

Word-order change as a trigger for grammaticalisation

Susann Fischer (University of Stuttgart/Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

This paper will present a new perspective on the interrelation of word-order and grammaticalisation by investigating the change that stylistic fronting and non-nominative subjects underwent in Romance (Catalan, French, Spanish) compared to Germanic (English, Icelandic). (i) It has the initial goal of providing an explanation of why non-nominative subjects, stylistic fronting and related verb-third effects disappeared in some but not all of the above-mentioned languages and (ii) the ultimate goal of achieving a better understanding of grammaticalisation perceived as an epiphenomenon of regular parameter change triggered by a “mere” word-order change as the result of syntactic diglossia.

(i) Grammaticalisation is generally seen as the change whereby lexical elements become grammatical elements and/or whereby grammatical elements become even more grammatical elements (Meillet 1912, Kuryłowicz 1965, Lehmann 1995, among many others), or in more recent approaches where lexical categories change to functional categories (Roberts and Roussou 2003, van Gelderen 2004). In all these approaches, grammaticalisation is seen as a unidirectional irreversible process, often claimed to start out in phonology, morphology and semantics, having its subsequent effects on syntax, i.e. word-order. These approaches see word-order change as the outcome of grammaticalisation but never as the source for grammaticalisation (Claudi 1994, Roberts and Roussou 2003 among many others); some even go as far as to suggest that “word-order changes are not to be included in the usual understanding of grammaticalisation” (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 23). In this talk I will argue and present evidence in favour of the view that a different perspective is also possible, a perspective where word-order change is the source for grammaticalisation. Grammaticalisation under this perspective is clearly seen as a loss of functional categories or the loss of the phonological realisation of functional categories (cf. Roberts 1999, Roberts and Roussou 2003), however, this loss of functional material need not be triggered by the loss of morphology or morphological cues, as has been argued by Roberts and Roussou (2003), but can also be triggered by a change in word-order alone. This perspective is not new. Meillet already opened up the possibility that the domain of grammaticalisation might be extended to the change of word order in sentences (Meillet 1912: 147) and von Humboldt (1822) in his approach took the change in word-order as the first step towards the emergence of grammatical elements, i.e. which is nowadays summarised under the term grammaticalisation.

(ii) Looking at the two extremes of the chronological line for the Germanic languages compared to the Romance languages, the situation can be characterized by the following facts: stylistic fronting (1) is attested in Old English and Old Icelandic and also in Old Catalan, Old French and Old Spanish; the same holds for the phenomenon of non-nominative subjects (2), which are also attested in Old English, Old Icelandic as well as in the Romance languages Old Catalan, Old French and Old Spanish¹. This situation contrasts notably with that in the modern languages. In the languages under investigation, stylistic fronting is only active in Modern Icelandic, but has been given up in English, Catalan, French and Spanish (3). Concerning the non-nominative subjects, the picture is rather more complex. They are not a feature of Modern English, their only appearance being in two idiomatic expressions, but they do appear in Modern Icelandic. In Modern French the verbs that used to assign a non-nominative subject have either gotten lost or have changed into now appearing together with a nominative subject and a reflexive clitic. In the Modern Romance languages Catalan and Spanish they are also used, however the syntactic status of these non-nominative subjects in Modern Romance has changed considerably. Modern Spanish (and also Modern Catalan) oblique subjects e.g. do not pass the subject tests for coordinate subject deletion and control which the Old Romance subjects all do (4).

I will argue that the phenomenon of quirky subjects and stylistic fronting is highly interconnected in the Germanic and Romance languages. I.e. if we find stylistic fronting in one of those languages, we also find quirky subjects and vice versa. This will also predict that if a language loses stylistic fronting it will also lose the availability of syntactic non-nominative subjects. In order to account for

¹ The examples presented here are all taken from Spanish, but identical examples exist in all other languages mentioned here.

the loss of SF and non-nominative subjects, I will propose an account in terms of grammaticalisation seen as a regular case of parameter change: those that have lost these phenomena have lost the possibility to make use of one additional functional category. Thus, the loss of non-nominative subjects, stylistic fronting and other verb-third effects is taken as a clear example of grammaticalisation. However, in contrast to previous and recent approaches of grammaticalisation, I will show that it is not the loss of morphological cues that triggers grammaticalisation with the subsequent effect of a word-order change, but that the word-order change as a result of syntactic diglossia sets off grammaticalisation in the functional categories which is then followed by changes in the morphology. Furthermore, I will show that even though grammaticalisation is taken as a parameter change, it still fulfils the requirements of grammaticalisation theory: the parameter change is unidirectional, and therefore follows pathways of change, exactly as is expected for cases of grammaticalisation.

- (1) e **dexado** ha ___ heredades e cases e palaçios OSp
 and left has.3sg properties and houses and palaces
 ‘And he has abandoned his properties, houses and palaces.’
- (2) De los que uos pesa **a mi** duele el coração OSp
 of the that you regret to me.OBL hurt.3sg the heart
 “As much as you regret this my heart hurts”
- (3) ***Dejado** ha ___ heredades, casas y palacios ModSp
 left has properties, houses and palaces
- (4) a. de todo lo que **Dios** quiere y ___OBL_i gusta OSp
 of all it that **God**_{NOM_i} loves and ___OBL_i pleases.3sg
 “and of all what God likes and what him pleases.”
- b. En conclusion **me** recorda [PRO] haber visto un árbol
 finally **me**_{OBL} remember [PRO] have seen the tree
 “and finally I remember to have seen the tree.”

- Claudi, U. 1994. “Word Order Change as Category Change”. *Perspectives on Grammaticalization*, Pagliuca, William (ed.), 191-231. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Gelderen, E. van. 2004. *Grammaticalization as Economy*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hopper, P. J. and Traugott, E. C. 1993. *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Humboldt, W. von. 1822. “Über das Entstehen der grammatischen Formen und ihren Einfluß auf die Ideenentwicklung”. *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*. Reprint: Humboldt 1972:31-63.
- Kuryłowicz, J. 1965. “The evolution of grammatical categories”. *Diogenes* 51: 55-71. Reprint: Kuryłowicz, J. 1975, *Esquisses linguistique II*. München: W: Fink.
- Lehmann, C. 1995. *Thoughts on Grammaticalization*. München, Newcastle: Lincom Europe.
- Meillet, A. 1912. “L’évolution des formes grammaticales”. *Scientia (Rivista di scienza)*, vol. XII (1912), n° XXVI, 6. republished in: Antoine Meillet (1965). *Linguistique Historique et Linguistique Générale*, 130-148. Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, Editeur.
- Roberts, I./ Roussou, A. (2003): *Syntactic Change: A Minimalist Approach to Grammaticalization*, Cambridge.