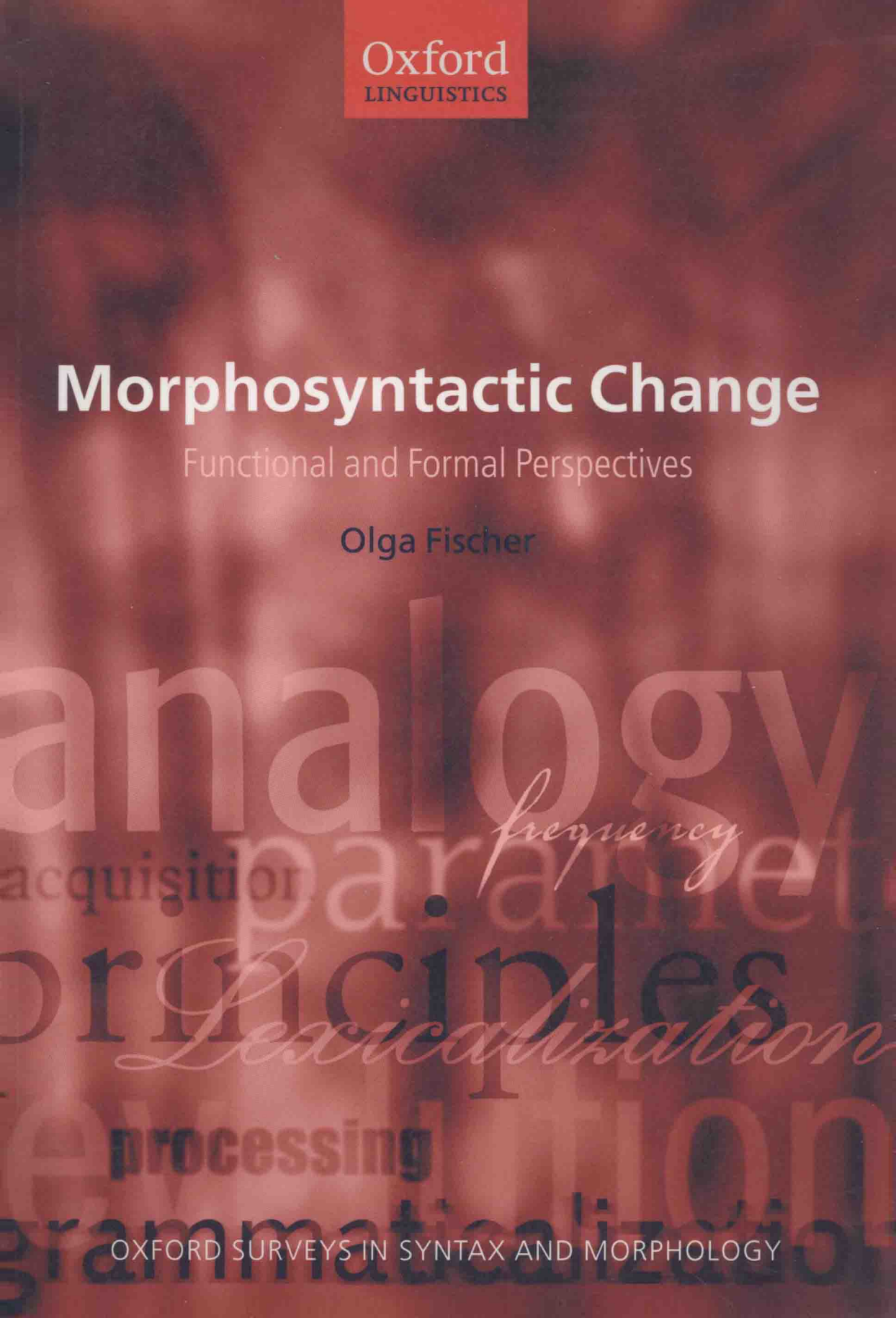
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Morphosyntactic Change

Functional and Formal Perspectives

OLGA FISCHER

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The history of science is replete with false starts. Scientific progress, however, is not based on a wholesale reputation of old claims with the arrival of new ones. ... It is more constructive when a new theory or discovery embraces old knowledge as a special case under a more general concept

(Goldberg 2001: 46–47)

Our work is based on the strong assumption that linguists and psycholinguists are studying the same object – human language – that their theories and experiments trade in the same notions, and that they will converge at same point (Anshen and Aronoff 1996: 11)

Analogy is the backbone of universal grammar (Anttila 2003: 439)

General Preface

Oxford Surveys in Syntax and Morphology provides overviews of the major approaches to subjects and questions at the centre of linguistic research in morphology and syntax. The volumes are accessible, critical, and up-to-date. Individually and collectively they aim to reveal the field's intellectual history and theoretical diversity. Each book published in the series will characteristically contain: (1) a brief historical overview of relevant research in the subject; (2) a critical presentation of approaches from relevant (but usually seen as competing) theoretical perspectives to the phenomena and issues at hand, including an objective evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach to the central problems and issues; (3) a balanced account of the current issues, problems, and opportunities relating to the topic, showing the degree of consensus or otherwise in each case. The volumes will thus provide researchers and graduate students concerned with syntax, morphology, and related aspects of semantics with a vital source of information and reference.

