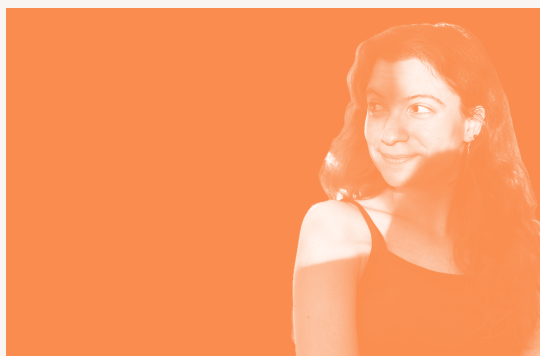


## Morphological Complexity and Predictivity in Hungarian

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Hungarian is traditionally characterized as a textbook example of agglutinative morphology, with systematic vowel harmony and a rich productive case system. This apparent regularity suggests high predictivity: given a stem, speakers should be able to generate all inflected forms through productive rules. However, closer examination reveals systematic exceptions that challenge both the pure agglutination analysis and the assumption of full predictivity, raising fundamental questions about lexical representation and morphological complexity.

This talk explores three interconnected puzzles in Hungarian morphology. First, I examine the case system: Hungarian displays approximately 18-20 nominal cases. Second, I turn to vowel harmony and predictivity. Hungarian suffix allomorphs alternate based on stem vowel backness making the process predictable (*ház-nak* 'house-DAT' vs. *fej-nek* 'head-DAT'). However, predictivity breaks down when it comes to linking vowels, lowering stems and neutral vowels. Third, a single Hungarian noun can generate 80+ surface forms. Full listing of all forms is cognitively implausible, yet deriving everything from a single base form fails because linking vowels and stem alternations are unpredictable. I argue that speakers likely store a minimal base set of 2-3 key forms plus productive rules—a model that balances storage economy with the need to capture idiosyncratic alternations.

This talk demonstrates that morphological complexity cannot be measured solely by paradigm size or morpheme count. Through examining Hungarian, I aim to show how apparently regular morphological systems encode complexity in systematic exceptions.

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