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What is it then, this Grammaticalization?[1]

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So… what *is* it then, this grammaticalization? Probably every linguist who is interested in language change will have raised this question at some point. And many of them will also have some answer more or less at hand. The problem is that these answers may all differ in one detail or other. A likely reason for this is the great success (or, for that matter, popularity) that the concept of grammaticalization has enjoyed in historical linguistics to date. Therefore, maybe inevitably, the proliferation of analyses within the domain of grammaticalization studies has also led to a proliferation of terms and notions, not all of them sharply defined. This, in turn, has produced a certain dissatisfaction with the state of the field among many more sceptical (or maybe just more cautious) linguists. Hence, the most important aim of the present collection of articles (which presents a selection of the papers presented at a workshop on "Refining Grammaticalization" at Freie Universität Berlin in February 2012) is to try to come to grips with the notion of grammaticalization and related concepts in the light of recent theorizing in historical linguistics.

Two suppositions. — The list of diverging definitions of grammaticalization which have been offered in the literature since Antoine Meillet's original definition (1912: 385) would run to several pages – not to mention the list of types of linguistic change either included in or excluded

1 We would like to thank all participants of the workshop *Refining Grammaticalization*, from which this Special Issue derives, for their fruitful discussions. We would also like to thank all anonymous reviewers who agreed to assess the papers submitted to this Special Issue, as well as the *Folia Linguistica* team, most of all Hubert Cuyckens, for valuable advice and helpful suggestions.

from these diverging definitions. Meillet originally characterized grammaticalization as the assignment of grammatical character to a lexical expression ("l'attribution du caractère grammatical à un mot jadis autonome"). Kuryłowicz (1965: 69) then expanded the notion of grammaticalization in that he *also* included the development from a grammatical element into a "more grammatical" element.

> Grammaticalization consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from less grammatical to a more grammatical status […]

Yet, Kuryłowicz did not motivate why a change from a lexical item to a grammatical one and a change from a grammatical to a more grammatical one should be described and understood as one and the same linguistic phenomenon, nor did he explain what exactly he meant by "more grammatical".[2] There are two suppositions underlying Kuryłowicz's definition, both of which have been taken for granted ever since. One is that the changes from a lexical to a grammatical item and from a less grammatical to a more grammatical item are indeed one and the same phenomenon. The other is that there exists relevant (i.e. non-trivial) variation among grammatical forms in their degree of grammatical character ("more vs. less grammatical"). While neither of these suppositions is inescapable, they have both been commonly accepted and, ever since grammaticalization made its way into the focus of linguistic attention in the 1980s, numerous attempts have been made to motivate each of these implicit claims. However, it should be kept in mind that such motivations have all been a posteriori explanations. Still, if we want to be able to operationalize Kuryłowicz's approach to grammaticalization, a diagnostic is required to measure the degree of grammatical character of a morpheme (or a construction).

Measuring the grammatical status: Lehmann's parameters. — Hence, once Kuryłowicz's double definition of grammaticalization had become accepted and canonical, a measure of what is "more" and what is "less grammatical" was needed. It was Christian Lehmann who – with his *Thoughts on Grammaticalization* of 1982 – proposed the first and, so far, only detailed set of diagnostics to measure the degree to which a particular linguistic item is grammaticalized. What has become known as "Lehmann's Parameters" is a set of six

2 The only example Kuryłowicz (1965: 69) provides is the case of a derivational morpheme (less grammatical) becoming an inflectional morpheme (more grammatical). There is, however, no obvious a priori reason why there should be a hierarchical distinction between derivation and inflection. Neither is a noun or a verb that was coined by means of a derivational process more or less grammatical (or, for that matter, lexical) than an inflected noun or verb can possibly be, nor can the respective effects that derivational and inflectional affixes exert on a lexeme be easily described by any hierarchy along these lines. Justifications for the difference in the degree of grammatical status between derivation and inflection have nevertheless been put forward, though only as a posteriori suggestions, that is, as a response to Kuryłowicz's claim.

parametrically described criteria that can be applied to a linguistic sign (see Lehmann 1995 [1982]: 121–178).[3] These six parameters are arranged orthogonally: three features, which Lehmann calls "weight", "cohesion", and "variability", are each applied to both the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic axis, which then results in six so-called "parameters".

