Call for papers: "Category change from a constructional perspective"

Call deadline: December 9, 2013

Workshop convenors*:*

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Call for papers

This is a workshop proposal to be submitted to the 8th International Conference on Construction Grammar (ICCG8), which will be held at the University of Osnabrueck, 3-6 September, 2014.

If you are interested in participating in this workshop, **please send both of us a title by December 9, 2013**, so we can submit our proposal (including a provisional list of participants and titles) to the ICCG8 conference organizers. If our proposal is accepted, participants will be invited to submit a full abstract (400 words) by February 1, 2014.

Conference website: http://www.blogs.uni-osnabrueck.de/iccg8/

Workshop description

Category change, i.e. the shift from one word class to another or from free categories to bound categories, is inherent to many different types of change, yet it is usually not given much consideration. The aim of this workshop, therefore, will be to bring category change itself to the fore, as a phenomenon worthy of study in its own right. Adopting a rather broad definition of "category", which includes both single words and multi-word units, we will explore how categories change and why some shifts are more frequent than others. In particular, we want to examine whether a constructional perspective enhances our understanding of category change. In our workshop, focus will be on three topics: (i) types of category change, (ii) degrees of gradualness and context-sensitivity, and (iii) directionality.

Types of category change

Category change may result from different processes. The first process is commonly termed "non-affixal derivation" or "conversion", as in the following examples from French (Kerleroux 1996) and English (Denison 2010).

(1)   *calme*_A 'calm' > *calme*_N 'calmness'

(2)   *daily*_A *newspaper* > *daily*_N

The second process is category change determined by a specific syntactic context, or "distorsion catégorielle" (Kerleroux 1996), as in (3), likewise from French:

(3)   *Elle est d'un **courageux**!* '(lit. She is of a brave) She is very brave'

However, there is no strict boundary between the processes exemplified in (1-2) and (3), as suggested by cases such as *Elle est d'un calme!* 'lit. She is of a calm; She is very calm'. In this example, the nominal use of *calme* can be accounted for both as conversion and as context-internal category change.

Third, category change can be linked to processes of univerbation with structural change (Denison 2010), e.g. the use of English *far from* as an adverbial downtoner in (4) (De Smet 2012), or the development of the German pronoun *neizwer* out of a Middle High German sentence (5) (Haspelmath 1997: 131).

(4)   *The life of a "beauty queen" is **far from** beautiful.* (web)

(5)   *ne weiz wer* 'I don´t know who' > *neizwer* 'somebody'

A fourth type is one in which an item shifts category in the wake of the category shift of another item, e.g. the shift of Swedish adverbs in –*vis* to adjectives when the head of a VP is nominalized:

(6)   *Samhället förandras **gradvis**_{ADV}.* 'Society changes gradually'

(7)   *Den **gradvisa**_{ADJ} förändringen av samhället.* 'The gradual change of society'

Finally, category change may be part of a grammaticalization change, i.e. "the change whereby lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions" (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 18), such as the grammaticalization of English *to be going to* from main verb to future auxiliary in (8-9). Such gradual grammaticalization processes may account for synchronic gradience (Traugott & Trousdale 2010).

(8)   *I [am going to]*_{MAIN V} *the train station*.

(9)   *I [am going to]*_{AUX} *be a star*.

Degrees of gradualness and context-sensitivity

The different types of category shift mentioned above can be arranged on a continuum, from abrupt to gradual and from context-independent to context-sensitive.

While the A > N conversions in (1-2) are abrupt and context-independent processes, shifts from N > A are often gradual and determined by the syntactic environment, as in the case of key_N > key_A in English (10a) and French (10b) (Amiot & Van Goethem 2012; Denison 2001, 2010; De Smet 2012; Van Goethem & De Smet (forthc.)).

(10) a. *This is a really **key** point.*
b. *Ceci est un point vraiment **clé**.*

However, similar developments in related languages may be characterized differently, as suggested by a contrastive case study on the adjectival uses of Dutch *top* and German *spitze* 'top' (Van Goethem & Hüning 2013). The category change in Dutch (11) seems abrupt, but the German (12) spelling of *S/spitze* and inflection of the preceding adjective/adverb is suggestive of a gradual development.

