# Lexicalization and language change

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# Preface

In the 1990s as historical studies of grammaticalization proliferated and questions arose about the relationship between it and lexicalization, we independently sought to understand better to what extent efforts to maximize the distinctions between the two were justified. At the International Conference on English Historical Linguistics in Santiago de Compostela, September 2000, we discovered that we had somewhat similar concerns and similar ideas, most especially that we were both embracing the realization that what we had polarized (see Hopper and Traugott 1993, 2003; Traugott 1994; Brinton 2002, and, to a lesser extent, Traugott 2005) were in fact very similar in certain respects. Having taken criticisms in Cowie (1995) to heart, Traugott was also concerned about the status of derivation in grammaticalization and lexicalization. Meanwhile, it became clear that many others were making similar efforts to account for the similarities as well as differences between the two processes (e.g., Lehmann 1989, 2002; Ramat 1992, 2001; Wischer 2000; Heine 2003b). The diversity of points of view on the two topics has been a matter of frustration to some, but we view it as an inevitable step in the development of relatively new subfields of linguistics, much as has occurred in the study of syntax or morphology.

Consistent with the aims of this series, *Cambridge Research Surveys in Linguistics*, our purpose in this book is to bring together a variety of scholarly debates concerning the relationship between lexicalization and grammaticalization in language change, with focus on the former. For this reason, the first three chapters present reviews of the literature, which in the case of lexicalization especially contains varied and often conflicting views on how this process is to be conceived. In the last three chapters, we suggest some ways in which these views may be reconciled and present one possible unified approach to lexicalization and grammaticalization. This book is addressed in the first instance to graduate students and established scholars in the field and assumes a general understanding of issues related to diachronic linguistics, and to grammaticalization studies in particular. However, we believe that it could also be used by advanced undergraduates who have a solid grounding in basic linguistics.

In a comparative work on lexicalization and grammaticalization of this nature, it has been necessary to omit a number of aspects of both phenomena

that are of potential interest. For example, we have had little space to discuss the phonological dimension of lexicalization. Moreover, although we have attempted to cover recent research on lexicalization and grammaticalization, we realize that much else may have been done that has not come to our attention. No doubt far more is currently in progress. In particular, we have, for reasons of time and resources, restricted our coverage primarily to work on and in English, with passing reference to other European languages. Therefore, a general understanding of the historical development of English is assumed in the work. Much of relevance has, no doubt, been written on other languages and in other languages. We hope that, despite these limitations of coverage, this volume will provide guidance and inspiration for those who wish to pursue the matter further, especially with reference to non-European languages.

In writing this book we have had to let go of old preconceptions and revise our thinking about lexicalization and grammaticalization; we would like to think we have encouraged others to do so too. We are grateful to Paul J. Hopper, Anette Rosenbach, Scott Schwenter, and Jacqueline Visconti for comments on an earlier draft as well as to three anonymous reviewers of our initial proposal. Isla Reynolds provided careful editorial attention to the manuscript. We would also like to thank Christina Bartels and Kate Brett at Cambridge University Press, who initially conceived of this project with us, and Helen Barton and Alison Powell, who carried the project through, as well as Jacqueline French for copy-editing.

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# List of abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ABL | ablative case |
| ACC | accusative case |
| Adj | adjective |
| Adv | adverb |
| Aux | auxiliary verb |
| COMP | comparative |
| Conj | conjunction |
| Dan. | Danish |
| DAT | dative case |
| Det | determiner |
| Du. | Dutch |
| EME | Early Middle English |
| EModE | Early Modern English |
| Eng. | English |
| F | feminine |
| Fr. | French |
| FUT | future tense |
| GEN | genitive case |
| Gk. | Greek |
| Gm. | German |
| Gmc. | Germanic |
| GRAM | grammatical morpheme |
| *HCET* | *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* |
| Hit. | Hittite |
| *ICAME* | *International Computer Archives of Modern English* |
| IE | Indo-European |
| INF | infinitive |
| It. | Italian |
| Lat. | Latin |
| LModE | Late Modern English |
| M | masculine |
| ME | Middle English |
| MFr. | Middle French |

| | |
|---|---|
| MHG | Middle High German |
| ModE | Modern English |
| ModGm. | Modern German |
| N | noun |
| NP | noun phrase |
| OE | Old English |
| *OED* | *Oxford English Dictionary* |
| OFr. | Old French |
| OHG | Old High German |
| ON | Old Norse |
| PAST | past tense |
| PDE | Present-day English |
| PGmc | Proto-Germanic |
| PIE | Proto-Indo-European |
| PL | plural |
| Port. | Portuguese |
| Prep | preposition |
| PrepP | prepositional phrase |
| PRES | present tense |
| PrP Adj | present participial adjective |
| PrP Prep | present participial preposition |
| Prt | particle |
| PTCP | participle |
| SG | singular |
| Sk. | Sanskrit |
| Sp. | Spanish |
| Sw. | Swedish |
| V | verb |
| 1 | first person |
| 2 | second person |
| 3 | third person |

Abbreviations of OE texts follow the conventions of the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*; abbreviations of ME texts follow the conventions of the *Middle English Dictionary*. When citing Old English and Latin we have omitted length marks. In the case of citations from other languages, we have retained them.

