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On the use of the Hungarian quasi-copula *áll* ‘to stand’

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the present paper is part of a series of research on the rules of quasi-copula use in languages related to or neighbouring Hungarian. The aim of the studies is to better understand the cognitive, typological, contact linguistic, etymological etc. factors that determine the semantic behaviour of the quasi-copula concerned.

Objective: to describe the use of the Hungarian quasi-copula ‘to stand’ in relatively great detail.

Research materials: the corpus of the study consists of sentences localising inanimate subjects, extracted from the Hungarian National Corpus 2, and those found via targeted Google searches.

Results and novelty of the research: it can be observed that in Hungarian, the visual similarity to the standing human posture, as well as the position that enables the object to perform its function equally trigger the use of the quasi-copula ‘to stand’. Similarly to other languages, the quasi-copula also has a perceptual usage. It can also be shown to be used contrastively, i.e. to describe past situations as opposed to the present. On the basis of the present corpus, it is difficult to know how Hungarian speakers choose between the quasi-copulas ‘to stand’ or ‘to lie’ for symmetrical objects, i.e. objects without marked dimension. Based on the available data, it is likely that, in such sentences, the properties of the Ground may also play a role, and that the neutral copula can also appear.

Key words: locative, quasi-copula, Figure and Ground, geotopographic use, perceptual use, Hungarian

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Об использовании венгерской квазикопулы *áll* ‘стоять’

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Введение. Данная статья является частью серии исследовательских работ по правилам использования квазикопулы в языках, родственных с венгерским (например, хантыйским и нганасанским). Исследование направлено на лучшее понимание когнитивных, типологических, контактно-лингвистических, этимологических и других факторов, которые определяют семантическое поведение соответствующей квазикопулы.

Цель: описать использование венгерской квазикопулы «стоять».

Материалы исследования: предложения с локализацией неодушевлённых предметов, извлечённых из Венгерского национального корпуса 2, Google.

Результаты и новизна исследования. Можно заметить, что в венгерском языке визуальное сходство с позой стоящего человека, а также положение, позволяющее объекту в равной степени выполнять свою функцию, приводят к использованию квазикопулы «стоять». Как и в других языках, квазикопула также имеет перцептивное применение. Кроме того, она используется контрастивно, то есть для описания уже прошедших ситуаций в отличие от настоящих. На основе настоящего корпуса трудно понять, каким образом носители венгерского языка выбирают между квазикопулами «стоять» или «лежать» для обозначения симметричных объектов. Исходя из имеющихся данных вполне вероятно, что в таких предложениях определённую роль могут играть свойства Фона, а также может появиться нейтральная связка.

Ключевые слова: локативный, квазикопула, Фигура и Фон, геотопографическое использование, перцептивное употребление, венгерский язык

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Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to give an overview of the use of the Hungarian posture verb ‘to stand’ as a quasi-copula. Of the three basic Hungarian posture verbs, i.e. ‘to sit’, ‘to stand’, and ‘to lie’, only the latter two have such a function, the verb ‘sit’ has only metaphorical and metonymical extended meanings, as well as it often appears in collocations [13].

One of the essential components of locative sentences is the Figure, introduced earlier in the discourse, which is thus definite. The Ground, which is a new element in the sentence from the point of view of information structure, appears as a locative adverb. Finally, there is a verb element, typically a verb, a copula or a quasi-copula.

After earlier, well-established and inspiring [3; 16], but less systematic studies, the importance of posture verbs among the verbal elements of locative sentences was brought to the attention of the literature by a monograph, which gave a major impetus to systematic discussion of the topic [9]. Later, researchers of the Max Planck Institute developed a typology of verb element use concerning locative sentences based on a large-scale study of European and non-European languages [2]. In the process, they elicited the locative sentences using a picture series [1]. Some Uralic languages have also been studied from this perspective, e. g. [8; 17; 18; 21; 22; 23]. These studies have revealed a number of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors that may shape and influence the complex semantic behaviour of grammaticalized posture verbs.

