SEMANTIC MOTIVATIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF RANGES OF SYNONYMS INVOLVING LIGHT VERBS: SYNONYMOUS CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE '*FELEDÉSBE* + VERB' TYPE

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Abstract

The meanings of light verb constructions are primarily determined by the meanings of the nouns in them (Dobos 2009). However, the light verbs cannot be regarded as "empty", meaningless elements with only grammatical functions, either (cf. Cetnarowska 2014): they contribute to the meaning of the construction by adding their specific nuances of meaning.

In the present case study, based on data from the Hungarian National Corpus 2 (MNSZ2), I examine light verb constructions following the scheme *feledésbe* + verb, meaning 'be forgotten' (e.g., *feledésbe merül ~ feledésbe homályosodik ~ feledésbe enyészik* 'sink/dim/vanish into oblivion'). First, I briefly review the constructions that make up the range of synonyms and outline the way these light verb constructions (as analytic expressions) and the synonymous verb *elfelejtődik* 'get forgotten' (as a synthetic expression) are related. Then, via the analysis of a single expression, *feledésbe merül* 'fall into oblivion', I strive to find out what semantic factors can affect whether a light verb construction becomes conventionalized and assumes a central position within a given range of synonyms.

Keywords: light verb constructions, polisemy, synonymy, ranges of synonyms, metaphorization

1. Introduction

In the present paper, I interpret 'light verb constructions' as a specific, heterogeneous group of verbal constructions with a metaphorical meaning (cf. Lanstyák 2019; Dobos 2009; Hrenek 2019a); they can be defined as expressions that are interchangeable with a single verb and the nominal elements of which are, from a morphological point of view, clearly linked to the verb that is synonymous[1] with the construction (e.g., the element *virág-ba* 'into bloom' of the construction *virágba borul* 'burst into bloom' is morphologically related to the verb *(ki)-virág-zik* 'effloresce' that is synonymous with the construction). Thus, this interpretation does not determine the construction type based on the generality of the meaning of the verb: in this approach, the extent to which the meaning of the (light) verb in the construction can be regarded as a general or grammatical meaning is not the basis of the definition but rather merely a potential organizational principle. Light verb constructions can be categorized into several groups with respect to the functions, schematization, and grammaticalization of the verbs included, as well as the features of the metaphorization processes (cf. Hrenek 2016, 2019a). Also, they can be assigned to points in a scale that is, at one end, open to verb constructions with very specific meanings and, at the other end, to constructions

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[1] In this paper, I do not examine the phenomenon of synonymy – with its possibilities for interpretation and (probable) graduality, its connection with semantic relations, etc. – in detail and from a theoretical point of view. I think that synonymy can be understood as a similarity across the meanings of diverse linguistic expressions, built upon (interpreted as) common components (cf. e.g. Ladányi 1993), and is closely related to, but cannot be simply identified with, the phenomenon of interchangeability (cf. e.g. Murphy 2003).

including verbs with highly schematic (grammatical) meanings and verbs with complex morpho-logical structures, containing grammatical elements (derivational suffixes).[2] This is presented in Figure 1:

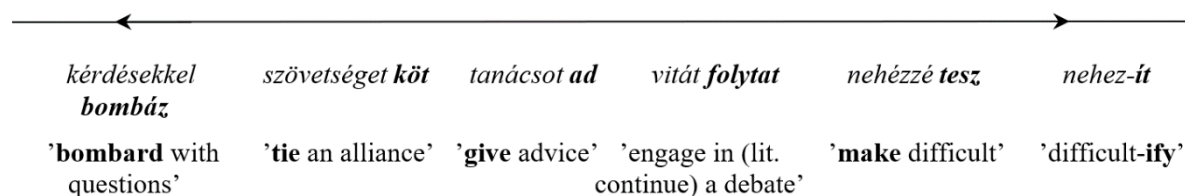| kérdésekkel **bombáz**	szövetséget **köt**	tanácsot **ad**	vitát **folytat**	nehézzé **tesz**	nehez-**ít**
'**bombard** with questions'	'**tie** an alliance'	'**give** advice'	'engage in (lit. continue) a debate'	'**make** difficult'	'difficult-**ify**'

Figure 1. Light verb constructions in the system of verbal constructions with metaphorical meanings

The expressions belonging to the *feledésbe V* 'get forgotten'[3] range of synonyms discussed in the present paper differ from each other, *inter alia*, in the extent to which the meaning of the light verbs included in them are specific or general. Accordingly, the diverse elements of the range of syno-nyms can be assigned to different parts of the scale above (e.g., *feledésbe szitál* 'sift into oblivion' is specific, while *feledésbe kerül* 'get into oblivion' can be categorized as a light verb construction containing a verb with a very general meaning). However, I do not discuss this issue in the present paper as it is not closely linked to the organization of the range of synonyms.

2. The objectives of the research: research questions

In this case study, aiming at a better understanding of the phenomenon and features of synonymy that occurs among light verb constructions, I focus on a single range of synonyms:[4] in particular, I examine instantiations of the verbal constructions following the *feledésbe + verb (feledésbe V)* scheme (e.g. *feledésbe merül ~ kerül ~ megy ~ vész ~ enyészik ~ süllyed* 'fall ~ pass ~ slide ~ fade ~ vanish ~ sink into oblivion') in the corpus, and then I analyse the expression *feledésbe merül* 'fall [literally: sink] into oblivion' in more detail. The research is based on The Hungarian National Corpus 2 (MNSZ2), and addresses two issues covering and including several sub-issues:

1. What is the relation between the meaning of the expressions *feledésbe V* and the meaning of the synonymous verb *elfelejtődik*?

2. What semantic factors motivated *feledésbe merül* to become the most conventional of the synonymous light verb constructions, and to make it the centre of that range of synonyms?