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# 1

# Theoretical contexts for the study of lexicalization and grammaticalization

## 1.0   Purpose of the present study

(1) We are celebrating a fascinating holiday today.

is something we might well say to a visitor from abroad, and not think twice about whether *holiday* and *today* or the *-ing* of *celebrating* and of *fascinating* function differently from the point of view of our knowledge of language. However, linguists, grammarians, and others who study and think about language, how it is structured, how we come to know it, and how it changes concern themselves with just such questions. In the introduction to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*, Matthews says: "Everyone will agree that linguistics is concerned with the lexical and grammatical categories of individual languages" (1997:vi), and this is what our example in (1) is about: *holiday*, *celebrate*, and *fascinating* are usually regarded as "lexical," members of large, "open" classes of forms that are relatively infrequently used and express relatively concrete meaning, while *we*, *are*, and *a* are regarded as "grammatical," members of smaller, relatively "closed" classes of forms that are very frequently used and express relatively abstract meaning. Moreover, *today* is not clearly a lexical or a grammatical form, having partially concrete and partially abstract meaning, and belonging to a rather large set of adverbs. Finally, the *-ing* of *celebrating* and the *-ing* of *fascinating*, although seen as originating in the same grammatical form, are generally understood as having developed differently over time, the former remaining grammatical and the latter becoming lexical. What these differences mean, how this kind of distinction plays out in language change, and what research questions it suggests are among the topics of the present book.

In recent years questions have frequently been raised about the relationship between "lexicalization" and "grammaticalization." The two terms, like many other linguistic terms, have been used to refer ambiguously to phenomena viewed from the perspectives of relative stasis ("synchrony") or of change over time ("diachrony"), to the process and to the results of the process, and also to theoretical constructs modeling these phenomena. According to Lehmann (1995 [1982]:6), the first formulation of an opposition between lexicalization and grammaticalization was Jakobson's (1971 [1959]) characterization of the first as optional, the second as obligatory. Since then, they have been theorized in a number of different ways, sometimes totally independently of each other, sometimes together. One constant in all these uses is pairing of meaning and form, and the extent to which this pairing is systematic or idiosyncratic. The starting point of the present work is to bring together a variety of scholarly debates concerning this relationship in language change, with focus on lexicalization, which has been studied far less systematically than grammaticalization.

The first three chapters are reviews of the literature; the last three propose some solutions. In this chapter, we will briefly introduce the contexts for the study of lexicalization and grammaticalization, most especially on approaches to grammar, lexicon, language change, lexicalization, and grammaticalization. We will not attempt to resolve the differences of opinion. Chapter 2 focuses in more detail on lexicalization, especially the definitions and viewpoints that have emerged during the last fifty years of work in linguistics. Chapter 3 presents recent arguments concerning the similarities and differences between lexicalization and grammaticalization. Chapter 4 suggests one possible integrated approach to lexicalization and grammaticalization that resolves the major debates about their relationship. Chapter 5 addresses some particular problems in the history of English from the perspective of definitions developed in Chapter 4, and Chapter 6 summarizes the book, ending with suggestions for further directions for research.

## 1.1   Debates concerning grammar and language change

It is impossible to understand how either lexicalization or grammaticalization have been conceptualized without paying attention to underlying assumptions about grammar and its relationship to the lexicon, as well as underlying assumptions concerning the dynamics of language change. A full investigation of these topics would entail a detailed history of linguistics, especially in the twentieth century. Space allows only for some sweeping generalizations here, which, unfortunately, tend to polarize and to be caricatures. However, without some attention to different foundational assumptions, it is often difficult to make sense of the literature or to propose a possible solution to the many issues that have been raised. In Section 1.1.1 we summarize two extreme approaches to grammar, the polar opposites between which much

linguistics has in actual fact been practiced, but which may help frame the varying discourses about lexicalization and grammaticalization.