In terms of locative sentences, a number of different principles governing verb choice

have been described in the literature. The most important lesson is that the conditions for the use of a quasi-copula in a given language can be defined as a combination of numerous general and language-specific principles. In what follows, we will first summarize those that are relevant to the study of the Hungarian quasi-copula ‘to stand’.

Quasi-copulas

Evidently, the definition of quasi-copulas cannot be given without describing the most important characteristics of copulas. Pustet’s definition is the following: ‘A copula is a linguistic element which co-occurs with certain lexemes in certain languages when they function as predicate nucleus. A copula does not add any semantic content to the predicate phrase it is contained in’ [14, 5].

The second sentence of the definition captures the essential difference between copulas and quasi-copulas. While copulas are semantically empty elements, quasi-copulas enrich the predicate with some semantic content. In the following locative sentences (1)–(2), the quasi-copulas make explicit the vertical or horizontal position of the suitcases in question:

(1) *A bőrönd a sarokban áll.*

‘The suitcase is (lit. stands) in the corner.’

(2) *A bőrönd az ágyon feküdt.*

‘The suitcase was (lit. lay) on the bed.’

The group of posture verbs is not the only source of quasi-copulas. In Hungarian [19], as in many other languages, verbs of motion can also appear in locative sentences, resulting in sentences expressing fictive motion, such as the following example (3):

(3) *A legrövidebb ösvény a tó mellett fut.*

‘The shortest path runs along the lake.’

Criteria for choosing the quasi-copula ‘to stand’

In the world’s languages, the criteria for the choice of the quasi-copula ‘stand’ in locative sentences are quite diverse. Obviously, much depends on which group of the Ameka–Levinson typology the language belongs to; in other words, the conditions are also related to the number of elements in the set of copulas and quasi-copulas available in the language for the construction of locative sentences. It is also self-evident that the semantic circumstances of the word ‘stand’ may also influence the rules of use in its quasi-copula role. There are, however, some criteria which seem to be relevant in numerous languages. These are listed below.

In describing quasi-copulae with the meaning ‘to stand’, some authors consider the visual and force-dynamic similarity between standing as a human action and the position of an object to be primary [10]. Others regard the orientation of the object to be equally important for the function of the object [24]. In what follows, the visual aspects are discussed first, but this does not mean that they are seen as a priority.

The geometry of the Figures

Some of the general characteristics can be easily deduced from the sight of a standing human body. Thus, long and thin objects in an upright position will usually trigger the use of the verb ‘to stand’ if it is supported from below.

However, the shape and height of the object that triggers the use of the quasi-copula ‘to stand’ varies from language to language. For example, in Swedish, proportions are very important, so if a building is horizontally prominent, the verb ‘to lie’ is used to express its location [23, 148]. In turn, in the Khanty language, the element with the meaning ‘to stand’ is used instead of the otherwise very common quasi-copula ‘to sit’ when the height of the object is outside the active zone of a person [11].

Likewise, it seems to be evident that the Figure must be able to hold itself [5, 1042]. This position is often described as requiring physical effort to maintain [10, 2], and that it conveys power and associates control [6, 118].

Furthermore, it may also be important whether an object is immobile or mobile, i.e. whether its size and weight can be manipulated by humans or not.

Legs, structural parts for support

Also related to the view of a person’s standing posture is the aspect of whether the object has legs or structural parts corresponding to legs.

Newman, discussing English posture verbs, briefly summarizes the conditions of use of the verb stand as follows: “Where the vertical dimension is not so salient or the entity lacks legs, as with computers, telephones etc., then *stand* is less appropriate. In contrast, sentences in which objects, such as furniture, have legs sound natural with the verb ‘stand’ because, as Newman puts it, “the objects have parts to them which can be construed as ‘legs’ (...)” [10, 8–9].

Base and function

Figures may have some kind of base, i.e. an identifiable, distinct structural part through which they interact with the Ground. This may equally trigger the choice of the verb ‘to stand’, i.e. not only visually distinct legs may be significant in this respect. In Dutch, the use of the verb *staan* ‘to stand’ is therefore much wider than that of the corresponding English verb.