3. Can the meaning system of the verb *merül* 'sink' and the specific meaning components that can be recognized in the light verb meaning of *merül* have any role in this, and if so, what role they can have?

I seek answers to these issues using qualitative methods, relying on the search tool Mazsola developed for the examination of verbal constructions, primarily on the corpus of MNSZ2, and the data of the Hungarian Historical Corpus (MTSZ), but in the semantic analyses (cf. section 4), I take into account data from some Hungarian monolingual dictionaries as well, especially the Dictionary of the

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[2] The scale presented here attempts to illustrate the synchronic connections across the verbal expressions discussed. In the present paper, I do not offer a discussion of the issue of the probable grammaticalization processes of light verb constructions or a diachronic approach to their description (Ittzés 2016; Bowner 2008; Butt–Lahiri 2013).

[3] *Feledésbe* is a word form of the noun *feledés* 'oblivion' with the case ending *-be* 'into'.

[4] It is, of course, not only light verb constructions involving the same nominal elements that the light verb const-ructions at hand can be connected with. However, in outlining the range of light verb synonyms, I take into account only this specific case of synonyms.

Hungarian Language (ÉrtSz.), Concise Dictionary of the Hungarian Language (ÉKsz.[2]) and the Comprehensive Dictionary of Hungarian (Nsz.).

During this research, I rely on the conceptual framework and meaning interpretation of organic language theory (cf. e.g. Zsilka 1975; NyMDK 1–11; for more details see Hrenek 2019a), and the relevant principles and results of cognitive linguistics (cf. e.g. Tolcsvai Nagy ed. 2017). I also use some of the findings of works examining light verb constructions with a variety of approaches (e.g. Dobos 2009; Lanstyák 2019). However, in the present paper – due to its case study nature –, I do not discuss the theoretical aspects of the emerging topics in detail.

3. The expressions included in this study

The *feledésbe V* 'get forgotten' construction is supposedly based on the *feledésbe* + motion verb (especially *feledésbe megy/merül* 'go/fall into oblivion') constructions and its (semantic) constructional meaning may also have been developed in these constructions, and have been abstracted from them. However, after the development of the constructional schema – on the analogy of the expressions *feledésbe megy/merül* (cf. 4.2.) – other motion verbs and additional verbs related to the semantic meaning of the construction as a whole (e.g. *vész* 'vanish' which prioritizes the component of 'loss') could also enter the construction. The new verbs and the new resultant constructions, however, can have an impact on the meaning of the construction in question – so the verbs do not simply integrate into an existing/given frame, but (can) shape, tinge and modify the construction in which they appear. The meaning of the variants – that is, the light verb expressions containing different verbs but involving the same nominal element and based on a similar semantic and structural schema (e.g., *feledésbe merül ~ enyészik ~ oszlik* 'fall/fade/disperse into oblivion') – is also determined by the common, general meaning of 'be forgotten', so the constructions mentioned are organized into a single range of synonyms.

I used MNSZ2 to prepare a list of light verb constructions that belong to the *feledésbe V* 'get forgotten' range of synonyms. From the hit list of a total of 3.115 elements including all the occurrences of the word-form *feledésbe* in the corpus, I selected the expressions in which the construction means 'get forgotten'. I compiled a list of the verbs that occur in these constructions, then (also in the MNSZ2) I picked the *feledésbe + V* constructions with targeted search.

According to data from MNSZ2, the following expressions are included in the *feledésbe V* range of synonyms, listed (in alphabetical order) in Table 1.[5]

Table 1. The occurrences of the *feledésbe V* 'get forgotten' constructions in HNC2

Feledésbe V	Frequency
borul 'be turned'	2
enyészik 'fade'	1
homályosodik 'dim'	1
hull(ik) 'fall'	5
kerül 'get'	16
megy 'go'	227
merül 'sink'	2077
múlik 'pass'	1
oszlik 'disperse'	1
süllyed 'ebb'	10
süpped 'subside'	1

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[5] In this case, 'frequency' means the number of times the linguistic units examined occurs in the corpus. Due to the small number of occurrences, there is no way to calculate relative frequency in this case.

szitál 'sift'	1
tűnik 'disappear'	5
vész/veszik 'perish'	16

I removed both recurrent examples and false hits from the hit list I got for each expression – therefore, the frequency data in Table 1 do not display the results of the automatic analysis of MNSZ2 but rather the actual frequency of the constructions developed with the various verbs in the corpus.

At the same time, it is also clear that six of the fourteen constructions that belong to the range of synonyms examined can be regarded as hapaxes – that is, they can be found only once in the particular corpus –, and only two expressions (*feledésbe merül* and *feledésbe megy*) occur with high frequency. I will discuss the interpretation of synchronic frequency data and the conclusions that can be drawn from them in detail in section 5, examining the organization of the *feledésbe V* range of synonyms. Before this, though – in order to outline the general features of the particular light verb constructions –, I briefly review what semantic and usage-based connections can be found between the construction *feledésbe V* and the synonymous verb *elfelejtődik* from studying the corpus data.

4. The relation between the construction *feledésbe V* and the verb *elfelejtődik*

In Hungarian, it is the middle verb *elfelejt* 'forget' that typically refers to the process of forgetting. It shows the particular process to be linked to a person but basically as an event that is independent of the intentions of the person in question (cf. e.g. Forgács 1998: 305). (Contrary to, for instance, the verb *emlékezik* 'remember' that refers to a deliberate recollection of memories assuming a conscious act.) In contrast, both the medio-passive verb *elfelejtődik* and the light verb construction *feledésbe V* can be regarded as specific. The data described below demonstrate that, compared to the verb *elfelejtődik*, the light verb constructions are not secondary in terms of their frequency of use or semantic complexity.