### 1.1.1 Approaches to grammar and lexicon: an overview

Toward the end of the twentieth century it appeared that there were essentially two types of linguists - "generative" and "functional" - who, because they were asking fundamentally different questions, often talked past each other (see Croft 1995, 2001; Newmeyer 1998; Darnell, Moravcsik, Newmeyer, Noonan, and Wheatley 1999; Kemenade 1999; Haspelmath 2000a). Although neither group works with a monolithic view of linguistic theory, the functionalist group is more diverse than the generative.[1]

On the one extreme, most formal, generative linguists since the 1960s have sought to answer such questions as "What is the system of knowledge of language?" or "How does this system of knowledge arise in the mind/brain?" (see, e.g., Chomsky 1988:3). The object of study is language as an innate capacity of the individual. The assumption is that the language capacity is computational and syntactic, and by hypothesis optimally structured and ultimately binary in nature. It is a self-contained modular mechanism that does not reflect external factors such as cultural or social systems. Nor does it reflect experiential structures such as vision or production factors such as frequency (this is known as the hypothesis of "autonomous syntax"). The universals of language that are posited are absolute in the sense that one counterexample disproves them (see, e.g., Newmeyer 1998:263). On this view, the grammar of a particular language, whether Swahili, or English, is an "epiphenomenon" of an intrinsic capacity and is of little interest beyond providing empirical evidence for hypotheses about general capacities. And on this view, such traditional questions in historical linguistics as "How did the category auxiliary develop in English?" are uninteresting, or worse, not sensible (see, e.g., Lightfoot 1979, 1999; Hale 1998).

At the opposite extreme, since the 1970s a group of "functional-typological" linguists have sought to answer the question of how speakers can use the "bricolage" or "jerry-built structure[s]" (Bolinger 1976:1) of language to impart information, and to get things done (see, e.g., Hopper 1988). As well as seeing language as a cognitive capacity, this approach privileges language as a device for communication between speakers and addressees. Crucially the assumption is that there is a causal relationship between meaning and linguistic structure, and furthermore that external factors may shape language structure. Language is a human activity, not an epiphenomenon of a static capacity (see Lehmann 1993:320). The prime object of study is language use and how it relates to the grammars of particular languages, and

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[1] Croft (1995) provides a useful and detailed discussion of different subtypes of functionalism.

how grammars may vary cross-linguistically. Universals of language are considered to be tendencies, not absolutes, and are usually of a general cognitive nature, not autonomous and not specific to language.

The turn of the present century has seen the emergence of several possibilities for a meeting of minds, as some generative linguists begin to try to account for cognition-based structures (e.g., Jackendoff 1983, 2002), for productivity (e.g., Jackendoff 2002), for the dynamic, emergent properties of the speaker's knowledge of the system (e.g., Culicover and Nowak 2003), and for the variation that undeniably occurs in language (see work on Optimality Theory, e.g., Boersma and Hayes 2001; Lee 2001; Bresnan, Dingare, and Manning 2002). Moreover, some "functional" linguists have sought to formalize their work at least in part (see, e.g., Bybee and Hopper 2001 for frequency studies; Croft 2001 for syntax).

Common to many, but by no means all, theories is the notion of "grammar" (whether at the abstract level of Universal Grammar, or at the more empirical level of the grammar of a particular language) that is distinct from the notion of "lexicon." If such a distinction is made, "grammar" is the set of categories, patterns, and organizing principles evidenced by language, most essentially abstract patterns of semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology that at least in theory permit infinite combinations. By contrast, the "lexicon" is a finite list (for any individual) of (more-or-less) fixed structural elements that may be combined. The lexicon is typically a theoretical concept, as distinguished from a "dictionary," which is a practical description. Hence, there is discussion of a "mental lexicon" (an abstraction and idealization), not of a "mental dictionary" (Matthews 1997:s.v. "lexicon").[2]

There have been essentially two views of the relationship of the lexicon to the grammar in generative theory of the last fifty years. The first, which Jackendoff (2002) calls the "syntacticocentric approach," assumes that the lexicon is a list of idiosyncratic items which are selected and inserted into syntactic structures (see various versions of generative syntax from "Standard Theory" [Chomsky 1965] through the Minimalist Program [Chomsky 1995]). Phonological and semantic interpretations are derived from the lexicon together with the syntax. The second, proposed by Jackendoff (1997, 2002), provides an alternative architecture: one in which phonological, syntactic, and conceptual structures are parallel components of the faculty of language, and in which lexical items "establish the correspondence of certain syntactic constituents with phonological and conceptual structures" (Jackendoff 2002:131).[3] A key proposal in Jackendoff's

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[2] As we will see, while some theories of the lexicon are roughly equivalent to "vocabulary," many are not, since they include grammatical forms such as past tense -d.

