclusion obviously influences the reader's current interpretation of his own life.

The author of the diary writes to a fictive imaginary reader. Both the reader and the author of the diary, as its reader, can read only in time. The time and time structure of the reading process does not match the time structure of the daily sequence of the entry, but it is related to it, the reader also perceives the temporal sequence. Each entry is tied not only to a date, but also to the imagined, recalled duration and the reception time of the narrated events and reflections. In the writing and reading of the diary, the relationship between conceived and processing time is overtly present in the sequential nature of the entries.

The entries in the five diaries in the corpus examined here are very mixed in terms of past tenses. Not only is the application of the imperfective past inconsistent in the diaries of the individual authors, but also with respect to the decade during which the five diaries analyzed here were written. There is a greater regularity in Antónia Kölcsey's diary (where the entries begin with a high frequency in the simple past tense evoking an event with a general effect about the given day, followed by personal episodes narrated in the imperfective past). In Ferenc Kölcsey's parliamentary diary, he uses the imperfective past in general (but not exclusively) to describe scenes he has personally experienced, and the simple past to events that have taken place in the earlier past related to the day of the entry and not witnessed directly. László Bártfay's diary shows a strong mix: there are parts or complete entries with (almost) purely simple past and parts or complete entries with (almost) purely imperfective past, regardless of the author's personal involvement in the narrated event. In the diary of Péter Tóth, the imperfective past is also characteristic of parts describing events he personally experienced and reports with direct witnessing, but a significant amount of similar data involves the simple past. In Etelka Slachta's diary, the imperfective past with communication verbs and movement verbs is very common, but in other respects the use of the simple past cannot be considered regular.

Using the simple past tense in the five diaries, the writer construes each event from a distance in an objectified temporal frame. The clear difference between the time of the entry and the time of each intraday closed event is decisive. The speaker sees himself from the outside in an earlier phase, from the same objectifying temporal distance as the other characters.

Using the imperfective past tense, the diary writer construes events as experienced processes in the temporal reference frame with a greater degree of subjectivization. The timing of the entry is in direct simulative correspondence with the narrated events, which are not separated sharply from episode to episode. However, the two main types thus separated are implemented in several

versions. In these variants, the functional difference between the two past tenses varies in a scalar manner, they differ greatly in one extreme region of the scale and are close in the other.

### 5. The verb *mond* 'say' in the dairy entries

The verb *mond* 'say' is a transitive active verb in Hungarian. The main schematic figures are the following: someone says something to someone (see Csontos 2012: 198–199). The primary figure (trajector) is an active human agent who says something, that is, he is the speaking, deliberately acting agent. Its elaboration in the clause is typically the subject. One secondary figure (landmark) is the content of the saying, its semantic role is passive theme. It is elaborated in a main clause typically by a pronominal grammatical object in the accusative and the dependent clause that elaborates it as a quotation. The other secondary figure (landmark) is the hearer of the saying, in the semantic role experiencer or beneficiary, its elaboration in the clause is typically by means of a dative dependent. The trajector's (speaker's) degree of volition and effect is high, that of the listener is small. The aim of the event is to direct the attention of the hearer, to foreground a certain content within the intersubjective attention frame, to change the mental state of the hearer. The entire event is active.

The verb *mond* 'say' is imperfect, unbounded in time, uninterrupted. Its event structure is loud speaking, a purpose-oriented real-time event, in order to make a certain content (conceptual structure) available through speech in an intersubjective comprehension process. The content is construed by the speaker, along with the hearer's comprehension process.

In the basic schema of the verb *mond* 'say', the most important complements can be named in three schematic figures: someone speaks, someone says something, to someone. In this speech construal, the speaker (the primary figure of the verb *mond* 'say', the one who quotes in the structures examined here) is the starting point, the deictic centre of the reference frame, the action of saying is expressed from this point of view. The speaker's speaking is directed, on the one hand, to the momentary listener. The speaker's speaking, on the other hand, focuses on the object of attention, that is, the object of the saying, the construed scene in the centre of joint attention, its content. With the verb *mond* 'say', the speaker thus construes the act of the saying itself, typically limited to the content and time of an utterance.

