

## Auxiliaries coming and going: Metaphor, lexical semantics and the grammaticalization of motion verbs

Matthew L. Juge  
Texas State University

Motion verbs, especially those glossed ‘come’ and ‘go’, are often grammaticalized into tense and aspect markers, but the details remain incompletely understood, especially as regards to metaphor. This paper expands my (2007) emphasis on lexical semantics in the grammaticalization of motion verbs and his critique of metaphor as a possible factor in this process. I employ Cruse’s (1986) approach to lexical meaning based on sense-spectra, i.e., the collections of meanings displayed by given lexical items, which facilitates detailed investigation of divergent polysemy patterns displayed by gram sources across different languages without undue reliance on patterns found in more familiar languages.

While some scholars, such as Matisoff (1991) and Heine, Claudi & Hünemeyer (1991), see grammaticalization as a kind of metaphor, a more moderate view prevails in the work of such analysts as Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994) and the contributors to Devos & van der Wal (2014). Emanatian’s account of future constructions in Chagga (Tanzania, Eastern Bantu) is a good example of this type of metaphorical analysis of grammaticalization. She asserts that the use of *-cha-* ‘go to’ and *-enda-* ‘come from’ in future constructions “*of course*, is spatio-temporal metaphor” (1992: 3, emphasis added). This analysis relies on the assumptions that the constructions reflect metaphor and that the verb forms are opposites, which invites the postulation of an unnecessary mechanism of ‘perspectival shifting’. These constructions can instead be accounted for by careful analysis of lexical semantics and the conventionalization of implicatures à la Traugott (2012).

This unneeded complexity results in part from inadequate attention to lexical semantics. The frequent treatment of verbs as equivalent to their English counterparts sometimes leads to unjustified attempts to reconcile apparent contradictions. With ‘come’ and ‘go’ verbs, two assumptions contribute to faulty reasoning: (1) that they are essentially deictic opposites and (2) that ‘go’ is the ‘basic’ motion verb. The development of future constructions in the Scandinavian languages illustrates the problems with these assumptions.

The verbs *koma/fara* (Icelandic), *komme/gå* (Danish/Norwegian), and *komma/gå* (Swedish) differ from English *come* and *go* in two important ways. First, *koma/komme/komma* are not as strongly tied to the deictic center as English *come*. Secondly, while English *go* is a hypernym of many motion verbs, the Continental Scandinavian verbs *komme/komma* act much more like hypernyms than *gå*. This distribution correlates with the use of *komme/komma* in future constructions and the lack of a future construction with *gå*. In Icelandic, both *koma* and *fara* show hypernymic characteristics, and both participate in future constructions. Much greater insight into grammaticalization paths and which verbs become grammaticalized is provided by detailed lexical semantic analysis than by assumptions about metaphorical patterns. For a diachronic analysis of the Swedish construction without recourse to metaphor, see Hilpert (2008).

The Catalan periphrastic preterit further illustrates the importance of lexical semantics for grammaticalization. This construction consists of forms derived from *anar* ‘to go’ and an infinitive (e.g., *vas cantar* “you sang” [go-2S sing-INF]). I have argued (2006, 2008) that this development did not involve metaphor, and indeed, to the best of my knowledge, no metaphorical analysis has been proposed. Rather, the unique combination of morphological and semantic traits found in the Catalan verb facilitated the grammaticalization of a past perfective form with a verb typically associated with future constructions.

These cases show that the processes underlying grammaticalization are better explained by detailed lexical semantic analysis — an indispensable part of diachronic linguistics — than by unsupported and unnecessary appeals to metaphor.

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