

Lexical persistence and subjectification in the Spanish Size Noun-constructions

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This paper focuses on the subtle interplay between subjectification and the phenomenon of lexical persistence in the grammaticalization processes observed for the Spanish Size Noun-construction (SN-construction). More precisely, I hypothesize that the more lexical features a grammaticalizing item retains from its original use, the less it is subjectively construed.

SN-constructions, such as *una pila de años* ('a lot [lit. pile] of years') constitute a non-canonical way of expressing quantification (Langacker 1991) and are claimed to be the locus of an *ongoing* process of **grammaticalization** (Brems 2003, Brems 2007, Verveckken 2007). Within the binominal construction the SN shifts from head status (modified by the following mass, e.g. *una pila de libros* ('a pile of books')) to modifier function, i.e. *quantifying* the mass specified in the following noun phrase (e.g. *una pila de años*). For each grammaticalizing SN, a certain degree of 'lexical persistence' (Hopper 1991) has been observed: instead of bleaching completely, a grammaticalizing item may retain and even reinforce particular features of its original use (e.g. quantifying *pila de* retains the concepts of intentional construction and verticality/linearity). Furthermore, two paths of grammaticalization have been posited, involving two types of subjectivity (Brems 2007): in addition to the pure *quantifying* function in *una pila de (años)* (path 1), SNs such as *un hatajo de (egoístas)* ('a bunch (lit. herd) of (egotists)') may also develop *valuing* quantifier uses (path 2).

In this paper, I claim that the grammaticalization of Spanish SN-constructions reflects some degree of **lexical persistence** and involves a process of **subjectification** in *Langackerian terms* ("thought of as a kind of semantic 'bleaching' or 'fading away'" (Langacker 2006: 21), i.e. shift from objectively construed to subjectively construed): the subjectively construed element is immanent, though masked, in the conception of its objectively construed counterpart. Because of this *immanence*, a link between subjectification and lexical persistence can be established: the more a grammaticalizing SN-construction inherits lexical features, the less it requires mental scanning and the less it involves subjectification. Whereas this observation seems straightforward in the case of quantifying quantifiers, it is at first sight less obvious for the valuing quantifiers.

With regard to *quantifying* SN-constructions such as *pila de*, the conceptualizer mentally traces the immanent constitution in order to specify the exact quantity meant (*immanent* in the objective conception, i.e. intentionally piled up along a vertical dimension). Interestingly, a high degree of subjectification does not necessarily parallel a high degree of grammaticalization: *aluvión de* ('flood of') retains more lexical features from its head-use than *pila de*. At the same time, however, the former is almost exclusively used as a quantifier (92% for *aluvión de* vs 20% for *pila de* (Verveckken 2007)). The subjectification hypothesis also holds for *valuing* quantifiers such as *hatajo de*: the semanticized pragmatic inference of 'negatively evaluated human beings' originates in the original objective conception of a herd, more precisely in the concept of 'herd instinct': the human beings all move, act and think in the same impetuous way. SNs grammaticizing via this second path also seem to involve subjectification in Traugottian terms: meanings "become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition" (Traugott 1989: 35; cf. in *hatajo de egoístas*, the speaker qualifies the egotists as such).

The dataset will contain a representative sample of several SN-constructions extracted from CREA (*tropel, alud, aluvión, pila, letanía, rimero...*). The aim of this paper is to verify whether the hypothesis stating that the grammaticalization of SN-constructions involves subjectification and interacts with the degree of lexical persistence, can be generalized to all SN-constructions, and if so, to all grammaticalizing items, given the general tendency towards

lexical persistence. Furthermore, I hope to shed some light on the question why some SNs are more inclined to involve subjectification than others.

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