

Stages of grammaticalization The position of French among the other Romance languages

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In this paper we will argue that gradualness of grammaticalization does not only apply to particular facts within one language but also to different languages which belong to the same language family. Thus we will show that French is far more grammaticalized than the other Romance languages, providing evidence from the verbal domain, such as tense (simple past), mood (subjunctive, Loengarov 2006) and auxiliation (Kuteva 2001), but also from other domains, concerning connectives (Charolles & Lamiroy 2007), word order (Marchello-Nizia 2006) and grammatical relations, in particular dative case (Lamiroy 2003).

Let us give just two examples. Firstly, whereas the subjunctive often seems to be semantically and pragmatically motivated in Spanish, it tends to function as a mere grammatical marker of subordination in many cases in French. Italian occupies a middle position (Loengarov 2006). Secondly, the external possessor construction, exemplified in (1a), which is gradually disappearing in most European languages (Haspelmath et al. 2001) is far more restricted in French than the other Romance languages. French only has a possessive dative with body part terms; kinship terms, however, which universally belong to the *inalienabilia*, do not enter the structure in French (1b), whereas they do in the other Romance languages (1c-d):

- (1) a. Fr. Il **m'**a pris le bras
He 1sgDAT has taken the arm
'He took my arm'
- b. Fr. * Deux enfants **lui** sont morts dans l'accident
- c. It. Due figli **gli** sono morti nell'incidente
Two children 3sgDAT are dead in the accident
'He lost two children in the accident'
- d. Span. Se **le** casa la hija mañana
3sgREFL 3sgDAT marries the daughter tomorrow
'His/her daughter gets married tomorrow'

We will show, then, that this hypothesis also applies to a certain extent to other domains, that may at first seem counterexamples, focusing on the nominal domain, and more specifically on (definite) determiners (Carlier & De Mulder, to appear), as well as on the development of prepositions (Goyens, Lamiroy & Melis 2002, Fagard 2006).

Given that a similar situation seems to hold within the Germanic language family, where English is far more grammaticalized than German (König & Gast 2007), Dutch occupying an intermediate position, we will address (and propose tentative answers to) the following questions:

- How can the degree of grammaticalization of a language be defined and compared to that of other languages?
- Some of our data can easily be accounted for by the fact that they are interrelated (e.g. word order obviously became fixed after case marking disappeared in Middle French), but this explanation does not readily apply to other domains, which are largely independent (e.g. what is the relationship between the *passé simple* and the grammaticalization of French prepositions?); is the degree of grammaticalization of a particular language ultimately determined by the simple accumulation of different

- grammaticalization chains (cf. the *invisible hand* hypothesis, Klausenburger 1999), or is there an underlying mechanism such as *analogy* which links them together and which accounts for them all?
- Why is it *in fine* that certain languages, such as English and French, grammaticalize more easily than others, such as German and Spanish?

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