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The Grammaticalization of the Body Part Nouns *fej/fő* ‘head’ and *agy* ‘skull/brain’ in Hungarian¹

1. Introduction

The term grammaticalization was first used by Meillet in 1912 (Hopper 1991: 17, Laitinen and Lehtinen 1997: 6) but the idea goes back to Hermann Paul to 1880 (Itkonen 1998: 38-40). Also many of the cases which are called grammaticalization today, could be found in the works of the early nineteenth century scholars (Traugott and Heine 1991: 2).

Grammaticalization is a form of language change. It is usually recognized as a linguistic process in which lexical items become grammatical or less grammatical forms become more grammatical (Heine et al 1991a: 3, Laitinen and Lehtinen 1997: 6). The following mechanisms are usually thought to be playing a role in the grammaticalization process: reanalysis and analogy (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 32-62), reanalysis and extension (Harris and Campbell 1995: 15-16, 61-119) and metaphorical and metonymical transfer (Heine et al 1991b: 156-160, Traugott and König 1991: 189-218). Itkonen (1998: 11, 15-27) showed that the main mechanism playing a role in grammaticalization is analogy: on the one hand, he pointed out that both reanalysis and extension are based on analogy, and on the other hand, he showed that metaphor and metonym are special cases of analogy.

The grammaticalization process is described as a continuum or as a chain (with overlapping areas) in which there is a shift from one cognitive domain to another (Heine et al 1991b: 163-164, 171-174). The shift is claimed to involve a semantic “bleaching”, depletion” or “weakening” or a “desemantization” (cited in Heine et al 1991b: 155-156).

The process of grammaticalization is usually thought to be gradual

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(Lichtenberk 1991) and unidirectional (Traugott and Heine 1991: 4-6, Hopper and Traugott 1993: 94-129). However, both gradualness and unidirectionality have been questioned by some scholars: for example, gradualness by Givón (1991) and unidirectionality by Campbell (1991), Greenberg (1991) and Itkonen (1998: 35-38).

This article deals with the grammaticalization of two Hungarian body part lexemes *agy* 'brain; (obsolescent:) skull, head' and *fej/fő* 'head'. This process is placed into a larger framework of the grammaticalization of body part nouns in Hungarian. A verbal prefix has developed from *agy* and a postposition from *fej/fő*. The connection between the grammaticalized item *agy* and some idioms involving the corresponding noun is also described. The unidirectionality assumption is questioned in this context. In the light of the usual grammaticalization type of body part nouns in different languages, an etymology revision is suggested in connection with the noun *fej/fő* in Hungarian.

2. Grammaticalization of body part nouns in Hungarian

Body part nouns are commonly subject to grammaticalization, especially for spatial orientation (Heine et al 1991a:34, 123-147, Svorou 1994: 70-79, Heine 1997:18-65). The authors mentioned above describe such processes mainly in African and Oceanic languages. Ojtkangas (1998 and 2000a, b) refers to grammaticalization of body part items in Balto-Finnic, especially in Finnish and Estonian. The same phenomenon also occurs in Hungarian which belongs to the same Uralic language family as Finnish and Estonian.

Body part nouns mentioned in Table 1 serve as sources for adverbs and postpositions which express spatial orientation in Hungarian. Some of them have further been developed into case endings or verbal prefixes.

In Uralic languages, a distinction is usually made between motion and stationary location. The category of motion is further divided into goal and source oriented motion. This tridirectionality is thought to be the "basic Uralic minimum", however, some of the Uralic languages distinguish even five location types (Abondolo 1998: 23-24).

As shown in Table 1, nowadays Hungarian follows the tridirectional model in adverbs, postpositions and case endings. Some adverbs and postpositions have only one or two forms. The tridirectionality also applies to local cases. For

Table 1. The grammaticalization of some body part nouns in Hungarian.

* Old Lative, Locative and Ablative endings.