One of the most important realizations of the verb *mond* 'say' is a complex sentence involving a subordinate clause with the conjunction *hogy* 'that'; this sentence construction is the schema of the realizations of the verb *mond* 'say' examined here: *azt mondja, hogy...* 'he says that...', *azt mondta, hogy...* 'he said that...'

In accordance with the schema of the complex sentence with the conjunction *hogy* 'that', the main clause expresses the mental process and communication activity of the agent (the speaker) of the construed scene from the speaker's point of view. Also, the *azt* 'that' accusative pronoun denotes the mental space of the saying, elaborated in the subordinate clause (Kugler 2017: 823). The main clause expresses the action value of speaking, also twice: on the one hand, that of the actual speaker who construes and narrates the scene of the saying, and on the other hand, that of the speaker who acts and speaks within the scene. This perspectivizes and contextualizes the scene while the subject of consciousness is the speaker of the scene expressed by the sentence (Kugler 2017: 823, 831, 839). For more details on the modality of using the verb *mond* 'say', see Csontos (2012: 200–201).

One determinant factor in the clausal implementation of the verb *mond* 'say' is the temporal reference frame, in particular the relationship between the inherent temporality (conceived time) and the processing time. This is so because the subordinate sentence containing the verb *mond* 'say' profiles the temporal process of the saying separately in the main clause, and the semantic content of the saying in the mental space of the saying in the subordinate clause with the conjunction *hogy* 'that', which is also construed as a scene in time. Both elementary scenes are epistemically grounded to its speaker as the base. These successive two inherent and at the same time grounded temporalities are related to the temporal component of the comprehension process of the speaker who speaks or writes both and the reader who receives them, through processing time.

In the complex sentences of the five diaries examined here construed with the verb *mond* 'say', the distribution and functioning of the imperfective and the simple past tense take place in this temporal reference frame. The reference frame is set up by the diary writer. One of the starting points in the temporal reference frame is the vantage point of the diary writer, the time of his speaking, in particular. The vantage point of the diary writer is a temporal reference point because the time of the narrated scene is relative to the processing time of the grounded speaking, the entry writing. It is from this grounding relationship that the deictic verb tense arises. The diary writer evokes another earlier speaker in his complex sentence, who actually tells what he is telling as an utterance of the act of saying, but already as a quote.

The temporal reference frame thus, on the one hand, establishes the diary writer's vantage point for the whole text (or part of it), which he processes in the diary as his present time and which the reader of the diary (even the author himself) reads the entry as past and present at the same time, knowing that the entry was made earlier, but the nature of reporting and recall is quasi-present compared to what was said in the entry, related to an earlier event. Related to this is the vantage point of the recalled speaker by the diary writer, which is also temporally related to the scene narrated by the recalled speaker and is grounded to the base of the diary writer. This base, as discussed above, is related to the here and now present of the act of the entry writing, and at the same time to the sequence of entries in the broader context of the diary. Another component of the resulting temporal structure is the characteristic function of the communicative verbs shown here, which "makes the fact of citation explicit while also depicting the process of creating the original discourse" (Csontos 2012: 196–200). The present study does not treat this detail.

In complex sentences containing the verb *mond* 'say', it is the intersubjective relationship between the diary writer and the speaker he recalls that is primarily profiled in the reference frame. At this point, it becomes important that in complex sentences containing the verb *mond*, the elaboration of the content of the saying, i.e. its mental space, is a quotation (see Csontos 2012; Csontos–Tátrai 2008; Csontos–Dér–Furkó 2019). In this construction, the quoting part is the act of the saying, while the quotation itself is "a re-construal of an already existing and linguistically represented event" (Csontos 2012: 196–204; Csontos 2016). Re-construal is done by processing the quotation and the act of the citation within the reference frame of the diary entry also in terms of time. In the framework of the present study, the question is: how the diary writer, as a text writer, relates in his own speaking time (processing time) to the time of the act of a saying made earlier and recalled by him, how does he construe this grounding relationship with the grammatical possibilities available in Hungarian.

