

Roadblocks along grammaticalization pathways

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In grammaticalization studies, the development of lexical verbs into auxiliaries has always received special attention. In the early eighties, the grammaticalization of auxiliaries has been embedded in the grammaticalization cline,

lexical verb → auxiliary → verbal clitic → verbal affix → zero

where moving down the pathway implies a loss of syntactic autonomy and semantic/phonetic substance (a.o. Lehmann 1985, Hopper & Traugott 2003). Moreover, it has been argued in grammaticalization theory that these grammaticalization pathways are fundamentally unidirectional and function in a rather mechanistic manner. Bolinger (1980: 297) articulates very well the dominant view on the nature of auxiliiation pathways:

The moment a verb is given an infinitive complement, that verb starts down the road of auxiliariness.

In this paper, I will challenge this mechanistic and essentially autonomous view of auxiliiation with a fine-grained quantitative study on the development of the *have*-perfect in Dutch. In my corpus, Middle Dutch texts (13-16th century) show an increasing usage of periphrastic constructions with *have* + past participle. Semantically, these verbal constructions show a growing salience of past time reference. This pragmatic-semantic development is paralleled with a gradual loss of syntactic autonomy of the auxiliary. Significant is the development of a fixed position of the auxiliary behind the past participle in the subordinate clause (as in German today). However, from the seventeenth century onwards, the periphrastic verbal construction appears to have stopped moving down the grammaticalization cline in Dutch. Instead of developing further into clitics (as has happened in English), the auxiliary *hebben* gives up its fixed position and starts to show word order variation again. Moreover, *hebben* also retains its lexical meaning to a large extent and keeps being used as a lexical verb with non-verbal arguments. Finally, no trace of phonetic reduction is apparent in the historical record. In sum, the presented historical data demonstrate that, although the *have*-perfect in Dutch has started its way down the grammaticalization pathway, its development does not necessarily go all along the way.

My central claim is that every step down the grammaticalization pathway should be motivated by the language system of the time. In the case of the *have*-perfect in Dutch, I suggest (concurrent with Fischer 2007 for Dutch modals) that the language system of seventeenth-century Dutch did not provide the necessary conditions for the perfect constructions to move further down the grammaticalization pathway. First, for auxiliaries to cliticize, they systematically need to be adjacent to one predictable class of items. In seventeenth-century Dutch however, we see that, despite the fixed position of the auxiliaries in the subordinate clause, verbal constructions remain discontinuous in the main clauses, yielding a residue of about 15% non-adjacent perfect constructions in the corpus. Second, finite verbs in Dutch do not lose their inflection so that they retain their status as an independent finite verb. Both characteristics of seventeenth-century Dutch form a 'roadblock' along the grammaticalization pathway for the *have*-perfect, preventing it from moving down the traditional cline.

The presented non-autonomous and non-mechanistic view on grammaticalization clines gives way to the study of grammaticalization phenomena off the beaten track. In the case of

have-perfects, we can observe from the seventeenth century onwards, new semantic and syntactic developments that are not predicted by the traditional pathways of grammaticalization. I believe that further advancements in grammaticalization theory are to be sought in this area.

References

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