** In the form (V)l, (V) means a vowel, possibly *ü*.

BODY PART	MOTION (GOAL) (where to)	STATIONARY LOCATION (where)	MOTION (SOURCE) (where from)
bél 'intestine, bowel; gut'	bél+é >> bele N + LAT* > PP, VERBAL PREF. 'into, inwards etc.' >> -BE 'ILLAT case ending'	bél+n >> benn N + LOC* > ADV, PP (benn + t >> bent) (ADV, PP+ LOC* >> ADV, PP) 'inside, within' >> -BEN 'INESS case ending'	bél+é+(V)l** >> belől N + LAT* + ABL* > PP 'out, from' >> -BŐL 'ELAT case ending'
szem 'eye'	szem+be N + ILLAT > PP, VERBAL PREFIX 'opposite, in the face of'	szem+ben N + INESS > PP, VERBAL PREFIX 'opposite to, in front of, over against'	
mell 'chest, breast'	mell + é N + LAT* > ADV, PP, VERBAL PREFIX '(next) to, beside, by, close to'	mell + ett N + LOC* > ADV, PP 'by, beside, by the side of, next to'	mell + ől N + ABL* > ADV, PP 'from beside, from the side of'
hát 'back'	hát + ra N + SUBLAT > ADV > VERBAL PREFIX 'backwards, rearwards; behind'	hát + ul N + ABL > ADV 'at the back, in the rear, behind'	hát + ul (+ ról) N + ABL* (+ ABL) > ADV 'from the back/rear, from behind'

example, Illative, Inessive and Elative case endings are developed from the body part noun *bél* ‘intestine, bowel; gut’ via postpositions (see Table 1). The same postpositions have developed into verbal prefixes as well. Also the body part noun *szem* ‘eye’ has given rise to postpositions and further verbal prefixes. Also *mell* ‘chest, breast’ and *hát* ‘back’ are subject to grammaticalization: *mell* is a source of spatial postpositions and *hát* of adverbs. (For the general development of adverbs and postpositions in Old Hungarian see Mátai 1991a: 401-432, Mátai 1992a: 570-661, Zsilinszky 1991: 442-460 and 1992: 696-715.)

The fact that in Hungarian some adverbs, postpositions, verbal prefixes and case endings have body part nouns as their sources, is not a new discovery in the Hungarian diachronic linguistics. Rather, it was pointed out by the “good old etymologists” already 70-100 years ago, and many of these cases are well described in the etymological dictionaries (among others Klemm 1928, Lakó and Rédei 1967, Rédei 1988). They also describe in detail the process in which nouns turn into grammatical elements, although they do not use the term grammaticalization.

2.1. The grammaticalization of *fej/fő* ‘head’ in Hungarian

Ojutkangas (1998, 2000a, 2000b) shows that body part nouns are sources of adverbs and postpositions involving spatial orientation also in the Balto-Finnic branch of the Uralic languages. She concentrates on the noun ‘hand’ (Ojutkangas 2000b) but she also refers (Ojutkangas 2000a: 69), among others, to the grammaticalization of the noun ‘head’, which is the source of the tridirectional postpositions meaning ‘over, above’: Finnish *päälle* (goal motion) - *päällä* (stationary motion) - *päältä* (source motion); Estonian *peale* - *peal* - *pealt*. In Finnish, for example, the same noun developed into postpositions (with inside locative case endings) which refer to spatial relations or time. Finnish has an additional grammaticalized form of ‘head’, *päin* ‘toward, in the direction of’.

According to the current etymological research, Hungarian does not have similar tridirectional adverbs or postpositions developed from *fej/fő* ‘head’. The

² Both of the forms of ‘head’ are developed from the same reconstructed Uralic stem **päŋe*. The form *fej* is developed from a form with a Possessive suffix.

Etymological Dictionary of the Finno-Ugric Elements in the Hungarian Lexicon (Lakó and Rédei 1967: 194) and the Uralic Etymological Dictionary (Rédei 1988: 378) reject the connection between the postpositions *fölé* (goal) - *fölätt* ~ *felett* (stationary) - *fölül* (source) 'over, above', the adverb *fenn* ~ *fönn* ~ *fent* ~ *fönt* 'above' and verbal prefix *föl* ~ *fél* 'up, above; perfective meaning' on the one hand, and the body part noun *fej/fő* 'head' on the other. The source of the postposition is thought to be another reconstructed Uralic word (**piöe*), meaning 'high(ness), long(ness)' (cf. Finnish *pitkä* 'long', Wogul *palit*, *pält* 'high, long; upper part, side'; see Rédei 1988: 377-378).

The connection between the word group *föl(é)* and the body part noun *fej/fő* 'head' is rejected on phonological ground (Lakó and Rédei 1967: 194). Namely, in Old Hungarian the loss of some final vowels and the vocalization of the consonants usually caused the lengthening of the vowels in the first syllable. This is not the case in the word group *föl(é)* in which the vowel is short in the first syllable. However, the semantic connection that underlies this etymology could be well accepted. Also the usual way of grammaticalization of the body part nouns into spatial adverbs and postpositions, and especially the general tendency of the body part noun 'head' to grammaticalize into spatial postposition or adverb meaning 'up, above' in many different languages (Heine 1997: 38, Svorou 1994: 70-79), suggest that this etymology might be justified.