In the temporal structure of sentences with the verb *mond*, different variants are realized in the diaries examined here, according to the relationship between the tense of the verbs and the inherent temporality of the verb, as well as between other factors of the sentence and the text:

- functions of the present, past, and future tense in finite verb forms,
- variations in the syncretism and disparity of tense and base,
- the space-time continuum of the current discourse space and the boundary of the construed scene,
- the relationship between the length of the scene and the length of the speaking time.

Based on the factors presented above, the use of the verb *mond* 'say' in the corpus is characterized by the following.

The inherent (lexical level) temporality of the verb *mond* is imperfect (the beginning and end points are outside the immediate conceptual scope). The duration of the saying is always longer than a moment, and a perceptible time (at least one or two seconds) is required for the utterance to be uttered, perceived and understood.

As a scene realized in the diary texts, the verb *mond* is in the past compared to the processing time (related to the time of the diary entry as the speaker's reference point). Two basic versions of past can be distinguished within the speaker's perspective in the reference frame:

- the past is accomplished, closed, distal, and objectified past time, epistemically non-direct; there is no correspondence between the sequential elements of the recalled action process of the saying and the temporality of the writing process of the diary entry – this past is expressed with simple past tense in the diaries;
- the past is continuous, it is continuously experienced as a past event, the epistemic immediacy is continuous, the perception of the saying is imaginative, its simulative evocation is overtly processual; there is a correspondence between the recalled action process of the saying and the temporally sequential elements of the writing process of the diary entry, as if the recalling of a past scene would be done in the continuum of the present tense of the entry writing, with a high degree of grammatically signified subjectivization – this past is expressed with imperfective past tense in the diaries.

From the above overview and the data, it can be seen that in all five diaries, the imperfective past of the verb *mond* 'say' (and mostly the communication verbs) have a prominent place in the linguistic, discursive construal of the diaries. The verbs in imperfective past tense show further variability. This variability depends on the relationship between the entry and the quoting main clause: the extent to which the saying is a direct element of the narrated episode or not. It also depends on how much the diary writer identifies himself with the point of view of the speaker quoted by him over time, or how much he or she focuses on the citation itself. The explicit use of the *azt* 'that' pronoun and the *hogy* 'that' conjunction or, conversely, their avoidance play a role in the construal of the variants: the marked use rather strengthens objectivity, the avoidance of the pronoun and the conjunction results in a more subjectivized structure in which the quotation begins to resemble to indirect speech and even free indirect speech, with the temporal and perspectival proximity or fusion of the speech of the diary writer and the quoted speaker.

In (2) the entry begins with an accomplished event (*feljött* [simple past] 'came up and is there'), then during the recall of the conversation the continuous, in-presence, epistemically immediate character of the verbs *olvasám* [imperfective] 'I was reading' and *mondá* [imperfective] 'he was saying' becomes decisive in the process of narration. That is, while the event is narrated with verbs whose start or end points are within the immediate semantic scope of the current meaning of the verb, the quotation phrase is continuous in the past, the start and end points are not profiled.

- (2) *Mihelyt feljött, olvasám neki a levelet, magyarázatokat tett rá, még azt is mondá, „szeretném tudni az ilyen kettős barátság egyez-e az emberi természettel?”* (Tóth, 1836. télelő [december] 6.)

As soon as he came up [simple past], I read [imperfective] the letter to him, he explained [simple past] it, he even said [imperfective], "I want to know if such a double friendship fits human nature?" (Tóth 6 December 1836).

In (3), the narration of the event occurred to the diary writer is construed in simple past tense as a default, although the introduction is in present. The narration contains one episode of saying in the imperfective past, with the dramatic story of the bread stealing in present tense. However, the story itself is fundamentally construed in an objectifying, removing past tense. The imperfective past tense of the verb *mond*, which profiles the immediacy of the quoted utterance, the direct perception and understanding of the speaking in the story, brings a momentary change to this.



