

Grammaticalizing JUST **Cross-linguistic insights into polycentric categories**

Clara Molina and Manuela Romano (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

A synchronic insight into the semantics of JUST in Romance and Germanic languages seems to reveal a diverging conceptual structuring of the category which outstrips English from the remaining languages. The semantic profile of the term in English displays a much richer degree of polysemization, for as many as twenty-five discrete yet overlapping nuances (situated at the fuzzy edges of different categories) are recorded in contemporary English dictionaries, many of which do not exist in other languages. However, a cross-linguistic diachronic study reveals significant parallelisms in the development of this polycentric adverb (with more than one prototypical centre from which peripheral meanings develop) both in English and in all the remaining languages. On the one hand, the category exhibits an increasing semantic expansion from scalar and more concrete meanings in the early times towards an array of more subjective present-day meanings, that is, polysemization. On the other hand, JUST displays increasing grammatical restriction in grammatical flexibility over time, that is, grammaticalization.

This paper unravels the reasons why, in spite of such converging diachronic evolutions, there exist substantial differences in both the degree and the speed of polysemization between English JUST and its counterparts in Romance and Germanic languages other than English. To our mind, it is the onomasiological context of the category in English, the different paradigmatic relations of the adverb within its semantic domain over history, that allow an explanation for the synchronic differences attested by contemporary data and for the how and why of the present-day semantic map of English JUST.

In order to delineate the evolution of the category, a socio-cognitive contrastive report will be presented (both in the semasiological and the onomasiological dimensions) of a pragmatic marker that embodies with rare transparency the transitional clines identified by recent studies of grammaticalization against the broader setting of semantic-pragmatic change. The data for the analysis comes from dictionary entries as well as from evidence still not recorded but nonetheless attested by informants of an empirical cross-linguistic study conducted for probing the semasiological profile of the term today as well as for testing the translatability of polysemy. The resulting multifaceted scenario, which encompasses both polysemization and grammaticalization, not only provides an explanation for the contemporary structure of the category but also invites insights into the operation of human cognition when dealing with polycentric categories.

References (other than dictionaries)

- Aijmer, K. 1985. Just. In S. Bäckman & G. Kjellmer (eds.) *Papers on language and literature presented to Alvar Ellegård and Erik Frikman*. Gothenburg, 1-10.
- Aijmer, K. 2002. The interpersonal particle just. From *Discourse particles*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 153-174.
- Brinton, L.J. 1996. *Pragmatic markers in English: Grammaticalization and discourse functions*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Brugmann, C. 1986. Sisterhood is more powerful than you thought: Scopal adverb placement and illocutionary force. In A.M. Farley, P.T. Farley & K.E. McCollough (eds.) *Papers from the parasession on pragmatics and grammatical theory at the 22nd regional meeting*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 40-53.

- Cohen, G. 1969. How did the English word just acquire its different meanings? In R.I. Binnik, A. Davison, G.M. Green & J.L Morgan (eds.) *Papers from the 5th regional meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 25-29.
- Erman, B. 1997. Guy's such a dickhead: The context and function of just in teenage talk. In U.B. Kotsinas, A.B. Stenström & A.M. Karlsson (eds.) *Ungdomsspråk i Norden; Föredrag från ett forskarsymposium*. Meddelanden från Institutionen för nordiska språk vid Stockholms universitet, MINS 43: 96-100.
- Gibbs, R.W. & T. Matlock. 1997. Psycholinguistic perspectives on polysemy. In H. Cuickens & B. Zawada (eds.) *Polysemy in cognitive linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 213-239.
- Kishner, J & R.W. Gibbs. 1996. How just gets its meanings: Polysemy and context in psychological semantics. In *Language and speech* 39: 19-36.
- König, E. 1991. *The meaning of focus particles. A comparative perspective*. London: Routledge.
- König, E. 1989. On the historical development of focus particles. In H. Weydt (ed.) *Sprechen mit Partikeln*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 318-328.
- König, E 1981. Scalar particles in German and their English equivalents. In Ch.V.J. Russ (ed.) *Contrastive aspects of English and German*. Heidelberg: Julius Groos Verlag, 116-158.
- Lee, D.A. 1991. Categories in the description of just. In *Lingua* 83: 43-66.
- Lee, D.A. 1987. The semantics of just. In *Journal of Pragmatics* 11: 377-398.
- Nevalainen, T. 1991. *But, Only, Just. Focusing adverbial change in Modern English: 1500-1900*. Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.
- Traugott, E.C. 1990. From less to more situated in language: The unidirectionality of semantic change. In S. Adamson, V. Law, N. Vincent & S. Wright (eds.) *Papers from the fifth ICEHL*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 497-517.
- Traugott, E.C. 1988. Is internal semantic-pragmatic reconstruction possible? In C. Brooke-Rose, J. Fisiak & T. Vennemann (eds.) *Rhetorica, Phonologica, Syntactica*. London: Routledge, 128-144.