“Dutch goes much further in its coverage, as the object need not have leg-like parts at all and it has, moreover, promoted the use of *staan* to the general rule if the canonical position of resting on a base applies. And it applies to a virtually open-ended set: plates, dishes, containers, ashtrays, printers, staplers, cars, trains, pies, etc.” [6, 120].

This functional base may also prove to be more important than the relative height of the object, as we can see in the Laz language [5]. Similarly, in German, the existence of a base may prove to be a more decisive factor than geometric features (4):

(4) Ger. Die Teller stehen auf dem Tisch. [16, 462]
‘The plates are (lit. stand) on the table.’

In their study of the Dutch posture verbs, Lemmens and Perez provide a definition that combines the two approaches: “... if the located entity has a side on which it rests when it is in its canonical and/or functional position, *staan* is to be used, regardless of the entity’s verticality” [7, 4]. That is, this definition combines the concepts of legs or base, and function.

Canonical vertical

In her description of German postural gestures, Fagan puts the correlation specifically in terms of function, not even mentioning legs, wheels, or a base. “A rigid object with one side or surface that is perceived as the top typically appears with the verbs *stehen* or *stellen* when this side or surface is facing up. When this side or surface is not facing up, *liegen* or *legen* is used” [3, 144].

Some studies use the term “canonical vertical”. This approach does not focus on the base of a

given Figure, but on the corresponding functional orientation. In Gamerschlag's example for German, the object in question does not have a base like a cup or a plate. However, it does have an orientation that allows the object to fulfil its function. "a shoebox is oriented canonically when its lid is on top and can be opened, even though this usually involves a vertical orientation of the shortest axis. This specific use of *stehen* can be addressed by making reference to the so-called 'canonical vertical' (...), i.e., the axis which is vertical when the object exhibits its canonical orientation" [4, 86–87].

Perceptual use

As Serra-Borneto put it in his study of German, in situations where the object whose location is given is directly perceptible, the quasi-copula 'to stand' is typically chosen. "if the objects (here, the houses) are inside the perceptual and deictic scope of the speaker, the scene is concrete and the dimensional character of the location is relevant. In this case *stehen* is required, since it is impossible to superimpose a non-dimensional and non-perceptual image on the scene, as the geographical location associated with *liegen* would require". He also added that in certain situation it is the speaker who decides on which aspect of the given scene he or she wants to put emphasis. If it is the Figure, the speaker will use the quasi-copula 'to stand'. When, in turn, the speaker wants to draw attention to the background the quasi-copula 'to lie' will be chosen [16, 470–471].

Vertical trajectory

According to Serra Borneto, in German, although in sentences such as (5), the Ground, or point of reference, is clearly horizontal, it is preferable to use the verb 'to stand' because, as he puts it "the conceptual projection of the vertical axis is superimposed over the entire scene":

(5) Ger. *Die Sonne steht am Horizont*. [16, 472]

'The sun is on the horizon (lit. stands).'

In the above sentence, the verb 'to lie' is not used because the trajectory of the Sun in the sky is understood to be vertical [16, 472], as in (6):

(6) Ger. *Die Sonne steht am Himmel* [16, 472]

'The sun is (lit.: stands) in the sky'

Since in spatial perception the vertical axis is always perceived earlier and more easily than the horizontal axis, Serra Borneto considers the former to be the more relevant axis for visual perception. In German, *liegen* expresses the default location of all objects without vertical prominence [16, 466–467].

'To stand' or 'to lie'?

In those languages where the verb 'sit' has not developed a quasi-copula, in the description the uses of the verbal elements 'to stand' and 'to lie' should be distinguished. From what we have seen so far, it seems that the orientation in relation to the function as well as the geometry of the Figure always determine the choice of verb. However, it may also be necessary to localise objects for which neither aspect is relevant.