In *Morphosyntactic Change: Formal and Functional Perspectives* Professor Olga Fischer surveys the two main approaches to the study of syntactic and morphological change, namely generative grammar and grammaticalization theory. Her critical examination of these two approaches is firmly embedded in the larger context of the history of language change, and presents insights not usually found in books written from a single perspective.

Robert D. Van Valin, Jr
General Editor

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I would also like to thank John Davey of Oxford University Press for his constant support, his interest in the content of the book itself, and his very efficient and kind handling of all matters connected with its publication.

I owe an enormous debt to my colleagues in the English department and the ACLC Research Institute (Amsterdam Centre for Language and Communication), who have read earlier versions of the manuscript or have taken over administrative duties during my sabbatical, or indeed both (in alphabetical order): Umberto Ansaldo, Anne Bannink, Hans den Besten, Tom van Brederode, Janneke Kalsbeek, Evelien Keizer, Ans de Kok, Willem Koopman, Lisa Lim, Sebastian Nordhoff, Hella Olbertz, Harry Perridon, Jetty Peterse, and Otto Zwartjes. In addition I would like to thank Anette Rosenbach and Guy Deutscher, who very critically read all of the manuscript, and have been a great help and valuable motivators, and Ronny van den Boogaart, Bettelou Los, Muriel Norde, Niki Ritt, Kees Vrieze, Anthony Warner, and Wim van der Wurff, who commented on sections, gave me new ideas, and here and there prevented me from making some serious mistakes. Finally, I would like to thank Chloe Plummer, Jetty Peterse, and Tessel Janssen for their help with the index.

I am grateful to the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (Dutch Organization for Scientific Research) for granting me a generous replacement subsidy enabling me to have a six-month sabbatical

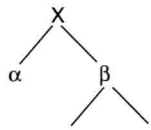
in which to finish the book, and to the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Amsterdam for supporting this grant. I would also like to thank the two anonymous referees who have supported my application, and Jacques Arends, Frederike van der Leek, and Kees Ostendorf, who helped me shape it. It is very sad indeed that Jacques Arends died very suddenly in the summer of 2005. He had promised to read the manuscript and his acute insight into matters of language change combined with his, always gentle, advice would have been most welcome and helpful.

I regret that the volume entitled *The Power of Analogy. An Essay on Historical Linguistics* (Mouton de Gruyter 2006) by Dieter Wanner appeared too late to enable me to consider it for the present volume. It provides invaluable discussions of many of the issues I have been concerned with here, most notably with respect to the use of formal and functional models in the area of language change, and the important roles played by frequency and analogy.

Finally, I would like to thank (in chronological order) Richard Hogg, Henk Gons, Barbara Strang, John Pellowe, Frederike van der Leek, David Lightfoot, Roger Lass, and Max Nänny, who each in their own ways have deeply influenced my thinking about language and my professional career.

Olga Fischer Amsterdam, April 2006

Abbreviations and explanation of technical terms

ACC	accusative case
C-command	a node α C-commands another node β iff the lowest branching node which properly dominates α (this is X in the structure) also properly dominates β, i.e. in the following structure:  α C-commands β, and also any nodes below β
checking	in the minimalist program grammatical features (such as agreement, case, etc.) have to be checked in the course of the derivation. If the features are interpretable they are erased, if not, the derivation 'crashes' and the construction is ill-formed
control verbs	verbs that take a non-finite clausal complement without a lexical subject. The empty subject is termed PRO, which is controlled either by the subject of the matrix verb as in *John$_i$ promised Mary* [PRO$_i$ *to go*] (subject-control), or by the object of the matrix verb as in *John persuaded Mary$_i$* [PRO$_i$ *to go*] (object-control)
DAT	dative case
ECM	Exceptional Case Marking occurs in so-called accusative and infinitive constructions, in which the matrix verb assigns objective or accusative case to an NP without assigning it a thematic role; it is the infinitive which assigns the NP a thematic role. The infinitive itself, having no tense features, cannot assign structural case to its thematic subject
E-language	External language, similar to 'performance' (language viewed independently of the mind)
fem	feminine gender

