

On the grammaticalization of periphrastic modals of necessity in English

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This paper studies the potential grammaticalization of verbo-nominal expressions of necessity involving the verbs *be* and *have* plus nouns meaning ‘necessity’, such as, for instance, OE *beon neod* (‘be necessary’) or *habban þearf* (‘have necessity’) from Old to early Modern English. It is well known that their verbal counterparts, OE *þurfan* and *neodian*, grammaticalize at different points of history, as has recently been pointed out in a number of studies (Loureiro-Porto 2005, Nokkonen 2006, Taeymans 2006). However, not much attention has been paid to the corresponding verbo-nominal expressions, with the exception of the *OED* and the studies by Molencki (2002) and Taeymans (2006: 132 ff.), who pay almost exclusive attention to their polarity, and Loureiro-Porto (2004), who studies constructions of the type *have need* from a semantic and syntactic perspective in eModE. One of the conclusions of the latter study is that *had need* becomes a periphrastic modal of weak obligation, since it is morphologically invariable, syntactically fossilized, and semantically expresses weak obligation, very much in the same line as PDE *should*. Loureiro-Porto (2004), however, only studies constructions involving the verb *have* and the noun *need* in the eModE period, failing to account for the previous history of these expressions as well as the potential grammaticalization of other verbo-nominal constructions involving nouns meaning ‘need’. For this reason, the aim of this paper will be to address the following still-unanswered questions: (i) when does *had need* begin to grammaticalize?, (ii) does any other verbo-nominal expression involving *þearf* or *need* enter the grammaticalization path, (iii) is the grammaticalization of these verbo-nominal expressions related to the grammaticalization of their corresponding modal verbs, i.e. *þurfan* and *need*? In order to answer these questions, I explore a 4.1 million word corpus including the *Helsinki Corpus*, the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*, the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence Sampler* and the *Lampeter Corpus*. The results will provide a thorough description of the evolution of these verbo-nominal expressions and their potential grammaticalization.

References

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