The Figures that have no marked dimension, i.e. neither a prominent height nor a definite horizontal extension, are called symmetrical objects by Serra Borneto. In German, *stehen* 'to stand' is not accepted to indicate the location of e.g. an orange or a dice because they have no prominent dimension. But *liegen* 'to lie' is a good choice for locating symmetrical objects for just the same reason, i.e. for the lack of a prominent height or width [16, 464].

As in the perception of space, the vertical axis is always perceived earlier and more easily than the horizontal axis, Serra Borneto considers the German practice this distinction as the most consistent with visual perception. In German, *liegen* expresses the default location of all objects without vertical prominence [16, 466–467].

Materials and methods

We used three sources to compile the example material that forms our corpus. As a first step, we used "Mazsola" [15] to extract the sentences in which the verb 'to stand' is used.

The software is designed to study the Hungarian verb phrases, and processes the 187 million words of the Hungarian National Corpus. The texts in the database represent five regional versions and five registers, i.e. press, fiction, scientific, official, and personal. The result list for "Mazsola" contained 88,960 sentences, from which we selected those containing inanimate subjects. Another source was the HNC2 (Hungarian National Corpus 2; Hu. *Magyar Nemzeti Szövegtár* 2), which contains more than a billion words [12].

The sentences from HNC2 are followed by numbers serving identification and retraceability. For the subjects for which no locative sentence is found in HNC2, we collected examples using Google's free-word search. This is indicated by the term "Google-search" following the sentences.

Results

The quasi-copula to 'stand' in the Hungarian language

In the following section, the most typical examples of the use of the Hungarian quasi-copula *áll* 'to stand' will be presented. Since our paper only considers this role of the verb, other, e.g. temporal meanings ('to be in an unchanged state for some time') are not examined, cf. (7–9):

(7) *Itt fél óráig áll az összeöntött tej, amelynek mennyisége huszonöt liter.* (Google-search)

'The mixed milk, which amounts to twenty-five liters, stands here for half an hour.'

(8) *Ha jól számoltam, azok a traktorok, az ekék meg a tárcsák legalább húsz évig álltak ott egy helyben, (...)* (Google-search)

'If I counted correctly, those tractors, ploughs, and disc ploughs had been standing there for at least twenty years, (...).'

(9) (...) *még egy héten keresztül álltak a koszos edények a mosogatóban (...)* (Google-search)

'(...) and for a whole week the dirty dishes stood in the sink.'

The importance of geometrical properties and orientation in the use of the Hungarian copula 'áll'

Narrow, tall objects

In many languages, one of the most common uses of the verb 'to stand' is to describe the location of trees – since they are entities in a vertical position that can hold themselves stably in that position (see below for the importance of a structurally distinct part in maintaining this position) (10–12):

(10) *A fa a hegy tetején állt, (...).* (356)

'The tree stood on top of the hill, (...).'

(11) *A fa a kert végében állt, (...).* (517)

'The tree stood at the end of the garden, (...).'

(12) *Ez a fenyőfa az édesanyámék telkén állt, (...).* (2598)

'This pine tree was (lit. stood) on my mother's property, (...).'

Large, stationary objects, such as towers, monuments, lookout towers, crosses, statues, etc., which are vertical, relatively tall and long in relation to their width, are typically used in locative sentences with the verb 'to stand' (13–17):

(13) *A 33 méter magas, téglából épült torony a vár alatti kikötőben áll, (...).* (2290)

'The 33-metre-high brick tower stands in the harbour below the castle, (...).'

(14) *1954-ben emelt emlékműve a torony előtti parkban áll, (...)* (2519)

'His monument, erected in 1954, stands in the park in front of the tower, (...).'

(15) *A kilátó a Kerek-hegy legmagasabb pontján áll.* (1544)

'The lookout is located at the highest point of the Kerek hill.'

(16) *Hangoztatták, hogy a keresztek magánterületen állnak, s az ügyben egyedül az egyház dönthet.* (134)

'It was pointed out that the crosses were on private property, and only the Church could decide on the matter.'