4.1. The semantic and pragmatic features of *elfelejtődik*

The verb *elfelejtődik* (as a stem) occurs only 567 times[6] in the corpus of MNSZ2 – as opposed to *feledésbe merül*, of which there are 2.077 hits, and the verb *elfelejt* 'forget' that appears 29.838 times. The low frequency of *elfelejtődik* is expected given that (i) this verb as a medio-passive verb (unlike the verb (*el*)*felejt*) construes the process of forgetting in a specific, non-typical aspect, and (ii) it can imply specific utterance attitudes.

Modrián-Horváth (2020) mentions the following features of passive constructions: a shift in perspective, the defocusing of the agent and the fact that these expressions primarily direct the attention of the addressee to some non-agent participant. Of course, we cannot identify an agent in relation to *elfelejtődik* or the process of forgetting as an event. However, the shift in perspective (compared to the use of *elfelejt*) can be noticed in the case of *elfelejtődik* and it can also be observed that the primary character of the construction *elfelejt vki vmit* 'somebody forgets something' – that is, the experiencer of the process of forgetting – is pushed into the background, and instead, the emphasis is on the forgotten token of memory as a patient. In constructions containing the verb *elfelejtődik*, however, the defocusing of the experiencer is often merely apparent and typically has pragmatic reasons. According to the data of MNSZ2, the experiencer – an individual, group or community – that is in many cases not specified in the broader context but can be inferred from the text/context, can be:

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[6] The automatic search provided 692 results, out of which 125 turned out to be repetitions or false hits.

- somebody who used to think, feel, know something that they no longer think, feel or know;
- somebody whose task or responsibility would have been to have an unfinished business dealt with;
- somebody who promised something which was not fulfilled later;
- somebody who should have done something that they did not do;
- somebody (typically a debate participant) who does not consider something or does not accept something that would be important in the speaker's view;
- a person or a group who knew about something / knew somebody but after a while they ignored it/them;
- the broader community (speaking community, public awareness, public opinion, etc.) that operates / could operate the collective memory, but they do not;
- the community that could follow the (e.g. linguistic, behavioural, moral) norms that used to play an important role in the life of the community and could carry on the community-shaping customs and traditions but they do not.

Thus, not only memories in the strict sense, or pieces of information, thoughts or tasks, can be forgotten:[7] likewise, emotions, beliefs, attitudes/approaches to somebody/something, skills (e.g. *elfelejtett biciklizni* '(she) forgot how to ride a bicycle', *elfelejtett spanyolul* '(she) forgot how to speak Spanish'), customs, behaviours, etc.[8]

However, as the verb *elfelejtődik* does not involve an agent but an experiencer, and instead of the person in question, it seemingly prioritizes the forgotten thing, this way of expression can be suitable for the speaker to express indirect and implicit negative attitudes, criticism, calling to account or even reproach that are still relatively easy for the recipient to understand.

In addition, *elfelejtődik* can refer to ignoring somebody or something. In this case, too, the verb can imply that, according to the speaker, it is not deliberate exclusion but merely an accidental process of forgetting. If the instance of forgetting to be expressed is that somebody – for any reason, and either deliberately or accidentally – ignores an aspect, piece of information, argument, etc. which the speaker believes to be significant, for example, during a decision or debate, *elfelejtődik* can, at the same time, suggest (often in a manipulative way or as part of an ironic utterance) that the particular factor might have accidentally escaped the attention of the person mentioned, while the authenticity, availability, relevance and importance of the piece of information in question is interpreted as an unquestionable presupposition.

Nonetheless, given all this, the corpus data suggest that – although as a medio-passive verb, it is considered to be a specific, non-typical way of construal and (not independently from this) its use can have powerful pragmatic motivations as well – the meaning of *elfelejtődik* cannot be regarded as specific compared to the meaning of either *elfelejt* 'forget' or *feledésbe V* 'get forgotten'. Thus, from a semantic point of view, out of the construction variants examined, this verb is closest to the expression *feledésbe kerül* 'pass into oblivion' which contains a verb with an extremely general meaning.

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[7] The verb *elfelejtődik* clearly refers to forgetting some memory of an event or image of memory in only a few examples.
[8] It is worth mentioning here that it is not only the representations of events experienced earlier that can be regarded as memories in a psychological-neurological sense, either. Besides the "I know" type of memories that belong to declarative memory in a narrow sense and refer to memories of knowledge (semantic memory) and the "I remember" type of memories of events (episodic memory), the habits, skills and rules related to procedural (non-declarative) memory and are manifested in automatisms and behaviours can also be interpreted as memories in a broad sense (cf. e.g. Knowlton–Squire 1995).

4.2. The construction *feledésbe V* and the verb *elfelejtődik*

In every case, the verbal elements of the *feledésbe V* type constructions – similarly to the verb *merül* 'sink' (section 1.6.) – tinge the meaning 'get forgotten' that overarches the range of synonyms with some specific component, so they do not only refer to the process itself, but also to its manner and circumstances, and they can also express the speaker's attitude to the particular event. (For example, the verb that appears in the construction *feledésbe enyészik* 'vanish into oblivion' depicts the act of forgetting as decay – the decay/destruction of memories – and loss and by emphasizing the negative consequences, it evaluates the process as obviously negative. On the other hand, the verb *szitál* 'sift' in the expression *feledésbe szitál* 'sift into oblivion' emphasizes the slow and gradual nature of the process, at the same time referring to the tiny parts or details falling out of memory (and into oblivion); cf. Hrenek (2021a).) Presumably, in a significant number of cases, these are precisely the features that motivate the use of light verb constructions.

By contrast, the synonymous verb *elfelejtődik* is semantically non-specific, but specific pragmatic functions are connected to its use, so this way of expression is suitable for referring to the speaker's attitudes implicitly. These (typically negative) attitudes, in almost every case, concern the person who forgets or ignores something, while the light verb constructions rather reveal the speaker's attitude to the process.