[3] Other proposals that treat the lexicon as part of the combinatorial architecture of a complex set of parallel structures include Lexical Functional Grammar (e.g., Bresnan 2001), and various types of Head Driven Phrase Structure Grammar

work is that the lexicon is multistructured and includes not only highly idiosyncratic, but also more regular elements. This is more in keeping with many functionalist views of the lexicon, which point to parallels between lexical and grammatical organization, although the regularities may be considered to belong to morphology rather than the lexicon (see, e.g., Bybee 1985, 1988; Langacker 1987; Haspelmath 2002). A more detailed discussion of Jackendoff's views, with focus on the problem of distinguishing types of lexical categories, follows in Section 1.2.

### 1.1.2 Approaches to language change

Because lexicalization (and grammaticalization) will here be conceptualized primarily as historical processes subject to normal constraints on language change,[4] we will briefly set out some assumptions concerning language change before turning to a more detailed examination of the conception of the lexicon. While a comprehensive examination of theories of language change is far beyond the scope of this introduction,[5] we will mention here a few factors that will help illuminate the debates over lexicalization and grammaticalization.

Historical linguistics was the focal point of attention in the nineteenth century, during which time many foundational ideas of linguistics were developed, most especially the concepts of structure and pattern. Discovery of such sound laws as Grimm's Law, which showed how the Germanic languages differed systematically in consonant articulation from the other Indo-European languages, and the Great Vowel Shift, which showed how later English differed systematically from earlier English with respect to the place of articulation of the long (later tense) vowels, highlighted the ways in which language phenomena are structured.[6] Work on

(e.g., Pollard and Sag 1994) and Construction Grammar (e.g., Goldberg 1995; Fillmore, Kay, Michaelis, and Sag 2003).

4 There has recently been some confusion about the term "process," depending on whether the term is used restrictively or not. As Newmeyer rightly points out, grammaticalization is not a "distinct process" in the restrictive sense that it is "an encapsulated phenomenon, governed by its own set of laws" (1998:234). He also acknowledges that "process" is most usually used in a non-restrictive sense as a "phenomenon to be explained" (232). We use the term in a slightly different but even more usual non-restrictive way to focus attention on (a) the need for a dynamic perspective, (b) the micro-steps that are obscured by the ">" typical of representations of change.

5 For the state of historical linguistics at the end of the twentieth century, see Joseph and Janda (2003).

6 The term "Great Vowel Shift" appears to be attributable to Otto Jespersen, see Jespersen (1961 [1909–1941]:Vol. I, Chap. 8).

comparative reconstruction of proto-languages was made possible by the crucial insight that while change is inevitable, it is not random.

The advent of "structuralism" in the twentieth century shifted the focus of attention from change in patterns over time to pattern and system as manifested in relative homogeneity and stasis, i.e., synchrony (see especially Saussure 1986 [1916]). Insofar as historical work was done in the earlier part of the century, the focus was typically on comparing synchronic stages of a language, or diachrony. Correspondences or "rules" were usually of the form

(2) A > B

This formulation suggested that the structures themselves change, rather than that the representation of these structures differs over time because each generation of speakers has to learn the language anew and uses it in novel ways. More importantly, the structuralist explanation for change was sought in properties of language and languages, in other words, what was thought of as "internal" or "endogenous" change. The formulation in (2) also suggested abrupt change over time, indeed complete replacement of one item by another. However, change always involves variation: older forms and newer forms coexist side by side, in the same speakers as well as in the same community, and a more appropriate formulation is A > A ∼ B > B (Hopper and Traugott 2003:49). Even this is misleading, since often, especially in domains that involve meaning, earlier patterns only become restricted or fossilized, not entirely lost. The typical situation is actually (3) where the emergence of B as the only choice may or may not occur:

$$(3)\ A > \left\{ \begin{array}{c} A \\ B \end{array} \right\} > (B)$$

By the second half of the twentieth century, considerable attention started to be paid to the questions "What is in the arrow?" and "How does change come about?" In a groundbreaking paper calling for integration of synchronic studies of variation with diachronic work, because synchronic variation is the result of and a necessary condition for change, Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) proposed that the focus of work should be on language variation and change. On this view, study of diachronic correspondences would take a back seat to the solution of several more important problems. These include:

(a) The constraints problem: What is the set of possible changes and possible linguistic conditions for change? Examples include changes in category status, such as the emergence of a new grammatical category (e.g., article, auxiliary verb), loss of an existing grammatical category (e.g., inflectional case), or chain shifts (e.g., Grimm's Law, the Great Vowel Shift).