(17) *A szobor egy kereszt talapzatán állt* (2193)

'The statue was (lit. stood) on a pedestal of a cross.'

Large buildings and landmarks

At the same time, it is not only the location of buildings and objects having a prominent vertical axis that can be expressed with the verb 'to stand', but also buildings with different proportions (department store, palace, barracks) (18–20):

(18) (...) *így nagy az esélye, hogy következő áruháza a Dunakanyar kapujában áll majd.* (1060)

'(...) so there is a good chance that its next store will be at the gateway to the Danube Bend.'

(19) *Palazzo Reale – a királyi palota a dómtól délre áll, és közrefogja a Piazzetta giá Reali nevű terecskét.* (Google-search)

'Palazzo Reale, the royal palace, stands south of the Duomo and encompasses the small square called Piazzetta giá Reali.'

(20) *A laktanya épületegyüttese a XI. kerület Sas-hegy elnevezésű városrészében, a Budaörsi út, Brassó út és Töhötöm utca által határolt telken áll, (...).* (Google-search)

'The barracks complex is located on a plot of land bordered by Budaörsi Street, Brassó Street, and Töhötöm Street in the Sas Hill part of District 11, (...).'

Perceptual use

Geotopographic use means that the localisation is not spatial, but is expressed in relation to the plane of a map. Hence it is the quasi-copula meaning 'to lie' that is typically used in such sentences. In Hungarian, too, it is mainly the verb *fekszik* 'to lie' that has such a role [20]. By contrast, if the speaker is in the same place as the building or landmark to be located when the sentence is uttered, and has direct visual experience, the actual topographic location can be expressed with the verb 'to stand'

instead of 'to lie'. The following sentences show that the author was in the same place as the object to be located because they also describe different impressions of the scene (21–22):

- (21) *A sárga homokkő fallal körbevett kolostor egy keskeny, erdős völgyben állt; az ágakon madarak csiripeltek vidáman a késő délutáni napsütésben.* (Google-search)
'The monastery, surrounded by a yellow sandstone wall, was (lit. stood) in a narrow, wooded valley; birds chirped merrily on the branches in the late afternoon sun.'
- (22) *A farm egy folyó mellett állt, és olyan tiszta volt a vize, hogy látni lehetett benne a halakat.* (Google-search)
'The farm was (lit. stood) next to a river, and the water was so clear you could see the fish in it.'

In a description that is not intended to refer to a direct visual experience, we would not necessarily choose the verb 'to stand' to locate a farm or a monastery (23–24).

- (23) *A kolostor a sziget északi partján áll.* (2540)
'The monastery is (lit. stands) on the north coast of the island.'
- (24) *A Ság-hegy akkoriban még a manapság Celldömölk részét képező Alsóság község területén állt, (...)* (1070)
'At that time, the Ság hill was (lit. stood) in the territory of the village Alsóság, now part of Celldömölk.'

Contrastive geotopographic use

The following past tense sentences describe the location of objects that no longer exist but are known only as ruins, archaeological finds or in the form of historical data on settlements. These examples give the geographical location of an object, therefore, by default, the quasi-copula 'to lie' would be a good choice. Yet the verb 'to stand' occurs frequently (25–26):

- (25) *Az eredeti település a Hernád folyó mellett állt.* (Google-search)
'The original settlement was located (lit. stood) near the Hernád River.'
- (26) *Az egyik [település] volt Csenik, amely a mai Csanyik-völgyben állt.* (Google-search)
'One of them [i.e. of the settlements] was Csenik, which was located (lit. stood) in what is now the Csanyik valley.'

The choice of the quasi-copula is adapted to the intended meaning that, in contrast to the present

situation, in the past the settlement in question existed in its physical reality. In a present tense statement, we would use the verb 'to stand' less frequently with a settlement as the subject of the sentence, and more often with the verb 'to lie' (27–28):

- (27) *Szülőfaluja a Duna partján fekszik.*
'His/her home village is located (lit. lies) on the banks of the Danube.'
- (28) *?Szülőfaluja a Duna partján áll.*
'His/her home village is located on the banks of the Danube.'