However, not only differences but also similarities can be noticed between these two ways of expression since – contrary to the more usual and more widely used *elfelejt* – both construe forgetting as an event that is independent of the will of the person in question, a spontaneous, not a deliberate event. At the same time, the experiencer is – seemingly or actually – pushed into the background and often remains implicit (that is, the experiencer is defocused, cf. Modrián-Horváth 2020), while the patient is prioritized: it is not the person, but the forgotten thing, the memory that is in the centre. (In some cases, this can be done in a way that the particular memory appears in the linguistic expression to be anthropomorphized, e.g. as the actor of a conscious, departing motion, cf. *feledésbe megy* 'pass into oblivion'.)

The common and the different features of the verb and the verbal constructions are summarized in Figure 2.
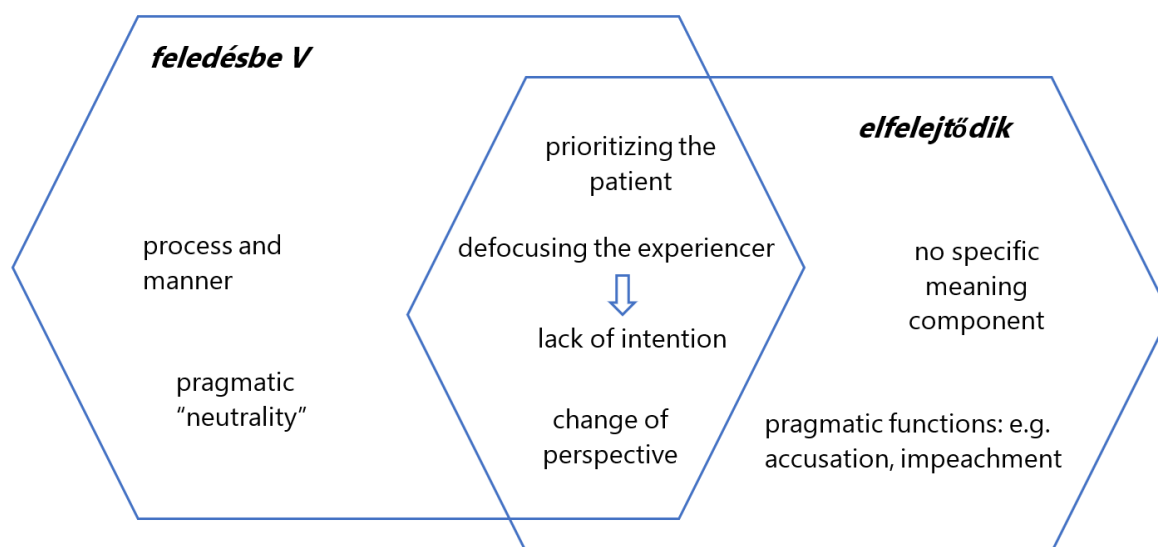

Figure 2. The relationship of *feledésbe V* constructions and the verb *elfelejtődik*

5. The organization of the range of synonyms *feledésbe V*

From a semantic aspect, the most important specificity of light verb constructions (compared to both the verb *elfelejt* and the verb *elfelejtődik*) is that they construe memories as perceptions of object-like phenomena, and it is not their getting out of memory but their falling into oblivion that they put into the forefront of attention. The *feledésbe V* 'get forgotten' expressions primarily emphasize the fact that, although the particular memory does not cease to exist, it becomes inaccessible or difficult to access during the process of forgetting. However, variants of the construction specify the process of getting forgotten in different ways and there can be large differences across the construction variants in terms of frequency.

Based on the data in Table 1, it is obvious that within the range of synonyms, *feledésbe merül* can be regarded as the most frequent and most central construction synchronically, around which the particular light verb construction range of synonyms is arranged and on the analogy of which novel, hapax-type expressions can be developed and interpreted. Its outstanding frequency (within the particular range of synonyms) can, at the same time, possibly refer to the large-scale conventionalization of the construction.[9] However, data from the *Hungarian Historical Corpus* (MTSZ) suggest that in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, this range of synonyms was not organized or determined by this expression – and these historical data (precisely because they reveal change) can be important in understanding what factors may have contributed to some constructions becoming central within a particular range of synonyms. Table 2 reviews, in the chronological order of their first occurrence, what verbs have been used to develop constructions and how frequently they have occurred in the texts from the MTSZ over the past 180 years.[10]

Table 2. The verbal elements of the *feledésbe V* in the MTSZ.

19th century (since 1841)	
tűnik 'disappear'	1
merül 'sink'	1
megy 'pass'	11
jut 'get'	1
süllyed 'ebb'	1
20th century (since 1900)	
merül 'sink'	74
megy 'pass'	29
vész 'vanish'	2
borul 'be turned'	2
kerül 'get'	1
szóródik 'be scattered'	1
süllyed 'ebb'	1

During the interpretation of the data, it is important to bear in mind that in the texts that cover the approximately 180-year time scale mentioned, the *feledésbe V* 'get forgotten' construction occurs only 125 times – this extremely small sample does not make it possible to reconstruct the change

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[9] During the description of the light verb construction range of synonyms, I presume proportionality between the extent to which the constructions are conventionalized and their frequency – at the same time bearing in mind that frequency is only one of the possible indicators of the extent of conventionalization, and that the two phenomena can by no means be identified with each other (cf. e.g. Dogruöz–Gries 2012). I do not discuss the (possible) connections between the phenomena of conventionality and frequency from a theoretical point of view.

[10] I did the search on the entire material of the corpus; I did not narrow it down to a time scale. Searching the word form *feledésbe* 'into oblivion', the first construction meaning 'get forgotten' was from 1841.

processes in a nuanced and reliable way by any means, nor does it enable one to explore how the particular range of synonyms was organized in different eras, what constructions constituted them and how the individual expressions (could) relate to each other. Some possible relationships, however, can be offered as assumptions based on the above-mentioned data.