Lehmann's parameter approach has been extremely successful in that it has been frequently employed up until today, some thirty years after it was first published. The fact that some of the six parameters have been employed much more routinely than others is in itself not a problem (but see below). A prominent example here is what Lehmann (1995 [1982]: 123, 126–132) has termed "paradigmatic weight" or "integrity". This parameter comprises what has been conventionally termed phonetic attrition or erosion as well as so-called "semantic bleaching". In practice therefore, the one parameter labeled "integrity" consists of two criteria, which have been applied independently in most studies on grammaticalization. The fact that this common practice actually deviates from Lehmann's original notion of "integrity" has, to the best of our knowledge, never been considered problematic. There is, of course, good reason to treat a change in the semantics of a linguistic sign independently from the shortening of its phonetic form. This is especially the case if we assume that form and function interact. So, if we wish to understand how the two interact, we need to keep them apart at the diagnostic level. But this rather fundamental conceptual problem in Lehmann's design has been generously overlooked and perhaps tolerated as teething troubles of a diagnostic apparatus that has nevertheless been helpful in many other respects. In the end, what counts is what the linguistic community has made out of it.

The other question is why the "integrity" parameter – comprising phonetic attrition and semantic bleaching as de facto two independent parameters – has remained so prominent and why at the same time most of the others of Lehmann's parameters have led more of a background existence. Is "integrity" the most easily accessible of a set of very technical criteria? In other words, is it simply easier to operationalize phonetic attrition and semantic bleaching, than, say, Lehmann's "paradigmaticity"? Or is it the case that "integrity" is the most revealing and therefore the most important of his parameters? Evidence against the latter assumption is the fact that both phonetic attrition and semantic bleaching can occur outside of grammaticalization and that at the same time a linguistic expression can be grammaticalized without undergoing significant phonetic attrition (cf. the development of the Old English noun *hwile* to the Present-day English conjunction *while*).

3 We refer to the 1995 version of Lehmann's *Thoughts on Grammaticalization,* as this is the most widespread of the extant versions of the text. The 1995 text is, however, identical with the original version from 1982. It therefore represents the state of the art of that year. A third version of the text, Lehmann (2002), which is at present still available online, likewise shows no significant textual changes and/or updates.

There are more unresolved issues with Lehmann's parameters: Which of the parameters overrules the other, in a case where two parameters are in conflict (one indicative of grammaticalization, the other one not)? How many of the six parameters need to apply in order for a particular change to count as an instance of grammaticalization? If it is a strict requirement that *all* six need to apply, it may be hard to find even a single case of grammaticalization. If we then concede that not all six parameters need to apply, we open the gate for categorizing two entirely different processes as instances of grammaticalization: indeed, what does an instance of language change to which only parameters A, C, and D apply have in common with an instance of language change to which only parameters B, E, and F apply?

Finally, what is the a priori motivation for Lehmann's orthogonal arrangement of the parameters with the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes on the one hand, and the notions "weight", "cohesion", and "variability" on the other? Would this not imply a rather mechanistic idea of human language such that each phenomenon that can be observed on the paradigmatic axis needs to be paralleled closely on the syntagmatic axis? In other words, does the arrangement in two times three parameters reflect prior observations about human language or is it perhaps motivated by the structural neatness such a model certainly possesses when visualized as a grid in tabular format? This visualization may have all sorts of practical advantages, but does it give rise to satisfactory criteria that give us insights for our understanding of language change?

In the present Special Issue, Lehmann's parameters are discussed by Muriel Norde & Karin Beijering (particularly in Section 1.5 of their article). They propose a model that builds to a significant degree on Lehmann, but that is more differentiated and flexible than his strictly parametric model. What is innovative, furthermore, in Norde & Beijering's approach is that they distinguish between "mechanisms", "primitive changes, and "side effects" as different levels of observation. At the same time, they propose cluster phenomena ("izations" in their terminology), that is, composite changes that are characterized by a typical cluster of lower level changes, of which grammaticalization is one.