Small, movable objects

The quasi-copula 'to stand' is also very often used to indicate the location of small objects. The form and vertical orientation of the object may in itself justify the choice of the verb (29):

- (29) *Az esküvői fotó itt áll a nappaliban, a falitükör előtti márványlapon.* (2288)
'The wedding photo is (lit. stands) here in the living room, on the marble slab in front of the wall mirror.'

Leg, base, wheel

If the object to be located has legs or a structural part that can be used equivalent to legs, i.e. base, wheels etc., and they function to maintain a stable standing position, the quasi-copula 'to stand' is often used (30–31):

- (30) *Az eset hétfőn történt, az autó egy bevásárlóközpont parkolójában állt.* (2267)
'The incident happened on Monday, the car was parked (lit. stood) in the parking lot of a shopping center.'
- (31) *A teljesen kiégett autó az országút közelében állt.* (1098)
'The burnt-out car was parked (lit. stood) near the highway.'

Furniture is probably the largest group of objects with legs. The ones in the following examples certainly have legs (dining table, piano). The use of the verb 'to stand' is very frequent, almost obligatory (32–33)

- (32) *Az étkezőasztal finomra metszett tölgyfából készült, a hatalmas, több személyes asztal az ebédlő közepén állt, (...)* (116)
'The dining table was made of finely cut oak, and the large table for several people was (lit. stood) in the middle of the dining room, (...)'
- (33) *A zongora a nappali sarkában áll, (...)* (1394)
'The piano is (lit. stands) in the corner of the living room, (...).'

Other furniture does not necessarily have legs; but the verb ‘to stand’ can be used regardless of this (34):

(34) *A ruhásszekrény az ablak mellett állt, (...).*
(Google-search)

The wardrobe was (lit. stood) next to the window, (...).

In the above example, the wardrobe is presumably a tall piece of furniture, so its prominent verticality may justify the choice of the copula ‘to stand’. However, the furniture in the following sentences do not have a more prominent vertical extent, and yet the same quasi-copula is used with them (35–38):

(35) *Az íróasztal az ablak előtt áll. (172)*

‘The desk is (lit. stands) in front of the window.’

(36) *A valószínűleg Gaudí tervezte pad eddig Barcelonában állt. (2382)*

‘The bench, probably designed by Gaudí, has been standing in Barcelona until now.’

(37) *A dívány egyazon házban, egyazon szobában állt 90 évig, Fall Riverben, Massachussettsben. (Google-search)*

‘The couch stood in the same house, in the same room, for 90 years in Fall River, Massachusetts.’

(38) *A franciaágy a szoba közepén áll. (Google-search)*

‘The double bed is (lit. stands) in the middle of the room.’

According to our corpus, the quasi-copula *áll* is obligatory in Hungarian sentences indicating the location of furniture. It is not possible in the present review to examine whether this is due to the fact that the prototypical furniture has legs, or whether it is triggered by the fixed positioning in relation to functionality.

Base and function

In the literature, the existence of a structurally distinct base, or wheels, legs, etc., and the orientation in terms of function, may appear to be two different principles as criteria for the choice of quasi-copulas. These two aspects are in fact intertwined and are in many cases difficult to separate (39)–(43):

(39) *Az üveg egy kis asztalkán állt, (...)* (501)

‘The bottle was (lit. stood) on a small table.’

(40) (...) *a víz kevesebb és a pohár más helyen áll. (1461)*

‘(...) there is less water in it and the glass is (lit. stands) in a different place.’

(41) *Az összekevert masszát állandóan melegen kell tartani, ezért a lábos vastag vasalátéten áll, (...).* (1183)

‘The mixed mass has to be kept warm at all times, so the pot is placed (lit. stands) on a thick iron base, (...).’

(42) *A hamutartó az asztal közepén állt, (...)*
(Google-search)

‘The ashtray was (lit. stood) in the middle of the table.’