Firstly, it can be stated that – in accordance with the previously described data of the MNSZ2 – also among the historical data, constructions mostly developed with motion verbs and verbs which, in terms of their primary meaning, designate motion. The only exceptions seem to be *tűnik* and *vész* – however, if we take it into consideration that according to the Historical-etymological Dictionary of the Hungarian Language (TESz.), *tűnik* originally referred to metaphorically understood motion related to thoughts and mental processes (e.g. *vkinek az eszébe, gondolataiba tűnik vmi* 'sg comes into sb's mind/thoughts'), this verb can also be integrated into the group of broadly interpreted motion verbs which do not necessarily refer to change of location in a concrete physical sense. On the other hand, *vész* presumably – in connection with the meaning component 'cease to be perceivable' which is emphasized in the meanings of both verbs – could have primarily entered the construction on the analogy of *tűnik*.

Besides, it is apparent that within the range of synonyms, based on data from the MTSZ, *feledésbe megy* and *feledésbe merül* can be considered to be the most frequent. It is worth, however, taking a closer look at the above-mentioned frequency data in more detail, regarding narrower time frames.

Table 3. The change of the frequency of *feledésbe megy ~ merül* (MTSZ)

	1841−1899	1900-1949	after 1950	Total
feledésbe megy	11	17	12	40
feledésbe merül	1	19	55	75

As can be observed, in the 19th-century texts of the corpus, it is *feledésbe megy* that obviously occurs more frequently (with approximately one order of magnitude than *feledésbe merül*), in the first half of the 20th century the frequency of the two expressions is almost identical (17 vs. 19 occurrences) but in the second half of the 20th century, *feledésbe merül* becomes more widespread. The data regarding occurrences in the last two-thirds of the 20th century in Table 3 are in accordance with the frequency data of MNSZ2.

If we take into account the fact that the *feledésbe V* expressions construe oblivion as an accessible internal place where memories get as a result of the process of forgetting, it becomes clear why the construction with *megy* 'go' (that can be regarded as a prototypical motion verb) in which the motion verb with a relatively general meaning construes the memories in an anthropomorphized way, as independent entities capable of deliberate, departing motion, has a prominent role in the range of synonyms. The question of how and why the construction *feledésbe merül*, containing a verb with a more specific meaning, rather than *feledésbe megy*, became a central expression with the role of organizing the range of synonyms will be examined in the next section where I review the semantic features of the verb *merül* 'sink'.

6. The semantic factors motivating the conventionalization of *feledésbe merül*

In what follows, I make an attempt to review the meaning system of the verb *merül*. During the analysis, I seek to answer (i) what meaning system its light verb meaning is integrated into,[11] and

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[11] I assume that the semantic relationships the components of a meaning are organized around in a particular meaning system, and the other components they interact with, are affected by how the recognizable components in the individual meanings – such as in the light verb meaning of *merül* – can be interpreted. (Note that, within the meaning system of a verb, the individual meaning components are present organized as one single unit. In addition, they constantly affect each other and create specific variants in specific combinations (cf. Hrenek 2019b). For instance, the component of 'intensity' in the meaning system of *vet* 'throw', is closely related to the component of 'vigorousness', while in the meaning system of *csap* 'strike', it is in close connection with the component 'with force', so in the meaning of the two verbs, we cannot actually recognize the same component of 'intensity'; hence, the notion of component itself is a kind of abstraction.)

(ii) how it can contribute to the conventionalization of *feledésbe merül* as a unit, and thus, to the construction at hand assuming a central position within the examined range of synonyms.

The examples in the analysis below are data from MNSZ2, most of which I extracted from the database using the Mazsola search tool. For the analysis, I used the relevant entries of several Hungarian monolingual dictionaries – the Dictionary of the Hungarian Language (ÉrtSz.), the Concise Dictionary of Hungarian (ÉKsz.[2])*,* and the Historical-etymological Dictionary of the Hungarian Language (TESz.) – but during the isolation and interpretation of the individual meanings of the verb examined, I did not proceed on the basis of the definitions in the dictionaries, but primarily on the basis of exact corpus data.[12] In terms of methodology, the analyses – as indicated earlier – are based on the meaning analyses of Zsilka (1978a) and the series Works of the Research group on the dialectics of the motion forms in language 1–11 (NyMDK. 1982–1994).

Before the analysis of the meanings of the verb *merül*, I briefly outline in section 6.1 the approach of János Zsilka's organic language theory regarding the system of verbal meanings.

6.1. Verbal meanings in organic language theory

Organic language theory differentiates three levels of meaning (Zsilka 1975). These are:

- the primary meaning, that is, the most direct meaning of the verb (or word),
- the metaphorical meaning(s), and
- the hypothetical meaning, which can most easily be determined as the abstract meaning generalized from (and reflected in) the metaphorical meanings.

If a word has only one (primary) meaning, the rich extra-linguistic situation which a verbal meaning may refer to can be described in detail but it cannot be identified which pieces of that description can be regarded as the components of the verb's meaning: the components cannot be isolated from each other. In this case, the primary meaning appears as a monolithic unit that can be understood directly without analysis. However, when the use of the word expands via metaphorization and becomes the marker of different (but in some way linkable) processes, the individual components of the primary meaning become recognizable;[13] that is, the structure of meaning is developed and becomes increasingly differentiated as a result of metaphorization.

In some metaphorical meanings of the verb, only one or perhaps a few of the components – recognizable, identifiable and describable in light of the various metaphorical meanings – of the primary meaning occur, so the meanings of some words might seem to be very distant from each other (e.g., 'lustre' and 'be ashamed', both from *ég* 'burn'). In this case, the unity of meaning is provided by the fact that every metaphorical meaning is connected to the primary meaning, although via different components (e.g., the meaning 'lustre' is primarily connected through the component 'emit light', while 'be ashamed' is linked especially through the component '[become] red' to the primary meaning of the verb *ég* 'burn'.)

