

Cognitive, linguistic, and communicative pressures at play in the Progressive-to-Imperfective grammaticalization path

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The links between certain linguistic markers and their specific functional meanings tend to evolve systematically. This observation has been documented in multiple semantic domains, across times and cross-linguistically. Such changes are considered unidirectional *grammaticalization paths* that manifest cyclically (Lehmann 1985, Traugott & Heine 1991, Bybee et al. 1994). However, even if these observations are robust, the specific representations and the cognitive and communicative pressures that support and trigger these linguistic changes are still not well understood.

Here I investigate these representations and pressures within a specific *grammaticalization path*: the Progressive-to-Imperfective shift. In this change, a language evolves from the availability of only one general imperfective marker expressing both the *habitual* and the *event-in-progress* readings to the recruitment of a new marker to optionally express the *event-in-progress* reading (**emergence**). Over time, these markers get restricted to categorical domains of use (**categorialization**) so that the old marker only expresses the *habitual* reading and the new marker is the only device to convey the *event-in-progress* reading. Finally, the new marker is reanalyzed as a general marker of imperfectivity (**generalization**), and the cycle recommences again (Comrie 1976, Deo 2015).

I present a proposal about the cognitive, linguistic, and communicative forces that drive the change from one stage to the following. In this talk, I will present a proposal about the contextual restrictions that are at play in the **categorialization** and **generalization** processes, specifying which are the contexts of use that allow the old marker to still convey an *event-in-progress* reading, and which are the contexts of use that allow the new marker to already express a *habitual* reading. This proposal is supported by experimental data from a set of tasks that allow for the controlled manipulation of contextual information, such as acceptability judgment and self-paced reading studies.

Thus, the observed synchronic variation in each time period between the distribution of these markers—and the subsequent semantic change—is understood as the manifestation of sub-stages within a *grammaticalization path*, which are themselves dependent on contextual properties that become relevant for their relation to specific cognitive and communicative pressures.

References

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