(43) *Cassidy tányérja az éjjeliszekrényen áll, (...).* (Google-search)

‘Cassidy’s plate is (lit. stands) on the nightstand, (...).’

In the case of the bottle and the glass, it may even be possible to argue that the relative heights of the objects justify the choice of verb. However, in the case of the pot and the ashtray, only function can explain why these low or markedly flat objects do not trigger the use of the verb ‘to lie’, but are used with the quasi-copula ‘to stand’.

The required orientation of the objects and the container function – the latter in the broad sense of the word, since the plate and the ashtray are more like storage surfaces – are obviously linked. In other words, the ideal position in which the object can perform its storage function cannot be separated from the existence of the base part of the object that ensures the object’s optimal position in the gravitational space.

Canonical vertical

There are locative sentences containing the quasi-copula ‘to stand’ in which the Figure is neither prominent for its height, nor has a storage function. However, for some other reasons, they require a certain orientation in order to fulfil their role. This group of objects includes, e.g. typewriters, record players, telephones, candles, cakes, and chessboards (44–48):

(44) *A hordozható írógépe az asztalon állt.*
(Google-search)

‘His/her portable typewriter was (lit. stood) on the table.’

(45) *A lemezjátszó az asztalon állt.* (Google-search)

‘The record player was (lit. stood) on the table.’

(46) *A telefon a kredencen állt.* (Google-search)

‘The phone was (lit. stood) on the sideboard.’

(47) *Az a gyertyacsonk, amely a szoba végében az asztalon állt, már alig pislákkolt (...).*
(Google-search)

‘The stump of a candle that was (lit. stood) on the table at the end of the room was barely flickering, (...)’

- (48) *Amire Mara anyukája este megérkezett Maráért, az elkészült születésnap tortám már az asztalon állt.* (Google-search)
‘When Mara’s mom arrived in the evening to pick Mara up, my finished birthday cake was (lit. stood) already on the table.’

Vertical trajectory

The literature also discusses the use of the quasi-copula ‘to stand’ to indicate the position of an object at a certain point on a vertical trajectory.

In Hungarian, except for one or two collocations, e.g. *A nap delelőn áll* ‘the sun stands at its zenith’; *A nap magasán áll* ‘the sun is high’ etc., it is occasionally used to express the position of the sun and the moon (49). They do occur when giving the water level or the position of the thermometer (50). However, these examples are hardly locative sentences, namely, the acceptability of questions such as *Where is the water level?* is questionable. Consequently, they may still be collocations.

- (49) *Dani fölsandított az égbe, a nap pont közepén állt.* (216)

‘Dani looked up at the sky, the sun was (lit. stood) right in the middle.’

- (50) *Amikor a két csövet egymás közelébe vittem anélkül, hogy kiemeltém volna őket az edényből, kiderült, hogy a higany mindkettőben ugyanolyan szinten áll* (...) (2514)

‘When I brought the two tubes close together without removing them from the vessel, I found that the mercury in both was (lit. stood) at the same level (...)’.

‘To stand’ or ‘to lie’?

Finally, the verb element that can be used to locate symmetric objects should be identified. In fact, it is so difficult to find sentences localizing ball and the cube-shaped objects that, exceptionally, we have included some existential sentences among the examples (51–56).

On the basis of the available sentences, it is difficult to define the borderline between the uses of the two quasi-copulas. The neutral copula can certainly be used with the above mentioned forms (51).

- (51) *Az alma az asztalon van* (Google-search)

‘The apple is on the table.’

The following three examples locate round objects. In the first two, the location of the

ball is expressed in the plane of the football pitch, in these ‘to lie’ is used (52–53):

- (52) *A birtokában lévő labda a gólvonalon fekszik ekkor* (...) (Google-search)

‘At the moment, the ball in his possession is (lit. lies) on the goal line.’

- (53) *A labda a mérkőzés végéig ott feküdt a középkörben anélkül,* (...) (Google-search)

‘The ball was lying in the centre circle for the rest of the match without (...)’