That the word group *föl(é)* originates from the body part noun *fej/fő* 'head', is not a new idea. Among others Budenz (1884-1894: 295, 391) and Szinnyei (1906:3-4) suggest a connection between *fej/fő* on the one hand, and the word group *föl(é)* on the other. The idea was later rejected by phonological arguments mentioned above.

In addition to body parts, environmental landmarks and relational object parts (sides, tops, fronts etc.) can serve as nominal sources for expressions of spatial orientation (Svorou 1994: 70-122). Hungarian postpositions, shown in Table 2, originate from 'relational object parts'. So does the word group *föl(é)*, if the connection to the body part noun *fej/fő* 'head' is rejected. Namely, the reconstructed Uralic meaning of *föl*, given by Rédei (1988: 377-378), contains the meaning 'upper part', i.e., the meaning of a relational object part.

Table 2. The grammaticalization of some nouns meaning relational object parts in Hungarian.

GOAL	STATIONARY	SOURCE	MEANING	VERBAL PREFIX
mögé	mögött	mögül	'behind'	meg- 'perfective'
elé	előtt	elől	'front of'	el- 'perfective'
alá	alatt	alól	'under, underneath, below, down'	alá- 'under(neat h), below, down'

Thus, both the postpositions *mögé* and *elé* have been further grammaticalized into the very common verbal prefixes *meg-* and *el-*. The usual function of these prefixes is to make the meaning of the verb perfective, for example *enni* 'to eat' - *megenni* 'to eat the whole [food]'; *olvas* 'read' - *elolvas* 'read the whole [book etc.]'. Also *alá-* functions as a verbal prefix with some verbs, for example *aláás* 'undermine, sap', *alábecsül* 'underrate' and so on.³ (For general development of verbal prefixes in Old Hungarian see Mátai 1991b: 433-441 and 1992b: 662-695.)

Although the Hungarian body part noun *fej/fő* 'head' continues to be rejected by etymologists in connection with the development of the word group *föl(é)*, it is subject to grammaticalization. The postposition *fejében* 'in exchange for, in return (for)' contains the noun *fej* 'head' plus the third person possessive suffix and the Inessive case:

fej	+	é	+	ben
head		PxSG3		INESS

³ One could think that these verbs are simple compounds. However, in Hungarian verbal prefixes behave differently from compounds, insofar as they can be separated from the main verbs by auxiliaries and in negation they move behind the main verb. By contrast, the parts of the compound words can not be separated.

According to Benkő (1984: 863-64), this postposition was already used in the 16th century in the same meaning. The postposition had also the meanings ‘in the name of, ‘on behalf of’, ‘as, by way of’, in order to, on purpose to’, and ‘because of’ which all are obsolete today (Benkő *ibid.*). However, they help to find the connection between the body part noun and the postposition with the meaning ‘in exchange for, in return (for)’. The semantical development of the word given in the Historical - Etymological Dictionary of the Hungarian Language (Benkő *ibid.*) is the following:

‘body part’ > ‘person’ > ‘in the name of, on behalf of’ > ‘instead of’ > ‘in exchange for’

on the one hand and,

‘body part’ > ‘person’ > ‘in the name of, on behalf of’ > ‘as, by way of’

on the other. In the first stage, thus, the probably most important part of the body, the head, began to represent the whole body, that is, the whole person (metonym). Soon it became extended also to mean a person who appears ‘in the name of, on behalf of’ the person, that is, grammaticalization (category reanalysis) took place in that stage. Via analogy it was later extended to inanimate objects to mean ‘instead of’ and then with further semantical development ‘in exchange for’, ‘in return for’. The semantical development from ‘in the name of, on behalf of’ to ‘as, by way of’ follows the development from a concrete to an abstract meaning. In the etymological dictionary the obsolete meanings ‘in order to, on purpose to’ and ‘because of’ remain without explanation. They are further semantical developments from a more concrete meaning (‘in the name of’) to more abstract ones, meaning purpose, manner and cause. The grammaticalization of the body part noun fej ‘head’ is the following in abstraction:

BODY PART > PERSON (= metonym)
 PERSON + PX + INESS > POSTPOSITION (=grammaticalization)

In the grammaticalization theory of body parts, there is usually a distinction between two conceptualization models: the anthropomorphic model and the zoomorphic one (Heine 1997: 35-65). The Hungarian postposition *fejében* seems

to be based on anthropomorphic model on the basis of written historical documents (Benkő 1984: 863-64).