GB	Government and Binding Theory (a modular formal generative theory of grammar, identical to the Principles and Parameters Model)
GEN	genitive case
HPSG	Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar (a theory that contains very few grammatical 'rules' because all important semantic and syntactic processes are driven via the information contained in the lexicon)
I-language	Internal language, similar to 'competence' (language viewed as an element of the mind)
INF	infinitive
INFL (I)	a term used in generative theory for an abstract constituent or functional category, which subsumes verbal features such as person, number, tense (in later versions it became restricted to tense, the other two becoming part of the category AGR[reement])
LAD	Language Acquisition Device (the innate grammar system or UG, which aids the child in learning its native language)
LF	(level of) logical form (representation of the logical form of an expression, which constitutes the initial representation of sentence meaning)
LFG	Lexical Functional Grammar (a grammar in which a syntactic construction consists of a constituent structure and a functional structure, but in which, as in HPSG, the lexicon plays a prominent role in the assignment of both structures)
LMC	Language Making Capacity (like the LAD this refers to the capacity of children to learn their native language, but unlike the LAD it is not assumed to be innate but to consist of operating principles which are simple at first and become increasingly complex, through associative learning)
masc	masculine gender
ME	Middle English (the period *c.* 1150–1500)
MED	*Middle English Dictionary* (also online)
Merge	an operation in Minimalism which combines categories to form higher categories or phrases: it replaces the former projection rules

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Move	an operation in which a linguistic element is moved from one position in a structure to another, e.g. by NP-movement or V-movement
N/NP	noun/noun phrase
neut	neuter gender
NOM	nominative case
NP-movement	in generative grammar, this involves the movement of an NP from one argument position to another. The movement leaves a trace, which cannot be filled by another argument
OE	Old English (the period *c.* 700–1150)
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* (also online)
OF	Old French (the period *c.* 850–1300)
ON	Old Norse (the period *c.* 1100–1400)
OT	Optimality Theory (a model, so far used mainly in phonology, in which filters and wellformedness constraints, ranked in a hierarchy of relevance which is language specific, determine which output form is most optimal of all the candidates available with respect to an underlying input form)
P&P	Principles and Parameters Model (in which a universal set of grammatical principles determines the properties of natural language (UG), and grammatical differences between languages are to be characterized in terms of a restricted set of parameters, which can be set one way or another)
PDE	Present-day English
PF	(level of) phonetic form (representation of the phonetic form of an expression)
pl	plural
PLD	Primary Linguistic Data (the data a child is confronted with in the acquisition period)
PRES	present tense form
PRO	used in generative models to refer to an empty or unexpressed pronominal subject, which functions as the subject of infinitival clauses, and which is controlled by the lexical subject of the matrix clause

pro-drop	a term used in generative models to refer to languages with a full inflectional verbal system of agreement, which enables subject personal pronouns (i.e. 'pro') to be left unexpressed
resumptive pronoun	the term as used here (in a wider sense than in generative theory) refers to a pleonastic element (usually a demonstrative or personal pronoun), which picks up an argument that was left 'dangling' due to an intervening phrase or clause, as in *My aunt, who is such an old fuddy-duddy, she completely forgot to* ... (cf. Crystal 1997: 332).
sg	singular
small clause	stands for an infinitival clause lacking both C(omp) and I(nfl), i.e. clauses like *I painted* [*the door green*], *I saw* [*him do it*], *I consider* [*it foolish*]
(S)OV	(subject)–object–verb word order
SUBJ	subject
Subject-raising	a rule in generative grammar whereby the underlying subject of a complement clause is raised to the subject position of the main clause, the latter being empty when the matrix verb itself is of a type that cannot assign an argument to its subject position
(S)VO	(subject)–verb–object word order
TEP	Trace Erasure Principle (a principle that forbids that an empty node (a 'trace') left by a moved constituent is erased (becomes filled) by another constituent)
that-trace phenomenon	used to refer to constructions which involve extraction of a subject from a clause introduced by a complementizer, whereby the complementizer may or may not be deleted, as in *Who do you believe (that) saw Bill?*
thematic role	also called θ-role; it indicates the semantic function that a verbal argument fulfils in the clause. It is assigned by the predicate to the argument in conformity with the so-called θ-criterion. The latter is a condition which states that at deep structure each argument is in a θ-position and that each θ-position contains an argument
θ-theory	theory about θ-roles
trace	a formal means of marking the place a constituent had before it was moved to another position in the clause. The trace (t) and the constituent in the new position are

	coindexed, and the trace is said to be bound by the new position of the constituent
UG	Universal Grammar (common grammatical properties shared by all natural languages)
V/VP	verb/verb phrase
Verb-raising	a generative rule used to describe a process in Germanic languages like Old English, Dutch and German, whereby an embedded clause is unified with the matrix clause (clause-union)
Verb-second	a phenomenon, well-known in the Germanic languages, whereby the finite verb moves to the second position in the matrix clause
Wh-movement	a type of operator movement in generative grammar whereby a relative pronoun/adverb (e.g. *who*, *that*, *which*, *when*, etc.) is moved to the front of the clause
WNT	*Het Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (Dictionary of the Dutch language)

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