

# Semantic Change in Grammaticalization\*

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, diachronic semantics as a discipline has undergone a revolution. Firstly, because the very concept of meaning has been broadened: whereas traditionally diachronic semantics focused on the study of lexicon, it is now agreed that not only the lexicon is a bearer of meaning, but also morphemes, phraseological units or grammatical constructions contain a semantic load. Consequently, this expansion of the field of study has been accompanied by a re-evaluation of the discipline: diachronic semantics has gone from being on the periphery of the study of linguistic change to being considered a core subject. The importance that semantic change has acquired in the study of grammaticalization is paradigmatic of all this: Semantics and Pragmatics have become fundamental disciplines for explaining the origin of grammatical change and the context in which it occurs.

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At first, studies on grammaticalization (see, for example, Lehmann 1995) focused on the description of the criteria defining the change and the semantic, morphosyntactic and phonological patterns involved. In these early studies, the role given to semantic change was minor, and it was mainly observed that grammaticalization entailed a loss of meaning (semantic bleaching) between the source units and the grammaticalized units.

In a second stage, studies such as those by Traugott (1989, 2010, among others), Traugott & König (1991), Hopper & Traugott (1993) or Traugott & Dasher (2002) placed semantics and pragmatics at the center of interest. Along with the semantic bleaching associated with grammaticalization processes, it was pointed out how grammaticalization also entails the encoding of pragmatic values in the new grammaticalized units that the source units did not possess.

Moreover, cognitivist and, more generally, usage-based approaches have offered new answers to a fundamental question about the process of grammaticalization: Why does change occur? Along with the well-known formal reasons (such as the power of analogy), in recent decades the importance of the discursive context in the initiation of these phenomena of change has been emphasized. To this end, the pragmatic analysis of concrete communicative contexts and the application of concepts such as bridging context and invited inference, which E. C. Traugott integrates in the Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change (IITSC), are fundamental. Grammaticalization, according to this theoretical framework, originates when the encoded meaning is enriched with pragmatic values that arise from concrete communicative contexts as a result of invited inferences. The conventionalization of these new values, with the formal changes that this entails, opens the way to grammaticalization.

Within this context, this special issue explores the place of semantic change in grammaticalization and studies cases of grammatical change with a focus on semantic change. In this sense, a selection of studies is offered that combine works with a greater theoretical weight, which *a*) analyze the development of the concept of grammaticalization and the place attributed to semantic change, *b*) deal with the correlation between semantic change and other aspects of linguistic change (syntax, morphology, phonology) and *c*) analyze the intersection between grammaticalization and other patterns in linguistic change (phraseologization, constructionalization). These works of a theoretical nature are combined with case studies, mainly, but not only, focused on Romance languages (and specifically on Spanish and Catalan). These empirical studies are based, in all cases, on historical data from linguistic corpora or on interlinguistic comparison.

## 2. Overview of the contributions

This special issue opens with an article by Professor Concepción Company Company entitled “Grammaticalization and Diachronic Structural Pattern”. This study combines a theoretical and empirical approach to the concept of grammaticalization. The first part, theoretical, offers a historical overview of the development of the concept of grammaticalization, culminating in an enumeration of the advances made

in the analysis of linguistic fact and the formulation of the research questions on grammaticalization that remain to be answered. This introduction serves to develop, in the second part of the article, one of the pending aspects previously raised: the relationship between structural diachronic pattern and grammaticalization. This is done by means of a case study, that of the evidential marker *dizque*, which describes in diachrony the change predicative > discourse marker > adjective. The author justifies the weight of the diachronic pattern in this evolution by defining intraparadigmatic and interparadigmatic patterns which may have influenced the process of change observed.

The article “Drawing Parallels Between Language Change Processes: Grammaticalization, Constructionalization and Phraseologization”, by Elena Sánchez-López, provides a comprehensive overview of studies on grammaticalization, constructionalization and phraseologization. The author reviews these three theoretical frameworks and analyzes the minimum unit considered and the mechanisms and stages established in the process of change. In addition, the three approaches are illustrated with case studies focusing on the Catalan language. Finally, the article offers a synthesis of the points of convergence between the concepts of grammaticalization, constructionalization and phraseologization, integrating the three theoretical frameworks discussed.

The grammaticalization of verbal periphrases is the subject of the article “(In) Transitivity, Semantic Change, and Reanalysis: The Diachrony of the Spanish Verb *Volver*” by Axelle Vatrican. This case study describes the grammaticalization of the verb *volver* between the 13th and 21st centuries, a process by which the periphrasis *volver a + infinitive* arises. In the explanation of this change, which among other consequences involves the intransitivization of the verb, the author highlights the importance of semantics as a key to explaining the changes observed at the syntactic level. In addition, the causes that explain why this new periphrasis came to displace the construction synonymous with *tornar* are pointed out.

