

GRAMMATICALIZATION – AN INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH CLOSS TRAUGOTT

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REVEL – What is grammaticalization? What areas of Linguistics are involved in studies on grammaticalization?

E. C. TRAUGOTT – ‘Grammaticalization’ is the development of procedural expressions, among them tense, aspect, modality, case, personal pronouns, complementizers and other connectives. It also refers to the study of such developments. Procedural expressions have abstract meanings that signal linguistic relations, perspectives and deictic orientation. Depending on one’s view of grammar, grammaticalization also includes the development of pragmatic markers such as hedges (e.g. *well*), comment clauses (e.g. *I think*), and tag questions (e.g. *isn’t it?*). In my view any systematic aspect of language structure is part of grammar, so I include pragmatic markers, and consider their development to be typical of the development of procedural expressions.

The dominant model of grammaticalization in the late twentieth century was one of reduction. Its roots are to be found in many nineteenth century writings and notably in Meillet (1958[1912]). Meillet discusses lexical to grammatical change (loss of contentful meaning and of morphological boundaries), and fixing of word order (hence loss of syntactic freedom). In his book, *Thoughts on Grammaticalization* (1995), Lehmann suggested a set of “parameters” and “processes” that have found

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wide acceptance. The processes are “attrition” of semantic features and phonological segments, paradigmization, obligatorification, condensation, coalescence, and fixation. All reduce the linguistic signal or its positional freedom, so grammaticalization came to be associated with loss, whether of lexical substance (e.g. “bleaching”) or of structural complexity (e.g. reduction of complex into simple clauses and morpheme boundary loss). The development from Latin *cantare habeo* ‘sing.INF have.SGPRES’ to e.g. French *chanterai* came to be a prototype example of grammaticalization: a contentful lexical item *habe-* ‘have’ ceased to refer to (abstract) possession, ceased to be used freely before or after the infinitive verb, was fused with the infinitive marker, was morpho-phonologically reduced, and came to be used as a member of the tense paradigm. Another prototype example is the development of *BE going to*. Initially a motion verb used in an imperfective purposive construction, it came to be used as an auxiliary. Here there is loss of both motion and purposive meaning, fixing of the string *BE going to V* with the verb immediately adjacent (*I am going to Beijing to give a course*, with a directional phrase between *BE going* and the purposive, is not an auxiliary use), and eventually phonological fusion as in *be gonna*. The model of grammaticalization as reduction led to hypotheses about unidirectionality of change. Because it was a testable hypothesis unidirectionality was a challenging and particularly interesting concept and got a lot of attention at the turn of the century, especially in Campbell (2001).

The model of grammaticalization as reduction began to be challenged toward the end of the nineties by several researchers, including myself. Bleaching came to be understood as loss of contentful meaning but gain of procedural meaning (e.g. if there was loss of motion meaning with the rise of auxiliary *BE going to*, there was gain of tense meaning, see Sweetser 1988). In a 1995 conference paper I suggested that the rise of pragmatic markers like rephrasing *in fact* as in *I like it, in fact I love it*, is a case of grammaticalization. Pragmatic markers evidence fixing and some coalescence, but their development involves scope expansion (from clause-internal adverb to clause-external marker), which violates Lehmann’s condensation parameter. In 2004 Himmelmann published a ground-breaking paper arguing that grammaticalization involves three types of context expansion: i) host-class expansion (as lexical items are used for procedural purposes, they are used with more and more “hosts”; e.g. as an auxiliary, *BE going to* came to be used with stative verbs such as

like, which are incompatible with motion), ii) syntactic expansion (the new grammatical forms are available in more and more syntactic structures, e.g. *BE going to* came to be used in raising constructions like *There is going to be a storm*), and iii) semantic-pragmatic expansion (first the relative tense 'later time' entailed by the purposive came to be part of the semantics of *BE going to*, and later deictic future based in the speaker's perspective was developed). Expansion began to be seen as a necessary outcome of reduction: if an item is bleached or obligatorified, then it is used in more and more contexts, and also more frequently. A close look at the histories of most changes thought of as grammaticalization shows that reduction and expansion are closely intertwined. In such a model unidirectionality has a less significant role to play than in the reduction model and does not follow from the properties and characteristics of grammaticalization.

In response to your question, what areas of Linguistics are involved in studies on grammaticalization, I would say most areas of historical linguistics. Although originally studied from largely functional perspectives, nowadays it is explored in Minimalist and other generative perspectives (see e.g. Roberts and Roussou 2003, van Gelderen 2004). The core areas of study are semantics, pragmatics, syntax, morphology, and morphophonology. Since change arises out of variation and gives rise to it as well, the study of variation and change is central to many studies. There has long been a tradition of work on grammaticalization and typology (e.g. Heine and Kuteva 2002). As a look at Narrog and Heine's *Oxford Handbook of Grammaticalization* (2011) shows, there is also very active work on sociolinguistics, contact, and areal phenomena, among other topics. Corpus linguistics is a methodology of increasing importance for work in grammaticalization (see e.g. Lindquist and Mair 2004).

