**Workshop proposal: The Linguistic Cycle**

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**Workshop organizer:**

**Elly van Gelderen, Arizona State University (**[**ellyvangelderen@asu.edu**](mailto:ellyvangelderen@asu.edu)**)**

The linguistic cycle is a name used to describe language change taking place in a systematic manner and direction. Cycles involve the disappearance of a particular word and its renewal by another. Perhaps the best known cycle is the Negative Cycle where a negative may be added to an already negative construction for emphasis after which the first one disappears. This new negative may itself be reinforced by another negative and may then disappear. Cyclical changes are unidirectional and typically changes where a phrase or word gradually disappears and is replaced by a new linguistic item.

The reason for a workshop is first to present a ‘state of the art’ of recent work on cycles (e.g. beyond van Gelderen 2011) and secondly to indicate some new directions and data. Cycles give us a window on which phonological, grammatical, and semantic features are important because these will be lost and renewed. They also provide insight on the interface between phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Frequent grammatical cycles involve subject (and object) pronouns, negatives, determiners, complementizers, copulas, valency, and TMA. Can these all be seen as involving the same mechanism? Apart from isolated cycles, such as the negative or complementizer ones, do cycles exist that characterize an entire stage, i.e. the change from synthetic to analytic and so on?

Heine et al (1991: 245) distinguish three kinds of cyclical change. The first only refers to “isolated instances of grammaticalization”, as when a lexical item grammaticalizes and is replaced by a new lexeme. The second type of change refers to “subparts of language, for example, when the tense-aspect-mood system of a given language develops from a periphrastic into an inflexional pattern and back to a new periphrastic one” or when negatives change. The third type of cyclical change refers “to entire languages and language types” and fits the pattern described by Hodge (1970) and, of course, by von der Gabelentz (1901: 256) in his view that “affixes grind themselves down, disappear without a trace; their functions or similar ones, however, require new expression. They acquire this expression, by the method of isolating languages, through word order or clarifying words”.

The major questions for the workshop are: (a) which cycles exist and why, (b) which semantic features need to be expressed grammatically and therefore participate in cycles, (c) are there typical steps in a cycle; for instance, what starts a particular cycle, (d) what are the sources of renewal once a cycle has desemanticized a lexical item and at what point in the cycle does the renewing element appear, (e) why are some changes slow and why do some categories remain semi-lexical and are unlikely to change, (f) what’s the role of contact?

**References**

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