The connection of metaphorical meanings to primary ones is not external, though: these meanings are not simply built on the primary ones but, at the same time, they also make the primary meaning resolvable and internally articulated by organizing its linguistically relevant components. Therefore, the movement between primary and metaphorical meanings is two-way:

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[12] The material that the analysis is based on – besides supplementary dictionary data taken into account – is a random sample of 500 items from the MNSZ2 and a complete hit list for the search [*merül* + *-ba/-be* 'sink into'] by the Mazsola search tool.

[13] For instance, the meaning components 'harshly' and 'away from oneself' in the primary meaning of the verb *taszít* 'push' become recognizable during metaphorization, in light of the metaphorical meaning of the verb (e.g. *kétség-beesésbe taszít*(met) *vkit* 'push somebody into despair' ⊃ 'harshly'; *vki messzire taszít*(met) *magától vkit* 'push somebody far away [e.g. with one's behaviour]' ⊃ 'away from oneself').

(i) the metaphorical meanings can be derived from the primary ones, and

(ii) the primary meaning becomes analysable through the metaphorical one.

Similarly, a two-way movement can be observed between metaphorical meanings and abstract, general, so-called hypothetical meanings developed from them. The hypothetical meaning is developed from the metaphorical meanings as a result of simultaneous generalization processes; however, once it has developed, the metaphorical meanings can be derived from it deductively and new metaphorical meanings can also be created.[14]

From a different aspect, the hypothetical meaning can be considered to be a different, expanded form of the primary meaning as the components of the primary meaning are present in it in a general and analysed form.[15] It is also important to mention that the connection between the primary and the hypothetical meaning is also two-way – that is, dual motions operate across all three levels of meaning (more exactly: between each pair of the levels).

At the same time, these dual motions determine the methods of the analyses carried out in this theoretical framework; the primary and the metaphorical meanings – just like the various components of the individual meanings – are closely related to each other, they interpret and modify each other during the analysis.

It also follows from this approach that the components are not static building blocks of a meaning and they can by no means be preestablished or preestablishable: the recognized components of the primary meaning can be modified during the analysis (or during the processes of the changes of meaning), they can be tinged and, to some extent, diverge from each other. However, the new components derived from the individual components are not in stark contrast with each other: despite their partial differences, they create a unit ensuring the cohesive nature of the meaning system of the particular verb.

6.2. The meaning system of the verb *merül*

Next, I will discuss the verbal element of the central construction in the *feledésbe V* range of synonyms in more detail. Within the framework of the present paper, it is not possible to take all the meanings of the verb *merül* into account, so the following analyses are limited to the exploration and brief outlining of some meanings that are closely related to its light verb meaning.

6.2.1. The primary meaning of *merül*

According to organic language theory, the primary meaning of *merül* can be determined as the most direct meaning in the synchronic sense. In what follows, though, I apply the term in a partially modified sense: I take 'primary meaning' to be the meaning that can be interpreted as a meaning central to the analysis, that is, the one that contains most of the components that will become relevant in the metaphorical meanings.

According to this approach, the primary meaning of *merül* is shown in, for instance, the following utterance extract (1):

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[14] The hypothetical meanings, "a group of common elements which hold the different meanings the same verb together" (Zsilka 1978b: 450), can be explored as a result of specific linguistic analyses. The denomination *hypothetical* refers to the fact that the hypothetical meaning does not occur linguistically.

[15] The metaphorical meanings of the verb are often built on different verbal contents (cf. e.g. Zsilka 1978a) and from these, an abstract component of the hypothetical meaning is generalized that ranges over the verbal contents of both the primary meaning and the metaphorical meanings. For example, "in the hypothetical meaning of the verb *álmodik* 'dream', a component of the primary meaning 'sleep' and the various mental activities ('daydream', 'think of something', 'long for something') that are integrated into the metaphorical meanings appear in a generalized way, as states (of mind)" (Ladányi 2016: 99).

(1) egy óriási robbanás történt és a tengeralattjáró mint a vízbe dobott kő merült a fenékre[16]
      'a huge explosion occurred and the submarine sank to the seabed as a rock thrown into water'

In this example, the verb directly refers to a process that takes place in the particular, exact, physical sense. If we want to describe the process involved, it is advisable to highlight among the features of the situation that an object (in this case, the submarine injured during the explosion) gradually sinks into the depth of the water by its own weight: the water covers it more and more until the structure completely sinks like a rock. Which of these features becomes linguistically relevant (and in what form, integrated into what context) in the meaning of *merül* can be explored – in accordance with what was said in 6.1. – by relying on its metaphorical meanings.

6.2.2. Some metaphorical meanings of *merül*

The metaphorical meanings that are closest to the primary meaning of the verb are those in which – similarly to example (1) – the verb refers to an object getting into water or water-like substance in a physical sense. The metaphorical meanings that can be classified in this range of meanings, in many cases, preserve certain components of the primary meaning in an unchanged (or almost unchanged) form, so they often cannot be clearly isolated from the primary meaning of the verb.[17] For instance:

(2) Egyre nyugodtabban evezett, a félelem okozta görcs elmúlt, az evezők simán merültek a vízbe,
      a csapások egyenletesekké váltak
      'He/she was paddling more and more calmly, the spasm caused by fear was gone and the
      paddles smoothly sank into the water, the strikes became even'

The example in (2) also directly refers to a particular process that takes place in a physical sense – the process of sinking into water. However, in this specific meaning of the verb, only the components 'get into' and 'cover' are present, while in the primary meaning (as it is pointed out by other metaphorical meanings), the reference to the lack of intention and the complete nature of immersion can also be detected.