Björn Wiemer's contribution raises related questions. He discusses the problem of the hierarchization of parameters. As he demonstrates, the parameter approach faces similar difficulties as traditional categorization in cognitive linguistics does. Is there a "best exemplar" of grammaticalization, from which other, more marginal cases can be derived with a sufficient degree of certainty? Are some parameters more relevant than others? Another question – which, as Wiemer shows, follows from these considerations – is how grammaticalization can be embedded into a broader theoretical framework of language change. In other words, how do

instances of language change – of grammatical change in particular – that are not cases of grammaticalization relate to grammaticalization?

All in all, Lehmann's *Thoughts on Grammaticalization* certainly have been a major advancement of grammaticalization studies, and it would certainly be too much to ask of such a seminal account to answer all questions once and for all. Yet, it is quite obvious that a number of questions about the concept "grammaticalization" have been left untackled ever since. Many of them, quite apparently, have to do with the heterogeneity of the canonical definitions of grammaticalization – the idea that both a process from a lexical to a grammatical expression and the shift from "less grammatical" to "more grammatical" epitomize the phenomenon to be studied and discussed.

Grammaticalization: A "composite change" or an epiphenomenon? — Another question brought up by Lehmann's parameter approach is the problem of whether or to what extent we can speak of grammaticalization as *one* phenomenon, once it has been defined by a set of features, each of which is considered non-necessary. In an attempt, on the one hand, to accept the broadening of the notion grammaticalization and, on the other hand, to retain it as a meaningful concept, some authors (e.g. Norde 2009, Norde & Beijering, this issue) suggest viewing grammaticalization as a "composite change". Grammaticalization is then seen as the tendency for several small-scale processes to occur in clusters. But is there a system behind this possible clustering? How is the composition of these small-scale processes motivated and, again, how do we distinguish such a "composite change" from phenomena (or types of changes) where, say, only one or two out of six features apply? Is there something like "grammaticalization light" next to prototypical cases of grammaticalization? Or will the idea of grammaticalization as a "composite change" automatically lead to its evaporation? If we conceive of grammaticalization as a cluster of changes, as Norde & Beijering (this issue) do, would the individual processes then not be more relevant than the cluster? In other words, if grammaticalization can only be thought of as a cluster of processes or as a "composite change", does this not lend credence to those voices that attribute an epiphenomenal character to grammaticalization? On that view, it is those more fine-grained processes – which in the tradition of grammaticalization research have orbited the notion of grammaticalization as "features", "diagnostics", or "parameters" – that give us deeper, perhaps explanatory insight in the way languages change and vary.

Newmeyer (1998: Section 5.4) concluded in the 1990s already that grammaticalization is an epiphenomenon, i.e. a tendency that we observe as concomitant with other processes; in his view, it is these other processes that have explanatory value, whereas grammaticalization does not. It would appear, then, that one possible result of our reflection on the notion "grammaticalization"

would be to recognize its epiphenomenal character. Another possible outcome would be coming to terms with what grammaticalization proper actually is (see below).

The kind of criticism instigated by Newmeyer was most prominently raised in Campbell (2001), in a special issue of *Language Sciences* on grammaticalization, labeled "Critical Assessment" – and also in the debate following the publication of this collection of articles.[4] One aim of the present Special Issue is to follow up on the criticism that was raised thirteen years ago and to assess how the concept grammaticalization has fared in the meantime.

Inflation of the concept. — With the growing popularity of grammaticalization studies, ever more potential instances of grammaticalization have been investigated, resulting in an increase in the number of catalogued grammaticalization cases. So, virtually with each new case study, our picture of what should or could be included into the concept of grammaticalization has become wider – and thus also fuzzier. A concomitant problem, which, as we believe, deserves more attention, is that it has also become more difficult to identify changes of a grammatical form that *cannot* properly be associated with grammaticalization.

Moreover, the process of grammaticalization was soon not only associated with the emergence and development of grammatical morphemes (as transpires from Meillet's as well as Kuryłowicz's definitions), but also with the emergence of *new* grammatical values and/or categories. While Hopper & Traugott (2003: xv), in their textbook on grammaticalization, still rephrase Kuryłowicz's definition rather faithfully,

> We defined grammaticalization as the process whereby lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions.

only a little further down, they add (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 23):

> […] grammaticalization tends to be a process of replacing older grammatical categories with new ones having the same approximate value.

