

Grammaticalization vs. reanalysis: evidence from Russian adverbial structures

Synchronically non-compositional idiosyncratic expressions can often be explained by way of a diachronic analysis. In particular, many constructions that have an opaque constituent structure develop out of former complex structures with several embedded constituents. In my talk, based on several case studies from Russian, I am going to discuss the syntactic development of several complex adverbial structures. These structures have not been previously described in detail and their thorough ‘micro-diachronic’ analysis is only possible with the help of large corpora, in particular, of the National Corpus of the Russian language (NCRL, www.ruscorpora.ru). NCRL encompasses texts from 18th century up to present and helps one to unearth possible scenarios of syntactic change that may not be drastic (and thus often remain unnoticed otherwise), but are still relevant for our understanding of the reanalysis-vs.-grammaticalization dilemma and of the diachrony in the domain of syntax, in general.

1) A typical example of a recently acquired complex adverbial in Russian is the structure of expressions with *vo glav-e s X-INSTR* ‘headed by X’ (lit. ‘in head-LOC with X-INSTR’). *Glava* is the word that used to mean ‘head’ as body-part in older variants of Russians, but that preserved only metaphoric meanings in contemporary Russian (‘chapter’, ‘chief / boss’, etc.).

The original structure that is relevant for the development of the complex preposition *vo glave s* can be found in (1):

(1) *V drugix gorodax skoncentrirovalis’ glavnye dejateli revoljucii, s Lavrovym vo glave* (1897)¹. ‘The main revolutionary activists concentrated in other cities, headed by Lavrov’.

Here the relevant construction comes in a form of a small clause [*s [Lavrov-ym [vo glav-e]]*], [with [Lavrov-INSTR [in head-LOC]]] and can be roughly paraphrased as ‘with Lavrov **being** in the head’. This type of structure is fully productive in contemporary Russian (cf. *mal’chik s lukom v rukax* ‘a boy with a bow in (his) hands’). However, in the course of marginalization of the word *glava* ‘head’ the uses like (1) got idiomaticized in the meaning ‘headed by NP’. This structure acquired the function of “circumposition” that surrounds its dependent Instrumental NP. The new reinterpretation of the old structure gave rise to another positional variant of the structure: *vo glave s X-INSTR* that conforms to the general preponderance of prepositions over postpositions, let alone “circumpositions”, in Russian. The ratio of prepositional uses of this complex structure is rapidly increasing during the 20th century (cf. 29% in the texts from 1900-1910 and 89% in modern texts).

2) A somewhat less usual scenario of the development of preposition-like elements heading adverbial structures is found in the use of the word *nazad* (< *na-zad* ‘to-back’, ‘backwards’) in the meaning ‘ago’. In the texts from 18th century this element is often found in the main clause of biclausal structures:

(2) *Desjat’ let tomu nazad, kak ozero sie pokryto bylo sol’ju* (1768-1769).
10 years that.DAT NAZAD as this lake was covered by salt
‘It is ten years ago that this lake was covered by salt’ (lit. ‘It is ten years backwards, as...’)

¹ All the examples, unless otherwise indicated come from the NCRL. I omit indication to the source, leaving only the year of creation of relevant texts. Many examples are presented in a shortened and simplified version.

In the course of time the biclausal structure has undergone attrition and the NP-ACC (*tomu*) *nazad* (where NP denotes a time-span, like e.g. ‘year’) became a clause-level temporal modifier. This is manifested in the acquisition of its positional freedom with respect to the rest of the sentence and the fall of the conjunction *kak* ‘as’ in this type of structure. As a result, the element *tomu*, which is used cataphorically in (2) (referring to the whole dependent clause), became semantically superfluous. Thus, it is optional in contemporary Russian as shown by (3):

- (3) *ejo sestra uchilas dva goda (tomu) nazad v shkole* (1969).
 her sister studied two years (that.DAT) NAZAD in school.
 ‘Two years ago, her sister was studying in the school’.

When used without *tomu* (44% in texts between 1700 and 1900 and 87% in texts from 1900 onwards), *nazad* can be justifiably analyzed as a postposition with the NP as its complement. Thus, this scenario of development is among the typical cases of grammaticalization of adpositions, that are cross-linguistically often developing on the basis of bi-clausal structures.

3) However, there are also less straightforward cases of development of adverbial structures. This can exemplified by the development of a new structure out of another type of older biclausal temporal construction:

- (4) *Tomu uzhe neskol’ko let, kak ja zaexal v selo P* (1789).
 that.DAT already several years.NOM as I went to village P.
 ‘Several years have passed since I went to the village of P.’