Example (3) also refers to getting into something and motion in a physical sense but in this case, the substance in question is not (or not completely) made up of a liquid, so instead of the component of hiding, covering, what becomes crucial is that the steam (filling the available space) completely covers the face of the person:

(3) Az arca könnyű fűszeres gőzökbe merült
      'His/her face was submerged in the spicy steam'

In other cases, the component of 'completeness' can also be connected with 'disappear' which is related to the component 'cover', but interprets it from a different perspective:

(4) Ismered a nagy kertek mélységét, ahogy sötétbe merülnek a fák? Csak a tanár ablaka világít.
      'Do you know the depth of large gardens as the trees sink into the dark? Only the teacher's
      window beacons.'

The verb in example (4) – similarly to the examples mentioned previously – is related to an exact, visually perceivable phenomenon, namely visible changes in the physical environment (how the

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[16] I present the examples without modification, keeping the original spelling in every case.
[17] The isolation of the primary and metaphorical meanings, the question whether the differentiation between the two levels is justified and whether it is really necessary for the exploration of semantic relations, might be explored in further research.
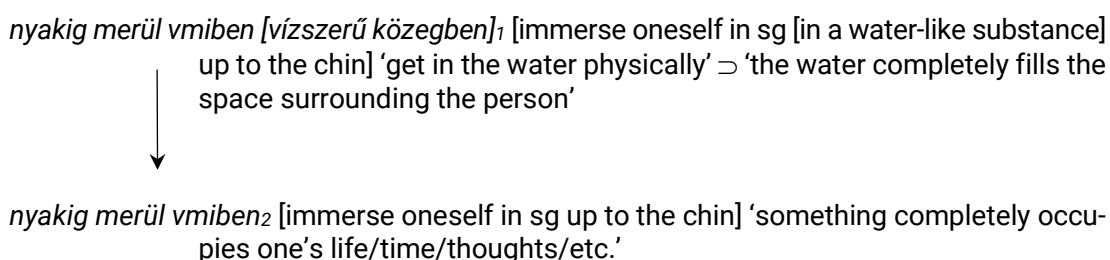
trees blend into the darkness as the landscape gets dark). However, it does not refer to actual movement, but a process of change conceptualized as a process of immersion. It seems as if the darkness that appears as a substance, water-like medium (cf. *depth*) surrounded or absorbed the trees and made them disappear by completely filling the substance in which they are. Therefore, the component of 'completeness' and 'disappearing: becoming invisible' – recalling the image of sinking in water – is prioritized in the meaning of *merül* in this case.

The constructions developed with the verb *merül* can often be related to the idea of sinking in water in other cases as well – especially when, in the metaphorical meaning of the verb, it refers to getting into a state, participating (actively, intensively) in an activity or dealing with a certain activity, thing, mental content, etc. intensively.[18] This relation and association are, on occasion, explicitly indicated by some elements of the utterance. For instance:

(5) Fiatalon *nyakig* merült az országot *elöntő* eszme*áradat*ba.
'When he was young, he immersed *up to the chin* in the *flow* of ideas *flooding* the country.'

(6) kevés idővel ezután a két első ülés utasa már megint *nyakig* merült az intellektuális eszme-csere oly kellemes *pezsgőfürdőjébe*
'shortly thereafter, the passengers of the two front seats were immersed *up to the chin* in the pleasant *bubble bath* of intellectual conversation again'

In these examples, the components 'completeness', 'cover' of the meaning system of *merül* are present in the combination 'completely lose oneself in something', that is, the verb refers to large-scale, deep involvement interpreted as immersion – expressing that the thing, activity, thought (etc.) in question surrounds a person like water, swallowing them up, so to speak. Some additional, similar examples of the meanings of the verb in this meaning system (also from the corpus of MNSZ2) are: *álomba merül* 'fall into a slumber'; *a rajzok, fametszetek csodálatába merültem* 'I lost myself in admiring the drawings and woodcuts'; *Iván komoly szemlélődésbe merült* 'Iván was absorbed in serious contemplation'; *egyre jobban saját depressziós gondolataikba merültek* 'they got more and more absorbed by their depressive thoughts'; *mindhárman hallgatásba merültek* 'all three of them subsided into silence'.

In examples (5) and (6), the expression *nyakig merül vmiben* 'immerse oneself in sg' that has a metaphorical meaning, can be understood as the result of the further metaphorization of a verbal construction referring to locomotion in an exact, physical sense (as a unit), that is, as an allegory or allegorical expression[19] as well:

nyakig merül vmiben [vízszerű közegben]₁ [immerse oneself in sg [in a water-like substance] up to the chin] 'get in the water physically' ⊃ 'the water completely fills the space surrounding the person'

nyakig merül vmiben₂ [immerse oneself in sg up to the chin] 'something completely occupies one's life/time/thoughts/etc.'

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[18] Therefore, it is clear that the component 'intensity' mentioned in footnote 11 fits in the relations that are different from the above-mentioned ones, even within the meaning system of *merül*, and as a result, it cannot completely be identified with the relevant components of the verbs *vet* 'throw' and *csap* 'strike'.

[19] In the framework of organic language theory, the term *allegory* typically refers to metaphorical verbal constructions having unit status. An allegory may result from the metaphorization of a verbal construction having literal meaning. Alternatively, it may also emerge when a construction involving a metaphorically interpreted verb comes to behave as a (tighter) unit, serving as a starting point for further processes of metaphorization (cf. NyMDK. 11).

In other cases, though, in accordance with the component 'disappear' mentioned previously, the aspect of immersion that is prioritized is that whatever gets under water becomes inaccessible – it will be unavailable, impossible to seize not only visually, but for perception and consciousness as well. This inaccessibility can refer to the events of the past (cf. (7), (8)) as well as those of the future (cf. (9)):

(7) Nem akarja, hogy a semmibe merüljön, rögzíteni akarja azt, ami elmúlt – úgy látszik, ez is egyik legfőbb ösztönző ereje a művésznek.
'He does not want what is gone to fade into nothingness, he wants to capture it – it seems that this is one of the artist's main incentives.'

