Interacting Factors in Grammaticalization: Source, Usage in Context, Paradigm

In grammaticalization theory researchers try to determine which factors are responsible for lexical expressions to become grammatical and for grammatical expressions to acquire more grammatical functions. Of the linguistic factors many have been discussed, most approaches however tend to be restrictive in that they only allow one factor to be the driving factor: the source determination approach only recognises the lexical source of expressions to be responsible for the emergence and development of grammatical meaning in the grammaticalizing item through processes such as metonymy and generalization of meaning (Bybee et al. 1994; Himmelmann 2005; Sweetser 1988). More pragmatic approaches hold that meaning changes in grammaticalizing items arise from usage in specific contexts or deployment for different discourse strategies (Diewald 2002; Traugott 1988; Waltereit 2012). A third, more structuralist, approach emphasises the importance of the reciprocal influence of a grammaticalizing item and the paradigm it enters in terms of niche competition (Diewald 2020). While the source determination and usage-in-context approaches are somewhat compatible as they usually apply to different stages of grammaticalization , paradigm-focussing approaches are often seen as incompatible with the other mentioned factors (Bybee 1988; Nørgård-Sørensen et al. 2011: 109ff.).

In my talk, I will make a case for not demoting any of these factors to mere epiphenomena and instead show how each of them is integral to account for various attested phenomena in grammaticalization theory such as layering, renewal, paradigmatisation and persistence.

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