Such an addition is by itself, of course, unproblematic. Yet, it does become a problem if a phenomenon is not only associated with typical (but not necessary) consequences, but gradually becomes identified with them. What Hopper & Traugott still describe as a tendency separately from the definition (the emergence of new grammatical values/categories) is already built into the definition in the way Dahl (2011: 153) extends the notion of grammaticalization. For Dahl, grammaticalization is

4 Two authors of the present issue (Muriel Norde and Brian D. Joseph) already contributed to the 2001 collection.

> the process by which grammatical structures and grammatical markings arise and evolve, including but not restricted to the development from lexical to grammatical morphemes.

Dahl is certainly not alone in subsuming the emergence of newly encoded grammatical values under the notion of grammaticalization.[5] This extension of the Meillet/Kuryłowicz concept of grammaticalization as such has consequences for any statement we make about, or any attribute we assign to, grammaticalization – and is therefore delicate. In the particular case of Dahl's wording, it is, moreover, remarkable that Dahl not only includes the emergence of new grammatical values into the definition, but he also puts them into focus, with Meillet's traditional view of grammaticalization becoming a possible, but non-necessary ("not restricted to") side effect. Thus, the original idea and its (possible, but not necessary) consequence have silently swapped positions.

As a result, grammaticalization is often no longer associated with a specific type of language change and thus with a specific phenomenon that would justify an independent strand of research or maybe even a theoretical framework ("grammaticalization theory"). "Grammaticalization" has come to be associated with virtually anything that changes in the grammatical system of a language. In fact, frequent use of the term grammaticalization implies that it not only subsumes the emergence of a new grammatical category, but in principle any kind of grammatical change. While this inflationary use of the term may sometimes be perceived as a rather implicit tendency, it has, deliberately or not, been made explicit in some discussions, as the following quote from Heine & Kuteva (2005: 17; our emphasis) may exemplify:

> *Grammaticalization* is a unidirectional process; still, more recent research has shown that there are some examples contradicting the unidirectionality hypothesis (Newmeyer 1998: 260ff.; Campbell & Janda 2001); however, as acknowledged by these scholars, such examples are few, accounting for less than one tenth of all cases of *grammatical change* […].

When, for instance, Croft (2001: 366) writes that "[g]rammaticalization is the process by which grammar is created", or when Comrie (1995: 1244a) defines tense as "the grammaticalized expression of location in time", then we have arrived at a concept of grammaticalization that seems to include almost anything we see changing or emerging which is somehow associated

5 Two further examples are discussed by Graeme Trousdale in his contribution to the present Special Issue.

with the realm of grammar, that is, ultimately, anything except lexical semantic change and sound change.[6]

One might well accept this as a common inflationary tendency that affects many technical notions – not only in linguistics, but in other disciplines just as well. But the more inflation, the less value. If, in other words, grammaticalization is to be taken as a significant phenomenon of human language – one whose study allows us to gain insight into the nature of human language – then it will be advisable to keep the notion sufficiently sharp, otherwise it will be impossible to make non-trivial statements about grammaticalization. In other words, a loose use of the term grammaticalization does not contribute any longer to our understanding of the mechanisms involved in the emergence of grammatical forms and constructions.

Brian D. Joseph, in his contribution, draws our attention to yet another difficulty that results from the inflation of the notion. Raising the question of what exactly counts as an instance of grammaticalization, he shows that this is not merely a matter of countability. He discusses the etymology of the Modern Greek future marker *θa* – a prototypical case of grammaticalization – and demonstrates the paradox that one instance of grammaticalization can consist of several instances of grammaticalization – all meeting different, but at the same time canonical conceptualizations of grammaticalization.