3. The grammaticalization of the body part noun *agy* ‘brain’; (obsolete) ‘skull, head’

The grammaticalization process of *fej/fő* ‘head’ into postposition *fejében* is quite simple. More complex is the grammaticalization of the body part noun *agy*, nowadays meaning ‘brain’. The body part noun ‘brain’ is certainly not a common source of grammaticalization. However, this development becomes comprehensible when it is noted that the common meaning of this noun in Old Hungarian was not ‘brain, cerebrum’ but ‘skull, head’ (Benkő 1984:105-107).

The noun *agy* is the source of the verbal prefix *agyon-* ‘to death, a lot, too much, over-’. The prefix has the structure N + CASE:

<i>agy</i>	+	on
N		SUPERESSIVE

The semantical domain of the verbs which can take this prefix is quite extensive. Within this domain the following groups may be noted:

- A) Verbs meaning ‘hit, strike’ - where the meaning of the prefix is ‘to death’:

agyoncsap ‘slay, strike dead’, *agyonsújt* ‘strike dead, electrocute’, *agyonüt* ‘strike dead, slay’, *agyonver* ‘beat to death’ etc.

- B) Some verbs with a negative connotation, meaning ‘ruin, destroy damage etc.’ where the meaning of the prefix is ‘to death’:

agyonnyom ‘crush/squash to death’, *agyontapos* ‘kill by trampling/treading’, *agyonrúg* ‘kick to death’, *agyonszúr* ‘stab to death’, *agyonvág* ‘beat/smash to death, strike to death’, *agyonlő* ‘shoot dead’, *agyonzúz* ‘smash/crush to death’ etc.

- C) Some other verbs with a negative connotation, meaning ‘torment, torture, hunt etc.’ in which the meaning of the prefix is either ‘to death’ or ‘a lot, too much, over-’:

agyongyötör ‘torment a lot, to death’, *agyonkínoz* ‘torture a lot, to death’,

agyonsigáz 'weary/tire a lot, to death'⁴; *agyonhajszol* 'chase to death or exhaustion in hunting, harass, overdrive, override' (> abstr. *agyonhajszolja magát* 'work sy to death, over-fatigue') etc.

- D) Other verbs (less negative or neutral), a reflexive pronoun is required: the meaning is 'too much, over-'. The act might cause some negative physical changes in the person, for example sickness, but not necessarily:

agyondolgozza magát 'overwork oneself', *agyonolvassa magát* 'read too much', *agyonmérgel ődi magát* '(fret and) fume a lot' etc.

- E) With a few verbs the prefix changes the originally positive or neutral meaning into the negative meaning 'too much':

agyonbeszél 'speak unnecessarily a lot about sg' *agyoncsókol* 'kiss too much', *agyondicser* 'praise a lot, praise to the skies, puff' *agyonhallgat* 'keep quiet about something, not to reveal sg', *agyonölel* 'hug a lot, squeeze by hugging' etc.

- F) In connection with food: 'put too much spices, flavouring into the food' *agyonborsoz* 'put too much pepper [into the food]', *agyoncukroz* 'put too much sugar [into the food]', *agyonósó* 'put too much salt [into the food]' etc.

According to Benkő (1984: 105-107), the original meaning of the expression *agyon* was 'on the head' in connection with verbs meaning 'hit, strike'. In the following example (from the year 1575) the context makes it clear that the meaning is 'on the head' and not 'to death'. The example (1), cited by Klemm (1928: 258), is given in the current Hungarian orthography, not as it was originally written:

- (1) Bottal ütötte volt agyon,
stick-INST hit-IMPF.SG3 be-IMPF.SG3 head-SUP.ESS

kibe meg-süket-ült.
which-ILLAT VERBAL PREF-deaf-DENOM. VERBAL SUFF-IMPF.SG3
[He] had hit [him] on the head with a stick, therefore [he] became deaf.'

⁴ The original meaning of the verb *agyonsigáz* is connected to an instrument of torture from Middle Ages: 'torture sy with pulley/winch'.

