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A Corpus-Based Approach to Analyzing Czech Perfective Doublets

In Czech there are numerous simplex aspectual pairs of the type *trhatⁱ/trhnout^p* ‘tear’ or *házetⁱ/hodit^p* ‘throw’. The imperfective member of these pairs typically has an iterative meaning, while the perfective member of the pair is a semelfactive verb. Both verbs can be prefixed, resulting in two perfective verbs, e.g. *roztrhnout^{ps}/roztrhat^{pd}* ‘tear apart’ and *vyhodit^{ps}/vházet^{pd}* ‘throw out’. These two perfective verbs are referred to as **perfective doublets** (Hilchey 2014). The first member of a doublet is a **single act verb** (indicated here by ^{ps}). The prefixed forms derived from iterative imperfective simplex verbs are known as **distributive verbs** (indicated here by ^{pd}). Examples (1-2) from the Czech National Corpus illustrate this distinction.

- (1) *Automobil se roztrhl^{ps} na dvě části.*

‘The car was **torn** into two pieces.’

- (2) *Roztrháte^{pd} je na malé kousky a na den namočíte do vody.*

‘You **tear** them (**apart**) into small pieces and soak them in water for a day.’

A single act verb typically indicates a single action on an object, while a distributive verb is used to describe multiple actions. However, single act verbs can also be used in certain contexts involving multiple actions.

- (3) *Zdálo se, že jí zubař bude muset vytrhnout^{ps} zuby, poněvadž se ji viklaly.*

‘It appeared that the dentist will have to **pull out** her teeth, because they were wobbling.’

The precise distinction between single act and distributive verbs requires additional analysis. This paper presents a description of the semantics of single act and distributive verbs based on empirical data from the Czech National Corpus.

Bibliography:

- Hilchey, Christian T. 2014. *Prefixation of simplex pairs in Czech: An analysis of spatial semantics, distributive verbs, and procedural meanings*. PhD diss., University of Chicago.