I have defined grammaticalization as the study of change. However, many scholars use findings from research on grammaticalization to organize synchronic variation in the procedural domain of language and to suggest possible ways in which change occurred. Data is often conversational rather than written. This has opened up new avenues for research, such as study of possible prosodic correlations with grammaticalization (Wichmann 2011). In work on dialects of English, Tagliamonte (2004) uses multivariate analysis to model constraints and weigh factors in the

variation between Northern British *have to*, *gotta*, and *must* to suggest ways in which community norms may affect paths of grammaticalization over time and how dialect differences may arise (Southern British English usage of the modals is considerably different). Another relatively new area of research draws on synchronic evidence for processing to hypothesize how and why grammaticalization takes place. Here there are ties with psychology (see Fischer 2007, who draws on psychology (Tomasello 2003) and neurolinguistics (Pulvermüller 2002)).

ReVEL – According to the biosketch on your website, your ‘current research focuses on ways to bring the theories of construction grammar, grammaticalization and lexicalization together in a unified theory of constructional change.’ Can you tell us more about this project?

E. C. TRAU GOTT – Graeme Trousdale and I recently published a book on the subject entitled *Constructionalization and Constructional Changes* (2013). There are several models of construction grammar. In all the basic unit of grammar is the construction or form-meaning pair (also known as ‘signs’). Constructions may be procedural (‘grammatical’) or contentful (‘lexical’); many have elements of both. The model we adopt is usage-based and generally consistent with Croft (2001) and Goldberg (2006).

Briefly, constructionalization is the development of form_{new}-meaning_{new} pairs. The study of constructionalization embraces both grammaticalization and lexicalization but goes beyond them in two important ways. One is that both meaning and form have to be considered equally. By contrast, grammaticalization has often been thought of primarily in terms of meaning and conceptual structure (e.g. the work of Bernd Heine) or of form (e.g. the work of Christian Lehmann). By contrast, lexicalization has largely been seen in terms of change in form only, especially coalescence (e.g. Lipka 2002, Brinton and Traugott 2005). Since the architecture of construction grammar does not posit different modules of grammar, and the basic unit of grammar is the construction, no specific interfaces (e.g. between syntax and semantics or between information structure and prosody) are needed. Rather, a construction consists of a set of features that include semantics, pragmatics,

discourse function on the meaning side and syntax, morphology, and phonology on the form side (see Croft 2001). Any one of these may change (we call this ‘constructional change’); only when an entrenched new form-meaning pairing appears do we consider this to be a constructionalization.

The second way in which constructionalization embraces and goes beyond grammaticalization and lexicalization is that changes are thought of in terms not only of specific elements but also of the abstract schemas to which they are recruited or for which they serve as seeds. To avoid possible confusion, I should mention that we think of schemas as highly abstract form-meaning pairings with slots and links to wider networks. Some schemas consist entirely of slots. Probably the most extensively discussed of these is the ditransitive SUBJ V OB₁ OB₂ as in *I gave her the book*. This view of schemas as form-meaning pairings contrasts with that of cognitive grammar in which schemas are conceptualized as abstract cognitive and primarily semantic frames (see e.g. Lakoff 1987 and Langacker 1987). Heine, Claudi, and Hünemeyer (1991) discuss schemas in grammaticalization from this cognitive grammar perspective.

From a constructionalization perspective, the history of *BE going to*, has to be seen not only in terms of changes to the string *BE going to*, but also in terms of the auxiliary system. While it is of course possible to use this double perspective in work on grammaticalization, and indeed this approach is increasingly coming to be the norm, it has also been common to analyze one specific item without particular attention to other members of the sets from and to which it is recruited. In work on constructionalization, the ability to see how schemas and micro-constructions are created or grow and decline, as well as the ability to track the development of patterns at both substantive and schematic levels, allows the researcher to see how each micro-construction has its own history within the constraints of larger patterns (most immediately schemas, but also related network nodes). It also provides a principled way to think about analogical change as well as reanalysis.

Our model of constructionalization focuses on changes in compositionality, schematicity, and productivity, and on the intertwining of reduction and expansion at the level not only of specific items but of schemas as well. It posits a gradient between

procedural and contentful constructions, and confirms earlier hypotheses (e.g. Brinton and Traugott 2005) that shifts toward both procedural and contentful outputs are similar in many respects. While lexicalization has been thought of as reduction, Trousdale and I show that when one thinks about the development of contentful constructions, such as the rise of word formation patterns like *X-dom* (e.g. *kingdom*, *boredom*) or idiomatic patterns such as the “snowclone” pattern *X is the new Y* (e.g. *Orange is the new black*), there is expansion. New schemas are developed that sanction new formations. There may also be reduction: schemas may cease to be used and obsolesce, and specific constructions may undergo coalescence and fusion. An example of growth and obsolescence is the development in Old English of a word formation schema *X-ræden* ‘X-status’; by later Middle English it had been replaced largely by *X-dom* (originally also X-‘status’). Only two members of the schema remain in contemporary use, *hatred* and *kindred*, both with phonological reduction.