In this stage the expression had only the meaning of a concrete place on the body, ‘on the head’ (with verbs ‘hit, strike’):

N + CASE = CONCRETE PLACE

Because hitting on head could result in death, in the next stage a semantical extension (via metonymical transfer) took place. The meaning of the expression was extended to include the result of the act, which produced the meaning ‘causing death by hitting on the head’:

CONCRETE PLACE + RESULT OF THE ACT
 ‘on head’ ‘to death’

Causing death by hitting usually demands a strong hit or hitting a lot. In this stage the meaning was extended to include the meaning of the manner of the act (‘strongly, a lot’, i.e., ‘causing death by hitting strongly/a lot on the head’):

CONCRETE PLACE + RESULT OF THE ACT + MANNER OF THE ACT
 ‘on head’ ‘to death’ ‘strongly/a lot/(repeatedly)’

In the next stage the meaning of the concrete place disappeared and only the result and manner of the act remained:

RESULT OF THE ACT + MANNER OF THE ACT
 ‘to death’ ‘strongly/a lot/(repeatedly)’

In example (2) the meaning of *agyon* contains both the result and the manner of the act. It seems that the concrete place (‘head’) is not playing a role anymore (i.e. semantic bleaching). However, it is also possible that the example still contains a concrete place, assuming that *agy* ‘head’ represents the whole body (i.e. metonymical transfer):

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------|---|--|
| (2) | Három
Three | mennyitő kővel
sky-hitting-stone-INSTR | ütetett
hit-DEVERB.CAUS.SUFF-IMPF.SG3 |
|-----|----------------|---|--|

agyon.⁵
 head-SUP.ESS (= 'to death/ ?the whole body')
 [he] was struck by three strokes of lightning

In my opinion, examples similar to those mentioned above provided the possible contexts in which a category reanalysis took place: the N + CASE turned into a grammaticalized adverb form:

(RESULT OF THE ACT + MANNER OF ACT) > ADVERB (reanalysis)
 'to death' 'strongly/a lot'

The adverb with the meaning 'to death' was soon attached not only to verbs meaning 'hit' or 'strike' but also to other verbs which meant 'ruin, destroy, damage' (Bárczi 1963: 282, Benkő 1984: 105-107); thus, a semantical extension took place. In connection with some verbs, the original meaning of *agy* 'head' or 'brain' (which meaning is already found in the 17th century, see Benkő 1984: 106) still remained, for example in the expression *agyonlő* 'shoot dead'; given that besides the heart, the most common target of shooting is the head or the brain. Also in the verbs *agyonrúg* 'kick to death' or *agyonszúr* 'stab to death', the target could be the original one, namely the head.

When the adverb *agyon* with the meaning 'to death' was attached to verbs which had such general meanings as 'ruin', 'destroy' and 'damage', the result was that these verbs acquired the additional sense of *completed action*. This made a category reanalysis possible: the adverb became a verbal prefix whose meaning/function was to make the verb perfective:

ADVERB + PERFECTIVENESS > VERBAL PREFIX (reanalysis)
 'to death' 'final result'

When the grammaticalization process of *agyon* began, the grammaticalization process of some verbal prefixes, for example of *meg-* and *el-*, had already been completed. Both *meg-* and *el-* have a perfective function. Via analogy they may

⁵ The example from the year 1551 cited by Benkő (1984: 105-107) repeated here in current orthography. By old beliefs, stones are thought to be falling down from the sky in connection with lightning.

have contributed to bringing it about that *agyon* too was grammaticalized into a perfective verbal prefix. The prefixes *meg-* and *el-* had also undergone a phonological change: the final vowel *-é* (which was a Lative case in the adverbs *megé/migé/mögé* and *elé*) disappeared because there was a general tendency for word-final vowels to disappear in Old Hungarian (Mátai 1991b: 433-434). By contrast, *agyon* remained unchanged. Some word-final consonants also disappeared in Old Hungarian but not *-n* (Bárczi 1963: 49-51, 127-144).

Further semantical extension took place when *agyon* was attached to verbs meaning some kind of 'torture, torment'. With those verbs the meaning of *agyon* was no longer 'on the head' but 'to death'. In the Middle Ages the punishments with strong physical torture or torment often resulted in death or nearly in death. The expression *agyon-* could easily extend its meaning into 'almost death/a lot', if the tortured person did not die: *agyoncsigáz* 'torture someone a lot (to death) with pulley/winch' *agyongyötör* 'torment a lot, nearly to death, to death', *agyonkínoz* 'torture a lot, nearly to death, to death'. However, as shown earlier, the meaning of *agyon* could from the very beginning contain the meaning 'a lot' (of hitting). The change from 'to death' to 'almost to death/a lot' made it possible to use the verbal prefix with neutral verbs, like 'work' or 'read', in which the exaggerated act could still cause some physical damage (for example, sickness), but not necessarily: *dolgozik* 'work' - *agyon dolgozza magát* 'overwork oneself'.