As in the previous scenario discussed, the biclausal structure acquired monoclausality over time and *tomu*, which is used cataphorically in (4) (and could be also used anaphorically), got released (almost obligatorily in this case), cf. (5). The clearest hallmark of the loss of biclausality is that (*tomu*) *uzhe* NP-NOM *kak* can now be used **within** the clause to which the corresponding temporal adverbial semantically pertains:

- (5) *My uzhe god kak rabotaem s etim oborudovaniem* (2003).
 we already year as work with this equipment
 ‘We have been working with this equipment for already a year’.

From the very start, the structures under discussion could be used with either i) Past Tense forms of perfective verbs (as in 4), in which case the meaning of the relevant NP is interpreted as the time-span **between** the event denoted by the verb and the reference point (usually the speaker’s present), or the ii) Present Tense forms of imperfective verbs, in which case the NP is interpreted as the time-span **during** which the state or activity denoted by the verb is taking place (5).

It is crucial that in the ii) case the adverbials under discussion are competing with the usual expression of the meaning of duration, viz. the corresponding NP in the **accusative** case (NP-ACC = ‘for NP-time’). It is the most likely explanation of the fact that over time the nominative form of the time-span-NP in the constructions at issue has been replaced by the accusative form. The two case forms are homonymous with the majority of NPs possible in this structure, however, whenever the two forms are not homonymous, it is the accusative form that **must** be used in contemporary Russian (cf. *uzhe nedelju kak* in (6), while in biclausal structures from the previous epochs the nominative was the dominant option, e.g. *uzhe nedel-ja kak...* ‘already week-NOM as’):

- (6) *Vsex prilichnyx ljudej* *uzhe* *nedel-ju* *kak arestovali* (1975).
all decent people.ACC already week-ACC as arrested(impers.)
'It is already a week that all the decent people are arrested'.

However, the competition mentioned above is not observed in the i) case, cf. **uzhe neskol'ko let zaexal v selo P.* (lit. 'I went to the village P. for already several years).

Thus, the new temporal adverbials retain their old combinatory potential, while their remaining crucial formal property is the use of the conjunction *kak* 'as'. However, this conjunction no longer marks a dependency relation between two clauses, since two clauses are no longer found in the relevant structures, such as (5) and (6). Arguably, this is the reason why *kak*, which remains an obligatory part of the whole structure, is now much more relaxed – in terms of its linear position – than it is used to be:

- (7) *Tamozhni* *jantarnogo kraja* *uzhe* *kak god* *lixoradit* (2004).
Customs.ACC amber region-GEM already as year cause.fever(impers.)
'The amber region's customs are fevering for already a year'
(8) ... *usilenno reklamiruemyj* *uzhe* *polgoda* *kak* (2002).
... strenuously advertised(participle) already half.year as
'... strenuously advertised for already half a year'.

Thus, *kak* loses its status of a conjunction and becomes a relatively free marker of the construction as a whole that no longer plays a role of a linking element.

4) All of the scenarios described (and other scenarios that I am going to discuss in my talk) have at least one property in common: in terms of their origin, the adverbial constructions at issue are due to the simplification of multi-layered (bi-clausal, first of all) structures. In this respect, they conform to one of the well-known unidirectional trends in grammaticalization processes. On the other hand, however, they all involve a significant reorganization of the constituent structure (and not just a categorical shift in the status of one grammaticalizing element), which is typical of reanalysis. They might be (cf. sections 2 and 3) accompanied by a loss of substance (one more typical feature of grammaticalization processes), but not necessarily so (cf. section 1). In none of the cases discussed is there a clear shift in meaning observed in the period that is reflected in the NCRL, which again can be an argument for treating these developments as cases of reanalysis. The scenario in 3 is also problematic for the analysis in terms of item-based and category-based (as opposed to construction-based) grammaticalization, since there is no particular element that develops from a lexical item into a (more) grammatical one. Moreover, crucially, the scenario in 3 is unusual in that here **a tighter syntactic structure develops into a looser one**, rather than vice versa, which would be the usual property of syntactic development of grammaticalizing constructions.

A more general conclusion is that the micro-diachronic scenarios analyzed call into question those approaches in which grammaticalization and reanalysis are viewed as two types of syntactic development that are **systematically** opposed with respect to a number of relevant properties. It might be speculated that the triggering factors behind the two processes, viz. language use and language acquisition (cf. [Haspelmath 1998] for the elaboration of this idea), might in fact interplay in the course of diachronic development.