(8) Egy estényi pillanatra feledésbe merülnek a makacs nagyhatalmi érdekek
'The stubborn interests of power are forgotten for an evening-long moment'

(9) A település további sorsa homályba merül.
'The further fate of the settlement fades into obscurity.'

Thus, this is the group of meanings which the expression *feledésbe merül* – along with other phrasal constructions (e.g. *semmibe merül* 'fade into nothingness' or *homályba merül* 'fade into obscurity') – is integrated into. In these cases, *merül* refers to recognition/recognizability and recollection, that is, mental access, made difficult or impossible – also recalling the image of sinking in water; however, it also draws attention to an aspect that the entity that sinks in the water (although it does not cease to exist) completely disappears from the perceiver, it becomes invisible, inaccessible and impossible to manipulate. Accordingly, in this particular meaning of the verb, besides the obviously dominant 'become inaccessible' (in the appropriate context) that can be related to the limits of perception and access, the components 'completeness' and 'graduality' can also be recognized.

However, it is worth noting that in the case of the expressions that are conventionalized as units – such as *feledésbe merül* –, the verb is, in a semantic sense, closely linked to the noun it constitutes a construction with: the meanings of the two elements mutually presuppose and interpret each other. I discuss this question briefly in section 6.3.

6.3. The factors that motivated *feledésbe merül* to become central

In view of the foregoing, the question arises why *feledésbe merül* is in the centre of the range of synonyms examined,[20] and what may explain the fact that in a few decades *merül* became significantly more frequent in the construction than the verb *megy* 'go' which was more typical in the 19th century (cf. Table 3).

Reviewing the list of the verbs that occur in the *feledésbe V* construction (Table 1) and some specific meanings of the verb *merül* (section 6.2), it is clear that *merül* is intermediate between verbs of very specific meaning (e.g. *szitál* 'sift') and ones of very general meaning (e.g. *kerül* 'get'): its meaning is neither too specific, nor too general. This feature of (the meaning of) the verb, allowing for a relatively widespread use of the expression,[21] may have contributed to *feledésbe merül* becoming conventionalized.

It also seems to be an important factor that nominal elements with the suffix *-ba/-be* 'into' are typical and frequent complements of *merül* as a verb expressing downward movement; and this

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[20] The central position of *feledésbe merül* is supported by the frequency data in Tables 1−3.

[21] Although, in this case, we cannot talk about grammaticalization, it is worth referring to the findings of research on grammaticalization according to which grammaticalization processes typically proceed on the basis of linguistic units that denote basic-level categories (e.g. Heine−Claudi−Hünnemeyer 1991: 32−36; Ladányi 1999: 126−127; Dér 2008). Both experience and the linguistic construal of experience are related to basic-level categories and the use of linguistic units denoting such categories is the least limited – that is, these expressions can be applied in a broader range and in a significantly higher number of contexts than more specific or general terms (related to sub- or superordinate categories).

relation – as we could see in the analyses above – is made especially salient by the fact that in the metaphorical meanings the verb often invokes the idea of sinking into water.

The motivation for being conventionalized as a unit – and therefore for taking the central position within the range of synonyms – may be the close, essential semantic relationship between *merül* and *feledés(be)*. The verb also refers to the presumably inherent and crucial components of the process of forgetting marked by the noun – becoming inaccessible by sinking into the depth of consciousness –, while it construes forgetting as a relatively slow, gradual process, as a result of which forgotten memories do not dissolve or cease to exist, they merely become (temporarily or irrevocably) inaccessible, impossible to recall and manipulate.[22] Therefore, *merül* emphasizes the specific and dominant components of the meaning of the noun.

7. Summary

In the present paper, I discussed the light verb constructions following the schema *feledésbe* + verb, meaning 'be forgotten', and constituting a range of synonyms. After comparing synthetic and analytic ways of expression, and a brief demonstration of the organization of the range of synonyms, I presented a case study through the semantic analysis of the verbal element of *feledésbe merül* to determine what semantic factors could contribute to a light verb construction becoming conventional and assuming a central position within this particular range of synonyms.

Based on the results of the research – although the examination of a single range of synonyms does not allow general conclusions to be formulated –, it can be assumed that in the case of light verb constructions, the semantic features of the verb have a crucial role in the development of the organization of the range of synonyms and in which expression becomes central in a particular range of synonyms. It is important that the meaning of the verb should not limit – either due to its generality or due to its specificity – the use (and along with this, the conventionalization) of the construction to a significant extent and its close semantic connection to the nominal element of the construction: it should capture the essential components (or those understood to be essential) of the process and those of the nominal elements referring to it. However, further analyses and the processing of a larger material are needed for the description of these connections.

Although the present paper did not deal with this issue, during the collection of *feledésbe V* constructions it became clear that this range of synonyms overlaps and is closely linked to other ranges of synonyms (*homályba V* 'become faded', *sötét(ség)be V* 'sink into darkness') as well (about the connection between ranges of synonyms cf. Hrenek 2021b). This suggests that it might be worth extending the research on the light verb ranges of synonyms with other possible relations and interactions across ranges of synonyms that are in connection at multiple points, as the exploration of these connections can also contribute to a better understanding of the individual ranges of synonyms and that of the semantic specifications of the light verb constructions belonging to them.

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[22] Similar components are prioritized by *süllyed* 'subside' as well, however, this verb – contrary to *merül* – carries a negative evaluation and implicit value judgement, so its use is more limited. On the other hand, *megy* 'go' is related to getting into oblivion (as an internal place) and demonstrates forgetting as movement in a metaphorical sense, but it does not refer to the features of the process, so it is connected to the complement *feledésbe* and the construction *feledésbe V* less closely than *merül* is.

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