Also positive verbs like *csókol* 'kiss' or *ölel* 'hug' could acquire negative meanings and could be thought to (almost) cause physical damage when the act is exaggerated: *agyoncsókol* 'kiss a lot/too much so one is almost being suffocated' or *agyonölel* 'hug a lot/too much/almost squeeze by hugging'. Via further semantical extension the prefix was also attached to verbs in which physical damage cannot appear, for example in the verb *agyon dicsér* 'praise a lot, praise to the skies, puff'.

The meanings of 'death' and of 'exaggeratedness of doing something' are connected in many languages, including Hungarian (*halál* = 'death')⁶:

⁶ Some expressions are loan translations in Hungarian.

halálosan fáradt ‘tired to death’, literally ‘deadly tired; *halálosan komoly* ‘dead earnest, too serious, literally ‘deadly earnest, serious; *halálosan un* ‘be sick/tired/weary of, be bored by (sy)’, literally ‘deadly bored by’; *halálra dolgozza magát* ‘work/slave oneself to death’ etc.

The meaning of ‘a lot/too much, exaggeratedly doing sg’ made it possible to extend the use *agyon* also to words which are connected with food, for example, *agyonborsoz* ‘to put too much pepper [into the food]’.

Some other body part nouns have a development similar to *agyon-*. The noun *nyak* ‘neck’ too became a verbal prefix in a construction *nyakon-* ‘on the neck’. It is, however, restricted to a few expressions in which the meaning of the concrete place on the body, ‘on the neck’, has remained unchanged:

nyakonüt ‘strike, clout on the neck’, *nyakonvág* ‘hit on the neck’; *nyakonönt* ‘pour liquid onto sy’s neck’, ‘*nyakoncsip* ‘grab (on) the neck, collar, catch, capture’ etc.

Another body part noun *szem* ‘eye’ also developed into a postposition and further into a verbal prefix. Again, analogy played a main role in this process:

szemben- ‘in the eye’ > ‘in the direction of the eye’ > ‘the opposite side’ > ‘opposite’

The process of grammaticalization of *agy* forms a continuum with overlapping areas (cf. Heine et al 1991b: 163-164, 171-174), as showed above. According to Klemm (1928: 258), the semantical change of *agyon* from the meaning of ‘on the head’ to ‘to death’ began in the second half of the 16th century. In the end of the 17th century it is already a verbal prefix. However, the original meaning of *agyon* (‘on the head/skull/brain’) was also preserved until the first half of the 18th century. Klemm (1928: 258) mentions that the widespread of the verbal prefix in the meaning of ‘a lot, too much, over-’ occurred as late as in the 19th century. However, as it is argued above, the meaning ‘a lot/too much, over-’ may have been attached into the expression *agyon-* already in expressions meaning ‘causing death by (a lot of) hitting’. The widespread of the meaning ‘a lot, too much, over-’ in the 19th century did not completely replaced the meaning ‘to death’. The verb *agyongázol* ‘run over by car, to death’ is an example of attaching the verbal prefix *agyon-*, in the meaning ‘to death’, into a verb developed in the 20. century in

connection with cars:

agyon-	gáz-	-ol ⁷
'head/brain-SUP.ESS' (= 'to death')	gas	denominal verbal suffix
'run over by car, to death'		

The grammaticalization of *agyon* is based on the anthropomorphic conceptualization model, as shown by historical documents of written Hungarian.

4. Unidirectionality

In most cases described in the literature, the grammaticalization process is unidirectional: from lexical to grammatical or from less grammatical to more grammatical. Itkonen (1998: 37) offers the standard 'rational explanation' for the tendency of unidirectionality: forms in languages become worn and reduced. For example, phonological reduction is a well known phenomenon. However, Itkonen himself underlines that counterexamples to unidirectionality can also be found in different languages (Itkonen 1998: 37). Unidirectionality has also been questioned, for example, by Campbell (1991) and Greenberg (1991).

Unidirectionality could also be questioned in connection with the development of the body part noun *agyon* in Hungarian. Klemm (1928: 258) mentions that *agyon-* is sometimes used in dialects in the form *agyonra*. The construction of *agyonra* is the following:

agy	+	on	+	ra
head		SUPERESSIVE		ALLATIVE

Klemm (1928: 258) cites the following example:

- (3) agyon-on-ra sóztad
head-SUP.ESS-ALLAT = 'too much' saltDENOM. VERB. SUFF.IMPF.SG2

⁷ For understanding the meaning of the expression *agyonagázol*, cf. *gázt ad* 'step on the gas', literally 'give gas'. The same verb, *gázol*, is also used with another verbal prefix *el-* in the same meaning as with *agyon-* (*elgázol* 'run over by car, to death').