Primary versus secondary grammaticalization. — At the outset, we mentioned another difficulty emerging from Kuryłowicz's definition of grammaticalization. Kuryłowicz's concept of grammaticalization also bears the problem of conflating two clearly distinct steps into one phenomenon. Admittedly, a grammatical morpheme that has become "more grammatical" (provided this can be diagnosed in a satisfactory way – see above) is not unlikely to have emerged from a lexical expression at some earlier stage of its etymology. But does this mean that there is a necessary conceptual identity between these two steps in any way? Or could this mean that, after a linguistic item has grammaticalized from a lexical expression, its further change into a "more grammatical" item is more likely than any other type of language change?

While the exact relation between "primary grammaticalization" (Meillet's original idea) and "secondary grammaticalization" (Kuryłowicz's extension) has hardly been addressed to date, yet another problem emerges from the wide variety of views that are around in the literature about what "secondary grammaticalization" itself could be. This problem is addressed by Tine Breban

6 In an attempt to keep things apart, Lass (1997: 256, footnote 38) distinguishes between *grammaticalization* as a term for the "downgrading" set of processes and *grammaticization* as the emergence of an obligatorily coded grammatical value in a grammatical system, irrespective of changes in individual elements. But since *grammaticization* is frequently used synonymously with *grammaticalization* in the Meillet/Kuryłowicz sense, this distinction is not too helpful. While in principle creating notional clarity, it does not provide any remedy for the terminological confusion.

in her contribution. She shows that there is no agreement on whether "secondary grammaticalization" should be seen as a mere morphosyntactic development of increasing bondedness or as a more semantic/functional phenomenon characterized by bleaching. She distinguishes five common concepts of "secondary grammaticalization" and argues that they are all notionally distinct both from each other and from "primary grammaticalization", but that all of them have their independent values for our understanding of grammatical change.

Grammaticalization and its relatives. — More recently, phenomena considered as related to, though not identical with, grammaticalization – such as subjectification and pragmaticalization – have come into focus. When linguists' attention was drawn to the emergence of discourse markers out of lexical expressions, an entire new domain of instances parallel to canonical cases of grammaticalization was discovered. One the one hand, what is often labeled pragmaticalization is, just like grammaticalization, the development of function words from words whose etymological origin lies in either lexical expressions (*I think*, *y'know*) or grammatical expressions (*now*, *so*). Many of these instances show concomitants similar to those observed for grammaticalization (referred to as "side effects" by Norde & Beijering, this issue) largely along the lines of Lehmann's parameters and similar diagnostics. For some authors (see Norde 2009: 22, and references therein), a crucial difference is that in grammaticalization we observe scope decrease, while the development of discourse markers is said to show increased syntactic scope compared with their etymological origin. But the development of unbound, often non-eroded grammatical expressions such as prepositions (*because*, *during*) or conjunctions (*while*), perhaps even that of analytic markers such as auxiliaries (*have*), makes it more difficult to confine grammaticalization to the formal, i.e. morphosyntactic level. An open question is whether the features that both processes – grammaticalization and pragmaticalization – share are frequent, but trivial concomitants of both, or whether grammaticalization and pragmaticalization have a common ground significant enough to impact our theoretical understanding of language change.

The comparison of pragmaticalization with grammaticalization shows that a refined notion of grammaticalization need not only be sufficiently clear-cut by itself, but that it must also allow us to unequivocally distinguish it from other types of language change. Thus, a sharpened notion of grammaticalization – if it proves possible to find common agreement on one – will probably not contribute that much to a refined "theory of grammaticalization", but rather to a comprehensive theory of grammatical change, or perhaps even of language change in general.

Linking grammaticalization with models of language change and grammatical systems. — Refining grammaticalization therefore has an enormous potential for currently debated areas of linguistic theorizing, for instance the discussion around the relevance of usage

for linguistic change and variation, or the development of approaches to language that allow for variation and change as inherent properties of grammar.

One point highlighted by Esme Winter-Froemel in her contribution to this issue is the locus of linguistic change. Although one of the main tenets of grammaticalization research has always been that change is grounded in actual language usage (in contrast to models that emphasize the role of first language acquisition), the aspect of speaker–hearer interaction still offers great potential for further insights on grammaticalization. With the development of the Modern French first-person plural pronoun *on* from an indefinite-generic pronoun (and ultimately from a lexeme meaning 'man, person'), Winter-Froemel exemplifies how various small-scale developments, each of them naturally grounded in concrete speaker–hearer interactions, can combine to form larger grammaticalization pathways.