Mar Garachana, in the article “*¿Cabe decir algo más?* An Inquiry into the Historical Development of a Modal and Discursive Verbal Periphrasis in Spanish”, also deals with the process of grammaticalization of verbal periphrases. In the article, she studies the origin of the verbal periphrasis “*cabrer + infinitive*” in contemporary Spanish, which expresses modal (dynamic and deontic) and procedural (attenuation) values. The author reconstructs, employing corpus documentation, the evolution of the construction since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the verb *cabrer* began to be combined with the infinitive. The study allows her to analyze the interaction between semantics and syntax in the process of grammaticalization, as she observes that the formal properties of the construction played a decisive role in the semantic evolution of the periphrasis.

Diana Gómez Vázquez and Jaume Mateu, in the article “A First-Phase Syntax Approach to Grammaticalization: Evidence from the Spanish Pseudo-Copula *Quedarse*”, contribute more data to the debate on the interaction between semantics and syntax in the processes of grammaticalization. In this case, they study the diachronic evolution by which the verb *quedarse* ‘to remain / stay’ became a pseudo-copula (*quedarse*+adj). The study starts from a description of the construction in

present-day Spanish and applies Ramchand's (2008) theory of "First Phase Syntax" in interpreting the phenomenon. The article highlights how the loss of semantic information that is not syntactically encoded in context can trigger changes in the meaning of the verbal argument structure.

A third block of articles analyzes the process of grammaticalization that makes the emergence of discourse markers possible. This is the case of the contribution by José Luis Cifuentes Honrubia with the article "*Bien mirado*: Absolute Clause and Discourse Marker", which studies the discourse marker *bien mirado* in Spanish. In the first part, the construction is described in contemporary Spanish: the syntactic and semantic criteria that differentiate the discourse marker from other functions that can be assumed by *bien mirado* are established, and the discourse value of this marker is defined. The second part focuses on the emergence and evolution of the construction since the first documented testimonies in the 15<sup>th</sup> century using corpus documentation. This process of grammaticalization is defined by the semantic subjectivization of the construct, the result of contextual inferences.

The emergence of a discursive marker is also the subject of the article "The Catalan Epistemic Modal Marker *Pot molt ben ser*: from Emphatic Possibility to High Probability" by Mar Massanell i Messalles. The author studies the rise of the epistemic marker *pot molt ben ser* in contemporary Catalan. The origin of the construction is to be found in the construct formed by the modal periphrasis "*poder* + infinitive" with the existential verb *ésser* 'be' as the main verb, intensified by the interpolated adverbial phrase *molt ben* 'very well'. The article analyzes the origin of the discourse marker from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards on the basis of corpus data. Once again, the importance of pragmatic analysis of the examples studied is stressed as a means of explaining the process of grammaticalization. A central role in the explanation is given to the inferences provided by the context and the bridging contexts that make them possible.

Professor Hans-Ingo Radatz is the author of the article "The Romance Subjunctive Schema. Grammaticalisations and Constructionalisation in a Comparative CxG Analysis of Spanish, Catalan, French, and Italian". In this article, he uses the principles of Construction Grammar (CxG) to offer a renewed and comprehensive look at the constructions of the subjunctive in Romance languages. The study is based on an exhaustive review of the bibliography published on the subject and on cross-linguistic comparison; in particular, it considers the cases of Spanish, Catalan, French and Italian. On this basis, the author develops a representation of the cognitive network of the various constructions of the subjunctive on which to formulate hypotheses about the evolution they have undergone. In the explanation, he applies Traugott & Trousdale's (2013) concept of constructionalization.

Jordi Ginebra, in the article "Light Verbs and Grammaticalization. Evidence From the Catalan Light Verb *Agafar*", analyzes the limits of the concept of grammaticalization. This article contributes to the debate on whether *light verbs* are grammatical units or lexical items that have undergone desemanticization. The author argues in favor of the first option and considers that the concept of grammaticalization is useful for studying the emergence of this class of verbs. To sup-

port his proposal, Ginebra analyzes the process by which the Catalan verb *agafar* became a light verb in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This special volume closes with the article by Daria Seres, “The Grammaticalization of Numeral ‘One’ in Slavic: From Quantification to (Non-) Referentiality”. This study analyzes the process of grammaticalization of the numeral ‘one’ to the indefinite article in Slavic languages. It is based on the analysis of contemporary corpus data from six Slavic languages: Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, Serbian, Macedonian and Bulgarian. Through interlinguistic comparison, the author points out the hypothetical process of evolution that the numeral may have followed in diachrony. Furthermore, she situates the evolution of the numeral ‘one’ in each Slavic language studied in the corresponding stage of grammaticalization, concluding that Bulgarian and Macedonian are the languages with the most advanced stage.

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