[az ételt]
the foodACC
You put too much salt [into the food].

In the native dialect of the author, the form *agyonra* is also in common use. There it has only the meaning ‘a lot, too much; exaggeratedly doing something’, as in example (5), but not ‘to death’⁸:

- (5) Agyonra olvasod magad.
head-SUP.ESS-ALLAT = ‘too much’ readSG2 yourself
You read too much (so much you will (almost) become sick).

The New Hungarian dialectological dictionary (Lőrinczy 1979: 169-170) cites several verbs in connection with *agyonra*. The usual meaning of *agyonra* in them is ‘a lot, too much, over-’. It has the two meanings ‘a lot, too much, over’ and ‘to death’ only with one of them, namely with the verb *ver* ‘beat, strike’:

éheztet ‘starve, famish somebody’, *etet* ‘feed, give food’, *főz* ‘cook’, *itat* ‘give to drink, make somebody drink’, *kényeztet* ‘pamper’, *szid* ‘chide’, *ver* ‘beat, strike’.

Using two or three different case endings in the same word or combining two endings to form a new one, is not unknown in Hungarian (cf. Table 1). The old endings lost their function and additional endings were needed to serve the same function. In the examples mentioned above, the form *agyon-* needed an additional case ending to strengthen its function or meaning. If this abverb, *agyonra*, developed from the verbal prefix, it is a counterexample to unidirectionality:

VERBAL PREFIX > ADVERB

However, it is always possible that besides being verbal prefix, *agyon* has continued to be used also as adverb in the dialects concerned. If this is the case, unidirectionality remains in force.

⁸ In this dialect the form *agyon-* is in use to express the meaning ‘to death’ with verbs ‘hit’ or ‘strike’ and so on.

5. Idioms and grammaticalization

Body part nouns are common sources not only in grammaticalization but also in development of idioms. Two semi-idioms⁹ in Hungarian seems to have a close connection with the grammaticalization of body part noun *agy* 'head, skull, brain', namely, *agyba-főbe ver* and *agyba-főbe dicsér*. The meaning of the verbs is literal but the meaning of *agyba-főbe* is the same as the verbal prefix 'agyon-', i.e., 'a lot, too much':

agyba-	-főbe	ver
skull/brain-ILLAT	head-ILLAT	hit
'hit a lot'		

and

agyba-	-főbe	dicsér
skull/brain-ILLAT	head-ILLAT	praise
'praise a lot, praise to the skies, puff'		

The expression *agyba-főbe ver* is used at least from the beginning of the 17th century (Szarvas and Simonyi 1890: 24) when the grammaticalization of *agyon-* was still in process. The expression of *agyba-főbe dicsér* may not be older than the expression *agyon dicsér* which, according to Klemm (1928: 258), developed in the 19th century.

Mikone (2000: 22) claims that the idiom is a necessary intermediate stage in the process of grammaticalization of body part nouns. From the semi-idiom *agyba-főbe*, it is not very clear whether it has had an effect on the development of *agyon-* or vice versa.

The body part noun *agy*, the original meaning of which was 'head/skull', had the meaning 'brain' already in the first half of the 17th century (Benkő 1984: 106). At that time the expression *agyon* had already the meaning 'to death' and possibly also the meaning 'a lot, too much' was attached to it. The expression *agyba-főbe ver* involved two body parts which were in close connection to each other, namely,

⁹ Semi-idioms are a type of idioms in which at least one component has retained its literal meaning (Fernando 1996: 35-36).

'skull/brain' and 'head'. The literal meaning of the expression was 'hit the skull/brain - the head'. The expression possibly developed first to emphasize the seriousness of the injury (head and brain damage). Later, at the time when *agyon* started to mean 'to death', the expression involving the two body parts began to emphasize the 'large amount of hitting' which was needed to cause the serious injury. Today *agyba-főbe ver* specialized to mean 'hit a lot' and *agyonver* 'hit to death'.