- (3) [...] robajjal *fut* a szónoksegéd, „jertek, nálam van Fekete Mátyás” (kékesi plebanus). Öltözünk s mentünk. Alant *kezdet*t a beszéd s *fölhágott* az örök erőre, Krisztusra, szóval a vallás legfőbb tárgyira. *Mondá* ő, hogy ezekhez hit kell, én óh, bizonyosan az kellene [...] (Tóth, 1836. nyárhó [július] 24.)

[...] the assistant pastor runs in [present] with a bang, “come, Fekete Mátyás has arrived at me” (parson from Kékes). We got dressed [simple past] and went [simple past]. The conversation began [simple past] low and ascended [simple past] to the eternal power, Christ, so the supreme object of religion. He said [imperfective] that these require faith, me oh, certainly it should [...] (Tóth 24 July 1836)

In the interrupted recording of the evening of the great flood in Pest on March 13, 1838, in (4) László Bártfay construes the events in the city from a double perspective. He recounts his own actions in the imperfective past, in a personally subjectified framework, in the marked role of the subject of consciousness, along the re-experienced continuity of events. External events, on the other hand, are expressed in the simple past (as in most of the rest of the daily entry not cited here). In the excerpt, the verbs with simple past refer to the actions of Miklós Wesselényi. This sequence is interrupted by the verb *mondá* ‘he said’ in imperfective past, then quoting Wesselényi’s utterance (formally in present, referring to the near future). This quoting main clause with epistemic immediacy in imperfective past (*azt mondá* ‘he said’) fits into the series of accomplished actions quickly following one another expressed in simple past. This brings a momentary change in the past tenses, therefore the correspondence between its directness and the process of recalling is contextually smaller. The intersubjective relationship between the diary writer Bártfay and the speaking Wesselényi stays in the background.

- (4) A’ legszelidebb holdvilágos este *volt*: de a’ harangok folyvást *zúgtak*. Vízet sehol sem látva, szokott utamon, a’ Muzeum mellett, *füttyülve jövék* haza. B[áró]. Wesselényi Miklóst már itthon *találtam*. Ő valamivel korábban *hagyá el* a’ színházat. Velünk *vacsorált* valami keveset. Annakutána mindjárt *átküldött* a’ köztelekre, hol lovainak istállója *volt*, egyet *megnyergeltetett*, és *ellovagolt* az áradás’ jelenségeit, irányát, terjedését a’ városon mindenfelé vizsgálendő. *Azt mondá*, majd hírt hoz ha visszajő. *Lefekvénk*, nyugottan, mint máskor. Szokásom ágyban olvasni. *Olvastam* ekkor is, sokáig: részint mivel érdekes könyvet *kaptam* e’ napokban „Napoleon und der Herzog von Vicenza” német fordításban, részint a’ Bárót ’s annak híreit várva. De az éjjélig nem *jött vissza*. *Hallám* a’ tizenkettőt ütni, gyertyámat *eloltám* ’s *elaludtam*. (Bártfay, 1838. március 13.)

It was [simple past] the mildest moonlit evening: but the bells were continuously ringing [simple past]. Seeing nowhere water, I came [imperfective] home on my usual way, next to the Museum, whistling. I already found [simple past] B[aron] Miklós Wesselényi at home. He left [imperfective] the theater a little earlier. He dined [simple past] with us a little. Immediately afterwards, he sent [simple past] [one of his people] to the plot, where he had [simple past] a stable for his horses, saddled [simple past] one, and rode away [simple past] to examine the developments, direction, and spread of the flood everywhere in the city. He said [imperfective] he would bring news when he came back [present]. We went [imperfective] to bed, as calmly as usual. I used to read in bed. I read [simple past] this time, too, for a long time: partly because I received [simple past] an interesting book in these days, the German translation of ‘Napoleon und der Herzog von Vicenza’, partly waiting for the Baron and his news. But he didn’t come back [simple past] until midnight. I heard [imperfective] striking twelve, put out [imperfective] my candle and fell [simple past] asleep. (Bártfay 13 March 1838)

