AUXILIARIES AND GRAMMATICALIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF GERMANIC AND SLAVONIC LANGUAGES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Strictly speaking, grammaticalization is referred to as a type of language change whereby grammatical items come into being: lexical words or constructions, in specific contexts, come to acquire grammatical functions, and once grammaticalized, can continue to develop new grammatical functions (Meillet, 1912; Kuryłowicz, 1965; Hopper and Traugott, 1993: 18; Bybee et al., 1994; Lehmann, 1995; Heine and Kuteva, 2002; Bybee, 2003; Lamiroy, 2003). In a more general way, grammaticalization can be defined as both a diachronic and synchronic phenomenon whereby linguistic items are re-categorized, for instance from nouns into prepositions, from verbs into auxiliaries, from adverbs into discourse markers, etc.

A grammaticalization process involves several interrelated mechanisms (Hopper, 1993; Lehmann, 1995; Heine and Kuteva, 2002: 2; Heine, 2003: 579), some of which are in fact triggering factors of the process while others rather should be seen as its effects.¹ In this chapter, we will not address the question which of these mechanisms functions as a sufficient vs.

¹ Note that the methodological status of the various mechanisms (trigger vs. effect of the grammaticalization process) is rarely discussed in the literature. While desemanticization can be viewed as a general triggering mechanism in language change, next to analogy and reanalysis, coalescence and phonetic erosion are rather a result of the same process. See Drobnjaković (in preparation) for a detailed discussion of this matter.
a necessary condition for the grammaticalization process to take place;\(^2\) but we will assume, following Lehmann (1995), that the following parameters play a role in the process:

(a) *desemanticization* – loss in meaning content;

(b) *decategorialization* – loss in morphosyntactic properties characteristic of the source form;

(c) *coalescence* – loss in morphological autonomy;

(d) *erosion* – loss in phonetic substance.

Let us recall, as has been repeatedly pointed out in the literature (Traugott, 1988, 1989, 1995), that *desemanticization* necessarily patterns with *resemanticization*, since grammaticalized items pick up new semantic values, most often by progressively integrating conversational inferences into their meaning. As for the morphological aspects of the process, note that *coalescence* is just one of them, *specialization* (Hopper, 1993) and/or *paradigmaticization* (Lehmann, 1995) of the grammaticalized form being other symptoms of the same process. And although the above mentioned mechanisms strongly suggest that all components of language (going from phonetics to pragmatics) are involved in the process, other factors still seem to play a crucial role: *frequency* (Bybee, 2003) and *extension* of the grammaticalizing item (Heine and Kuteva, 2002; Heine, 2003) are indeed most likely to favor the grammaticalization process, as grammaticalizing elements by definition come to be used in new, i.e. more contexts (Campbell, 2001).

Although the outcome of grammaticalization regards various parts of grammar (see Heine, 2003: 578 for an overview), we will focus here on auxiliaries, i.e. grammatical markers of tense, aspect, and modality (henceforth TAM verbs). The instance of grammaticalization whereby TAM verbs emerge is known as auxiliation (Heine, 1993; Kuteva, 2001). We assume, following Traugott (1995) and Bybee (2003) among others, that auxiliation is the result of a highly constrained grammaticalization path, which is crucially based on pragmatic inferencing. Thus with motion verbs, which express movement toward a goal and whose meaning is primarily spatial, a strong inference of intention is also present, which in turn leads to an inference of future actions to be undertaken, and hence to future tense. Likewise, volition verbs display a similar path along which the inference of desire leads to intentional meaning, and eventually, to future tense. As has repeatedly been pointed out by Traugott, what was pragmatic inference at first eventually becomes part of the meaning of the verb.

Both paths are illustrated here by cases such as Dutch *gaan* ‘go’ which functions both as a motion verb and as an inchoative or future auxiliary and Serbian *hteti* ‘want’ which still is a lexical verb with volitive meaning and an auxiliary for future tense (cf. infra).

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\(^2\) Although the four mechanisms are obviously related with each other (erosion thus often follows from coalescence, decategorialization is due to desemantization, etc.), all of them are not necessarily involved in the process, and certainly not at the same time. Most scholars, however, agree on the fact that desemanticization plays a fundamental (*sine qua non*) role in the process (Fischer and Rosenbach, 2000; Heine, 2003).