The head and the brain are unquestionably very important parts of the human body. It is understandable that when the purpose was to kill somebody by hitting, the target was often the head and the brain. In addition to the verbal prefix *agyon-* and the adverb *agyba-főbe*, there are two verbs in Hungarian which have developed from the same body part noun *agy* and have the meaning 'to hit a lot':

(el-)	agy-	-al
perfective	'head/skull/brain'	denominal verbal suffix
verbal prefix		
'hit a lot'		

and

(el-/meg-)	agya-	bugyá-	-l
perfective	'head/skull/brain'	reduplication	denominal verbal suffix
verbal prefix			
'hit a lot'			

The verb *agyabugyál*, with the reduplication included in it, has the closest structure to *agyba-főbe*. According to Benkő (1984: 106), the verb *megagyabugyál* was in use already in 1669, and it has been suggested that it developed from the verb *agyal*, which is from an earlier time. It seems to be the case that all of the above mentioned expressions (*agyon-*, *agyba-főbe*, *agyal* and *agyabugyál*) are connected to each other and have been influenced by each other. Another possibility is that the different expressions developed separately in different dialects and came to general use later (via written language). However, in order to prove this, a systematical dialectal comparison of texts from the Middle Ages would be required.

There is no mention in etymological dictionaries of the first appearance of the

semi-idiom *agyba-főbe dicsér* ‘praise a lot, praise to the skies, puff’. It may have developed via analogy from the pairs *agyonver - agyba-főbe ver* ‘hit to death, hit a lot’ on the other hand, and the pairs *agyonver* ‘hit to death’ - *agyondicsér* (‘praise a lot, praise to the skies, puff’) on the other:

<u>agyonver</u>	=	<u>agyondicsér</u>
<i>agyba-főbe ver</i>		<i>agyba-főbe dicsér</i>

Contrary to the pair *agyonver - agyba-főbe ver*, the pair *agyondicsér - agyba-főbe dicsér* has no semantical specialization: the meaning of both expressions is ‘praise a lot, praise to the skies, puff’.

In the development of the semi-idiom *agyba-főbe ver* one must remember that there are some other adverbs or semi-idioms with two body parts involved. In them, the two concrete body part nouns have also developed into an adverb with an abstract meaning of quality ‘a lot, again and again, quickly, precipitately’, for example:

hanyatt-homlok ‘quickly’, ‘precipitately’; cf. ‘head over heels’, literally ‘on the back - [and] forehead’
nyakra-főre ‘again and again’, ‘constantly’, ‘precipitately’; cf. ‘head over heels’, literally ‘to the neck - to the head’

The expression *hanyatt-homlok* has been known in its concrete meaning ‘(fall down) on one’s back - on one’s forehead’ from 1493 and in the abstract meaning ‘quickly, precipitately’ from 1639 (Benkő 1970: 50). The other expression, *nyakra-főre*, was in use in its concrete meaning ‘(fall/put/throw down) to the neck - to the head’ around 1550-1630, in the meaning ‘quickly, precipitately (fleeing)’ from 1577-80 and in the meaning ‘again and again, constantly’ from 1799 (Benkő 1970: 1033). The grammaticalization of these body part nouns from a more concrete place on the body into an adverb of quality began in the 16th century, at the same time when the grammaticalization process of the body part nouns *agy* and *fej*.

6. Conclusion

In what precedes, the grammaticalization of two Hungarian body part nouns, *fej/fő* 'head' and *agy* '(obs. head, skull) brain' has been described. The noun *fej/fő* developed into a postposition with the meaning 'in exchange for', 'in return (for sg)', 'by way (of sg)', and *agyon-*, a noun with the meaning 'head' developed into a verbal prefix with the meaning of 'to death', 'a lot', 'too much', 'over-'. Both grammaticalization processes involved category reanalyses (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 32-62, Harris and Campbell 1995: 61-96), metonymic transfer (Heine et al 1991b: 156-160, Traugott and König 1991: 189-218) and (semantical) extension (Harris and Campbell 1995: 97-119) which all exemplify the notion of analogy in one way or another (Itkonen 1998: 11, 15-27).

In connection with the grammaticalization of the body part noun *agy*, it has been shown that grammaticalization is the result of a complex process involving many levels of the language. In addition to the influence of the development of other body part nouns and the influence of the function of other verbal prefixes, some idioms and verbs involving the same body part are connected with the grammaticalization process.

It has also been shown in this paper that grammaticalization theory could also be used as a tool in etymological research. It was the observation that grammaticalization of body part nouns into spatial adverbs and postpositions (and even further) is very common in many languages, including Hungarian, which gave the idea for the etymological revision that has been described here. Namely, the word group *föl(é)* 'above', 'over', 'up' includes postpositions, adverbs and a verbal prefix. Its connection to the body part *fej/fő* 'head' was suggested by etymologists over 100 years ago, but has been rejected by current etymological research on phonological grounds. As suggested in this paper, however, the overall grammaticalization tendency in Hungarian supports the idea of a connection between the word group *föl(é)* and the body part noun *fej/fő* 'head'.

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