When the globular object is placed high, ‘to stand’ is the better choice (54):

- (54) *E régi épületnek némely helyei öt-, hat-, hétméteres kastélyhoz hasonlók, s minden kastélynak kupoláján egy-egy arany gömb áll,* (...) (Google-search)

‘Some places of this old building are like five, six, seven meter high castles, and, on the cupola of each tower there is (lit. stands) a golden globe, (...)’

In the next two sentences, the Grounds do not differ at all; it seems that both quasi-copulas can be used with cubes, which also lack a prominent dimension (55) (56):

- (55) *Két egyforma és három különböző kocka fekszik a dobás után az asztalon.*

‘On the table, there are two identical and three different dice after the roll.’

- (56) *Az asztalon áll egy kocka,* (...)

‘There is (lit. stands) a cube on the table, (...)’

Intertwining criteria

Finally, we think it is important to stress that in most of the sentences containing a quasi-copula, the aspects discussed above do not prevail in isolation, but several of them may play a role in verb choice. This was sometimes observed in the sentences above, but is illustrated separately below. In the case of the belfry in example (57), not only a prominent vertical extension, but also the legs in contact with the base could support verb choice. The shape of the trash bin in the following sentence is usually taller than it is wide, and the function of the object as a container is not in doubt (58). In the next one, the easel is certainly a stable constitution on legs, and its prominent vertical axis and the optimal position to maintain for its operation can be identified (59). In the last example (60), the position of the kurgan is given within a flat area, so it is possible that the two-dimensional Ground also determines which verbal element is appropriate in the sentence:

- (57) *A harangláb a ma is meglévő régi iskola épülete mellett állt.* (141)
'The belfry stood next to the old school building that still exists today.'
- (58) *Ez a kuka nem a ház előtt áll,* (...) (Google-search)
'This trash bin is (lit. stands) not in front of the house.'
- (59) *A vincellérházból lett a műterem, ám a festőállvány legtöbbször a parkban állt.*
'It is the winemaker's house that became the studio, but the easel was (lit. stood) most often in the park.'
- (60) *A kunhalom egyébként félig egy szántóföldön fekszik,* (...) (Google-search)
'The kurgan, incidentally, is situated (lit. lies) half in a cultivated field, (...)'

Discussion and conclusions

In this paper we have discussed the most important features of the use of the Hungarian quasi-copula *áll* 'to stand'. The discussion has proceeded from general properties to more language-specific ones.

It can be seen that the geometric properties of the Figure can be used as a basis for the choice of the verb 'to stand'. However, the existence of the numerous criteria that trigger the use of 'to stand' in itself suggests that the visual or geometric properties of the Figure can rarely be valid in themselves. Among other things, the construction of the object in question, i.e. whether it has a base, legs, wheels etc., which help(s) to maintain the optimal position for the object, may also be equally important.

The optimal position itself shows a natural correlation with the container function. In addition, for many non-container objects, there is a required spatial orientation that is necessary for operation. In other words, the formal properties of the Figure are not necessarily more important than the function or the canonical vertical position when choosing the verbal element for a sentence. Therefore, although it may seem easy to separate the use of quasi-copulas that can be traced back to the two posture verbs in question, function and canonical position can override their visual / geometric properties.

In addition, the quasi-copula 'to stand' has some more specific uses. Both in its perceptual use and in its contrastive geotopographic function, we prefer the verbal element 'to stand' to the much more common and frequent verb 'to lie' with buildings and settlements.

It varies from language to language whether the Figures that do not have a prominent dimension trigger the use of 'to lie' or that of 'to stand'. In the case of Hungarian, this can hardly be judged on the basis of the corpus examples or Google-searches. It is possible that the features of the background also play a role in the choice of the verbal element. Therefore, in the future, we plan to conduct a questionnaire survey on this.

While in the paper, the terms of use are necessarily discussed separately, the choice of the verb 'to stand' can of course be justified by more than one factor, as some of our examples above demonstrate.

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