(11) *het was (de) absolute **top**$_N$ / het was absoluut **top**$_A$ 'lit. it was absolute(ly) top'*

(12) *das war absolute **Spitze**$_N$ / das war absolute **spitze**$_{N/A}$ / das war absolut **Spitze**$_{N/A}$ / das war absolut **spitze**$_A$ 'lit. it was absolute(ly) top'*

Directionality

Whereas in earlier work (e.g. Lehmann 1995 [1982], Haspelmath 2004) the view prevailed that only changes from major to minor categories are possible, research on degrammaticalization (Norde 2009) has shown that changes from minor to major word classes, albeit less frequently attested, are possible as well. In addition, specific items have been shown to change categories more than once in the course of their histories, in alternating stages of grammaticalization and degrammaticalization. One example is degrammaticalization of the Dutch numeral suffix -*tig* '-ty' into an indefinite quantifier meaning "dozens", followed by grammaticalization into an intensifier meaning "very" (Norde 2006). Another example is the autonomous (adjectival/adverbial) use of Dutch intensifying prefixoids (Booij 2010: 60-61), such as Dutch *reuze* 'giant', which underwent multiple category changes (Van Goethem & Hiligsmann, forthc.; Norde & Van Goethem, in prep.), first from noun to intensifying affixoid (13) (grammaticalization) and later on into an adjective/adverb (14-15) (degrammaticalization):

(13) *Verder kunnen we **reuze**goed met elkaar opschieten* 'Besides we get along very well (lit. giant-well)' (*COW2012*)

(14) *Ik zou het gewoon weg **reuze** vinden als je eens langs kwam.* 'I really think it would be great (lit. giant) if you came by once.' (*COW 2012*)

(15) ***Reuze** bedankt!* 'Thanks a lot'

Finally, category shift may be "non-directional", in the sense that the input and output categories are of the same level, e.g. in shifts from one major word class to the other (examples (1-2)), or the transference of nominal case markers to verbal tense – aspect markers, such as the shift, in Kala Lagau Ya, from dative marker *–pa* to (verbal) completive marker (Blake 2001; examples (16-17)).

(16) *Nuy   ay-pa   amal-pa*
       he   food-DAT mother-DAT
       'He [went] for food for mother'
(17) *Ngoeba   uzar-am-pa*
       1DUAL.INCLUSIVE   go-DUAL.INCOMPLETIVE
       'We two will go (are endeavouring to go)'

The constructional perspective

The central aim of the workshop will be to investigate whether category change can be explained more accurately by analyzing it as an instance of "constructionalization" (Bergs & Diewald 2008; Traugott & Trousdale 2013 (forthc.)), which involves "a sequence of changes in the form and meaning poles of a construction, whereby new formal configurations come to serve particular functions, and to encode new meanings" (Trousdale & Norde 2013: 36).

In this workshop, we welcome both theoretically and empirically oriented papers that account for category change from a constructional perspective. Research questions include, but are not limited to, the following:

1: What is the status of category change in a diachronic construction grammar framework (e.g. Traugott & Trousdale 2013) and how can the different types outlined above be accounted for? Are categories grammatical primitives, or the epiphenomenal result of constructions in the sense of Croft 2001?

2: How can the notions of gradualness and context-sensitivity be modelled in a constructional framework? Does the gradualness of some category shifts imply that categories synchronically form a "continuous spectrum" (Langacker 1987: 18) or does it merely mean that a given item may belong to two or more categories whereas "the categories in question can nevertheless be clearly delimited" (Aarts 2007: 242)?

3: Is category change a change in form which together with a change in meaning constitutes a constructionalization change and if so, is it the shift itself or changes in morphosyntactic properties (e.g. decategorialization) that are associated with it?

4: How does the distinction between lexical and grammatical constructionalization link in to the different types of category change (abrupt vs

gradual, morphological vs syntactic, context-independent vs context-sensitive, word-level vs construction-level)?

5: Which role can be assigned to the notion of "category" in constructional networks?

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