In (5), Ferenc Kölcsey summarizes a daily episode of the struggle on the introduction or refusal to publish the parliamentary diary (the publication of abstract minutes and parliamentary speeches). The actions of those who opposed the protocol are first mentioned in the simple past by Kölcsey:

*nem akartak emlékezni* 'they did not want to remember'. The narration of this act of the representatives is continued in the imperfective past with the verb *mond*: *Azt mondák* 'they said'. And the recording of the next episode of the event is also in the imperfective past tense: *Hiában monda Pázmány* 'in vain said Pázmány'. Although the argumentation is in present (both in the present time of the intention to introduce the parliamentary diary and that of the author's diary writing), still the parliamentary episode itself ends in the simple past tense, expressing the accomplishment of the whole scene: *Mindezek nem használtak* 'all of these were in vain'. In this example, therefore, the imperfective past differs only slightly from the grounding content of the simple past, although it emphasizes the nature of the creative and receptive process of the saying.

- (5) Most tehát hogy a napkönyvet, amennyire lehetséges, a szerkesztők szabadkéjű csonkításaitól megmentjük, az alnádor által ajánlott záradék ellen viadalra szállánk, és nyertesek maradánk. De e nyereséget a napkönyvi kivonat felett támadt harcban kétszeresen veszítettük el. Embereink a január 10-diki végzésre, minélfogva a kivonat megállítaték, *nem akartak emlékezni*. *Azt mondák*: nekik s küldöiknek nem napkönyvi kivonat, hanem újság kell. *Hiában monda* Pázmány, miképpen e kivonat nem akar az újság surrogatuma lenni, miképpen az újság iránt jogainkat *fenntartjuk*, s most csak egy lépést *akarunk* a nagyobb publicitás felé stb. *Mindezek nem használtak*; a magyarnak vagy a *kell*t amit ő akart, vagy semmi sem. (Kölcsey Ferenc, 1833. május 18.)

So now, to save the parliamentary diary as much as possible from the free mutilation of the editors, we went [imperfective] to fight against the clause recommended by the vice governor and remained [imperfective] winners. But we lost [simple past] that profit twice in the fight over the diary abstract. Our people did not want to remember [simple past] the order of January 10, by which the abstract was stopped [imperfective]. They said that they and their senders did not need a diary extract, but a newspaper. In vain did Pázmány say [imperfective] how this extract does not want [present] to be the surrogate of the newspaper, how we reserve [present] our rights to the newspaper, and now we only want [present] one step towards greater publicity, and so on. All of these were [simple past] in vain; Hungarians either needed [simple past] what they wanted or nothing. (Ferenc Kölcsey 1833: May 18.)

## 6. Summary

The paper analysed the distribution of simple and imperfective past tense forms in the use of the verb *mond* 'say' in five 19th-century Hungarian diaries written in the 1830s and 1840s. The data show that the verb *mond* (and communication verbs in general) is grounded in the imperfective past in almost all cases, usually in the main clause of a complex sentence, followed by a re-construed quote in the subordinate clause as the elaboration of the pronominal grammatical object of the verb *mond* in the main clause. With this highly subjectivized use of the verb *mond* in the diary entries express the linguistic activity of one character in the diary text with epistemic immediacy, the diary writer presents a conversation with the participation of a speaker or the diary writer in a witnessing, participatory, simulative way. At the same time, this mode of construal profiles the continuous character of the narration; the simulative evoking of the past quoting act is construed as a directly experienced process. There is a correspondence between the recalled act of saying and the sequential elements of the temporal process of the entry writing. This rather consistent use of the verb *mond* shows a close correlation between the communicative situation recalled and the communicative situation of the diary writing, as opposed to the temporality of other types of events often expressed in the corpus with the simple past.

### Acknowledgements

This paper was written with the support of the NKFI project K129040 (Verbal constructions of Hungarian. Research in usage-based construction grammar). Further support was received from the Thematic Excellence Program of ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary.

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