As I see it, the “value-added” of a constructionalization approach is not only the sign model, but also the way it brings together many threads in the grammaticalization and lexicalization literature, some of them unresolved, and firmly embeds them in a view of a language as a system that is both communicative and cognitive.

ReVEL – It is vastly assumed among linguists that language change happens due to acquisition – or to put it in your own words, ‘that language change occurs primarily as a result of acquisition is uncontroversial’ (2011)². The story doesn’t end here, though. Could you explain to us your views on language change and its relation to the acquisition process?

E. C. TRAUGOTT – Despite the fact that we talk about ‘language change’, language does not change of its own accord. In my view, it changes only because speakers and hearers use it. Every individual has to learn a language before they can use it. Input is full of variation, and both production (by speakers) and perception (by hearers) are affected by context. Therefore, production and perception often do not match one to

² “Pragmatics and language change”, in Keith Allan and Kasia Jaszczolt, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Pragmatics*, 549-565. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

one, and it is unlikely that one language-user will acquire exactly the same system as another. In my view, acquisition occurs throughout life, and young adults (teenagers, in contemporary terms), not small children, are the prime drivers of change because they are particularly interested in identity-formation and demonstrating difference. This view of change assumes that usage changes through active negotiation of meaning by interlocutors (Bybee 2010), and that although there are probably some general cognitive capacities, language is for the most part learned over a life-time of use in communication (see Goldberg 2006). This contrasts with the generative view that language is acquired by largely passive children whose experience with linguistic input triggers the setting of universally available parameters, and that change occurs when the input is insufficiently robust to trigger the same parameter-setting as that of their parents or other older language-users (e.g. Lightfoot 1999).

A problem for all work on language change is how to reconcile individual innovation with shared change (Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog 1968). If I innovate some linguistic structure, even if I repeat it throughout my lifetime, that is not a change, because it has not been transmitted to another person. For change to be identified, I think there must be evidence of “conventionalization”—others must use the structure in a similar way, and it must be sufficiently entrenched for them to repeat it. Given that historical texts until the nineteenth century are written and their survival is largely a matter of historical chance, the very minimum the researcher needs to look for is a couple of examples of evidence of transmission from one writer to another; however, in practice one would like to find a half dozen or so examples in a half dozen or so texts before hypothesizing that a change has taken place.

ReVEL – There are many studies on grammaticalization processes in English and other Germanic languages (such as your own *Approaches to Grammaticalization* (with Bernd Heine, 1991), *Grammaticalization* (with Paul Hopper, 1993), *Gradience, Gradualness and Grammaticalization* (with Graeme Trousdale, 2010), etc.). What about studies on grammaticalization involving Indo-European languages, such as Portuguese? Are the Indo-European languages in the agenda of the studies on grammaticalization?

E. C. TRAUOGOTT – Yes, Indo-European languages are definitely in the agenda! There has been extensive work on grammaticalization in languages world-wide, including many Indo-European languages, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Some of this is represented in the books you cite in your question. Indeed, most work on morphosyntactic change, whether called ‘grammaticalization’ or not, has paid attention to the development of procedural markers. The *Oxford Handbook of Grammaticalization*, edited by Narrog and Heine (2011), contains a detailed article on grammaticalization in Brazilian Portuguese by Martelotta and Cezario, with examples from the rise of some pronouns (e.g. *você* and *a gente*), auxiliaries (e.g. *ir* ‘go’ future), and connectives (e.g. *apenas* ‘hardly’ from Latin *a penas* ‘with suffering’ via an emphatic value translatable as ‘only’).

REVEL – **Could you please suggest some essential readings on grammaticalization for our readers?**

E. C. TRAUOGOTT – I will restrict my response to works on grammaticalization as change. I will mention three books first. Lehmann’s *Thoughts on Grammaticalization* (1995) is a key work on grammaticalization as reduction. Heine, Claudi, and Hünne Meyer (1991) is essential for cognitive approaches to grammaticalization, with focus on conceptual metaphors. And, if I may say so, the second edition of *Grammaticalization* by Hopper and myself (2003) presents a broad view of work on grammaticalization in the early part of this century. If articles are preferred, I suggest four. Lehmann (1985) is a short preview of his 1995 book and is an excellent introduction to his perspective on grammaticalization. Himmelmann’s (2004) paper on grammaticalization and lexicalization is foundational for work on grammaticalization as expansion. Bybee (2011) provides an excellent overview of usage-based theories of change and shows how reduction arises from frequent repetition. Traugott (2010) provides an overview of work by the end of the first decade of this century.

Anyone who wants to get a broad view of the kinds of work that grammaticalization encompasses, should consult Narrog and Heine (2011)—at over 900 pages it is too much to read, but is essential browsing!

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