Book Review


This volume comprises 16 papers given at the 8th Diachronic Generative Syntax Conference held at Yale University in 2004, as well as an introductory chapter by the editors. The papers are grouped into four parts called *Grammaticalization and directionality of change* (I), *Change in the nominal domain: Internal and external factors* (II), *Change in the clausal domain: Cues, triggers, and articulation* (III), and *Morphosyntactic change and language type* (IV). Each part contains either four or five papers, except for part IV, which contains only two papers. While six of the papers are mostly concerned with English, a variety of other languages, such as Greek, Norwegian, Bulgarian, Portuguese, and Nahuatl, are discussed.

The editors open the introductory chapter with a reflection on five decades of research in diachronic generative syntax. In this context, the papers assembled in this book are tied together as representing the recent “expansion of empirical coverage and growth in theoretical confidence” (p. 6) within this field. The contributions of this volume differ vastly in their theoretical approaches, yet the editors outline basic methodological agreement between them. This agreement is summarized in three main points: formal synchronic description, confidence in the data, and independent diachronic principles. While the first point stresses the importance of parsed electronic corpora for historical syntactic research, the second refers to the quality of the data as reliable and well-understood. The third point alludes to the dispute about the validity of independent principles of language change.

In Part I, *Grammaticalization and directionality of change*, the concepts of grammaticalization, analogy, and reanalysis are investigated. In an in-depth discussion of various theoretical approaches to grammaticalization, Paul Kiparsky presents an account of grammaticalization as grammar optimization. Arguing within a generative framework, Kiparsky analyzes grammaticalization as a type of analogy. This kind of analogy he calls non-exemplar-based, as the emerging patterns are solely determined by UG constraints that were not instantiated in the language before. Kiparsky demonstrates, however, that grammaticalization processes are limited by language-specific constraints. By contrast, cases
of degrammaticalization discussed elsewhere are analyzed as exemplar-based analogical change by Kiparsky. In this way, he argues for unidirectionality as being exceptionless. Kiparsky excels at giving succinct overviews of contradictory theoretical positions, thus making this paper a valuable resource even to readers working outside the generative tradition.

Andrew Garret’s excellent discussion of reanalysis and directionality argues for a critical re-evaluation of the importance attributed to reanalysis and explores the compositional semantics of the pivot context as a factor in syntactic change. Garret demonstrates his view by analyzing the emergence of for NP to VP infinitivals in Middle English and the emergence of the be going to future in Early Modern English.

David Willis is concerned with the formal aspects of a minimalist approach to Jespersen’s Cycle in Welsh. He challenges the functionalist approach of taking grammaticalization to be gradual by breaking the process of change from preverbal to postverbal negation marker into a series of stages.

By contrast, Montserrat Batllori and Francesc Roca’s account of the evolution of estar in Romance does not tackle theoretical foundations. The authors take the expansion of estar at the expense of ser as the favoring of the merge option and thus to be a case of grammaticalization, as it involves structure simplification.

The papers of Part II, Change in the nominal domain: Internal and external factors, principally discuss language-specific developments, albeit against a backdrop of overarching theoretical questions. Uffe Bergeton and Roumyana Pancheva are concerned with the absence of a morphologically simplex reflexive in English. Bergeton and Pancheva assume that the reason for the addition of the intensifier self to the pronoun is that Old English pronouns became phonologically weak clitics. By way of a pragmatically oriented analysis, Bergeton and Pancheva claim that the pattern pro+self was promoted by anti-reflexive predicates. These do not require reflexive complements and therefore invite intensified reflexives. Bergeton and Pancheva base their argument on corpus searches showing that inherently reflexive predicates in Old and Middle English did not take intensified reflexives.

For his paper on the rise of the reflexive pronoun zich in Dutch, Gertjan Postma carried out extensive corpus work as well. Unlike the other authors, Postma also presents the results of his corpus searches in a number of graphs. He explores language contact with the donating language German and the concept of grammatical borrowing. Postma convincingly argues against the factor of prestige with reference to the fluctuating frequency of reflexive constructions. Instead, he comes to the conclusion that the substitution of hem with zich was motivated by a gap created by UG. Thus, the receiving language is presented as attracting the forms needed.