

**What can synchronic gradience tell us about reanalysis?
The grammaticalization of V1-conditionals in Swedish and German**

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Accounts of syntactic reanalysis commonly posit a historical scenario in which a construction could be parsed in two different ways (Harris and Campbell 1995: 61). When the grammaticalization of that construction predates available resources, it is often necessary to stipulate a plausible context in which reanalysis could have taken place. As a case in point, verb-initial conditional clauses in Swedish and German are already attested in the earliest available corpus data. A Swedish example from the 15th century is shown in (1).

- (1) Haffwer hon onth effter barn byrdhtha siwdegrabo i watn
 has she pain after child birth then boil mugwort in water
 ‘If she has pain after childbirth, boil mugwort in water ...’

The fact that the protasis in (1) is isomorphic to a polar question has led to the hypothesis that this construction emerged from a dialogical structure in which a question is reanalysed as a subordinate clause of a subsequent main clause (Jespersen 1940: 374). While this scenario is quite plausible, it is not supported by independent evidence (Harris and Campbell 1995: 284). As an alternative, Van den Nest (to appear) suggests that the construction developed out of a juxtaposition of two declarative clauses, the first of these being verb-initial. The present paper explores how these two hypotheses can be assessed through gradience in modern corpus data.

Crucial to the present approach is the notion that a reanalyzed structure retains certain aspects of its original source (Haspelmath 1998: 329). Put simply, if the protasis of a V1-conditional developed out of a question, it will keep some question-like characteristics even after reanalysis has taken place. Further, if V1-conditionals have become grammaticalized more strongly in one language than in another, the less-grammaticalized construction should retain more of these characteristics. This means that the two conflicting hypotheses outlined above are testable through a cross-linguistic comparison of V1-conditionals.

Swedish and German afford precisely such a comparison. While both languages have V1-conditionals, higher frequency of use and tighter syntactic integration suggest that the modern Swedish construction has grammaticalized further than its German counterpart. In order to test whether the latter indeed remains more question-like, the present paper undertakes quantitative comparisons of V1-conditionals and questions with regard to subject types, main verb types, and the presence of epistemic adverbials. Corpus data from Swedish and German show that differences between V1-conditionals and questions are in fact significantly smaller in German, thus providing indirect evidence for the interrogative origin of V1-conditionals.

In summary, the present paper uses synchronic gradience to approach questions for which direct historical evidence is sparse or absent. While such a method cannot automatically generate solutions to diachronic puzzles, it can rigorously test implications made by conflicting accounts. In the process, it sheds light on the process of reanalysis and the role of gradience in grammaticalization.

References

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- Van den Nest, Daan. To appear. Should conditionals be emergent ... Asyndetic Subordination in German and English as a Challenge to Grammaticalisation Research. In K. Davidse, H. Cuyckens, and J.-C. Verstraete (eds.), *Grammaticalization and grammar*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Corpus Resources

- Archiv der morphosyntaktisch annotierten Korpora. Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Mannheim.
<<https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de/cosmas2-web/menu.home.do>>
- PAROLE. Department of Linguistics, Gothenburg University.
<<http://spraakbanken.gu.se/parole/>>