In terms of theoretical frameworks informing grammaticalization studies, there is the recently growing impact of Construction Grammar in linguistics in general. The main characteristic of this model is that it shifts the focus from classical notions like word and morpheme to constructions, i.e. schemas of (combinations of smaller) linguistic elements as the central units of linguistic description. This allows us to pay attention to hitherto neglected parallels between the development of lexical items into grammatical ones or the further development of grammatical expressions, on the one hand, and other constructional changes, on the other hand. While the more traditional approach focuses on the history of individual morphemes – hence the recently spreading label of a "morpheme-based approach" for traditional grammaticalization accounts – applying the tools and assumptions of Construction Grammar to grammaticalization research acknowledges the fact that it is never isolated linguistic forms (morphemes) that grammaticalize, but that grammaticalization always requires syntagmatic collocation with other elements. For instance, *have* does not become an auxiliary by itself, but only in a construction with a participle; *going to* does not become a future-marker by itself, but only in a construction with a non-finite clause expressing an intention; *during* does not become a preposition by itself, but only in a clause pattern in which the verbal form serves as a dangling participle, and so on. These observations had not been new – traditional accounts on grammaticalization had acknowledged them. But it was not before the advent of Construction Grammar that formal and theoretical tools were provided to show that constructions may have an overall systematic role in language change – and hence also in grammaticalization. A construction in a Construction Grammar sense is more than the context of an expression, but procedural form–meaning pairings that also exist on an abstract, schematic level (as in S V O_I O_D – 'somebody moves or makes move something to somebody/something'). One of the

consequences for grammaticalization studies is that the question whether a linguistic sign "becomes (more) grammatical" (or lexical, or a pragmatic marker) may become more marginal; the more crucial question will then be whether a linguistic expression has a procedural meaning, as Graeme Trousdale argues in his contribution.

Trousdale assesses the opportunities that Construction Grammar and its notion of constructionalization provide for grammaticalization research, but also the difficulties that the traditional morpheme-based approach is facing. In this respect, he also argues that more general conceptualizations of grammaticalization as "any process by which grammar or grammatical categories emerge" are incompatible with the general tenets of Construction Grammar.

In a similar vein, Hüning & Booij advocate the notion of constructionalization – in contrast to grammaticalization and lexicalization, as traditionally conceived. They show that the emergence of derivational affixes can be understood as gradual constructional change involving several interwoven steps of constructional integration. Hüning & Booij can thus avoid the vagaries and problems of the notion of "affixoid" and include the relevant changes in a coherent model of grammar.

So… what is it *then*, this grammaticalization? Obviously, there is a plethora of different ideas about grammaticalization. And it seems that none of them is without difficulties. We do not claim to have an overall solution on offer. However, and this is what we would like to argue for, we are convinced that if anything in grammatical change can be called grammaticalization, then grammaticalization is not a beneficial concept in the study of language. Yet, we can observe that most (or all?) of those linguistic forms that encode a grammatical value and whose history can be traced back seem to originate etymologically in a lexical expression. This, then, provides sufficient evidence that there are non-trivial patterns in the ways that the structures of human languages are created (and re-created). We therefore think that there may well be a process of language change that can reasonably be captured by the notion of grammaticalization. Hence, the difficulties that we have touched upon here (and some more that we did not mention) need to be addressed, even at the risk of ending up with a completely reconsidered concept of grammaticalization.

The authors of this Special Issue – even if far from unanimous with regard to the direction in which the improvement might lie – all share the intention to address at least one of the current difficulties in grammaticalization studies and to indicate alternative ways of thinking about grammaticalization or (some of) its central aspects. In contrast to many studies on this topic, our authors do not primarily look at case studies or particular instances of language change to

examine whether a certain case can or cannot be catalogued as an instance of grammaticalization. Instead, the overall research question has been about the essential nature of grammaticalization. It is our aim, with the present collection of selected contributions from our Berlin 2012 workshop, to instigate research on grammaticalization (and thus on language change in general) that brings us a few steps closer to a refined notion of grammaticalization.

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