

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
Grammaticalization and Diachronic Construction Grammar:  
Convergences and Challenges

Université de Montpellier – Paul Valéry  
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**Keynote Speakers**

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‘Grammaticalization’ (a term introduced by Meillet in 1912) has been the subject of numerous studies, which have highlighted regularities in the emergence of grammatical forms across typologically diverse languages. Grammaticalization refers both to a type of change (and sometimes its result) and to a framework for analysing such change. As a type of change, many of the definitions that have been proposed can be formulated as follows: the evolution of a form from a lexical status to a grammatical status, or from a grammatical status to a more grammatical status (Kuryłowicz [1965] 1976). However, several broader definitions exist, such as Lehmann’s (2024: 1) ‘subjection of a linguistic construction or schema or of a linguistic operation to the rule of grammar’. Such definitional extensions affect a) the scope of this concept and b) the notion of unidirectionality (Prévost 2003, Haspelmath 2004, Norde 2009, Fischer 2013). The term ‘grammaticalization’ also refers to an analytical framework, or even a theory, built from observations of regularities of such processes. This framework expanded considerably in the latter half of the 20th century, notably through the work of Kuryłowicz (1976), Benveniste (1968), and Givón (1979). Among the key publications are Lehmann ([1982] 1995), Hopper & Traugott (2003), Hopper (1991), Traugott & Heine (1991), Heine (1993, 1997), and Heine & Kuteva (2005, 2007).

Around the turn of the 21st century, Construction Grammar developed rapidly. Much early research drew inspiration from Goldberg (1995), who defined a construction as a ‘form-meaning pair’ (1995: 4). Constructions are acquired individually because they are partly unpredictable, yet they are organized into a hierarchical network – the constructicon – that represents a speaker’s linguistic knowledge (Diessel 2023). In this network, lower-level constructions inherit properties from higher-level ones, and these vertical relations have been extensively studied. More elusive are the horizontal relations that link constructions at the same level, whether schematic or specific (e.g. *He broke the vase* / *The vase broke*). Diachronic Construction Grammar (a term first used by Ziegeler 2004; see Noël 2013) brings together work investigating how constructions evolve and how such changes are integrated into the constructicon (Barðdal et al. 2015, Smirnova & Sommerer 2020 *inter alia*).

Several authors have examined the relationship between grammaticalization theory and Diachronic Construction Grammar, but their conclusions diverge (Noël 2007, Trousdale 2012, Traugott & Trousdale 2013, Coussé et al. 2018, Hilpert 2018, Gildea & Barðdal 2023). Combining the two approaches helps capture a broader range of diachronic phenomena, though it raises both terminological and conceptual challenges. For instance, grammaticalization theory assumes a continuum between two poles – lexicon and grammar – whereas Construction Grammar conceives of grammar as the entire inventory of constructions, without such a fundamental division (Trousdale 2015, Heine et al. 2016; see also Boye & Harder 2012). In grammaticalization theory, ‘construction’ does not mean ‘form-meaning pair’ but rather the combination of at least two linguistic signs in interaction with context (Heine 2002, Bybee 2003, Himmelmann 2004: 31, Noël 2007, Legallois & Patard 2017, Haspelmath 2023). One may also ask which approach better accounts for syntactic changes, especially those involving word order (Lehmann 1992, Hilpert 2021, Prévost 2025). As a result, several scholars have questioned attempts to subsume grammaticalization under Construction Grammar principles (Börjars et al. 2015, Gregersen 2018, Heine et al. 2016, Hilpert 2021, Mélac 2024, 2025, Basile & Ziegeler *in press*, Heine et al. *in press*). Work on grammaticalization covers many linguistic areas, which led to numerous works adopting a typological approach (Heine & Kuteva 2002, Haspelmath 2019, Narrog & Heine 2018, Kuteva et al. 2019, Bisang & Malchukov 2020). Although Construction Grammar has increasingly been applied to languages beyond English (e.g. Croft 2001), it still tends to focus on specific constructions and their idiosyncratic features (Hilpert 2021). Given its theoretical orientation, Construction Grammar focuses less on typological generalizations and more on universals of linguistic usage and cognition.

**We invite proposals for papers or posters (500–800 words excluding references)** which may be either case studies discussing fundamental theoretical issues or theoretical work based on innovative empirical analyses, regardless of language. Contributions to the conference are invited to address especially questions like the following:

- What place should grammaticalization and Diachronic Construction Grammar occupy within a general theory of language change? Should we maintain them as distinct analytical frameworks, or seek to integrate them?
- What exactly is the scope of grammaticalization and Diachronic Construction Grammar?
- What predictive or explanatory power can be attributed to studies on grammaticalization and Diachronic Construction Grammar?
- To what extent are grammaticalization and Diachronic Construction Grammar relevant for explaining linguistic diversity and typological patterns?
- Which kinds of change, such as word order shifts or the development of discourse markers, are better accounted for by grammaticalization theory or Diachronic Construction Grammar?
- Do temporality or gradualness distinguish grammaticalization from other types of language change?
- Do frequency, analogy, and productivity have the same role for lexical and grammatical changes?
- How does the constructicon evolve – through the simple emergence or disappearance of constructions, through internal modification, or through reconfiguration of the network itself? Are these changes compatible with the key principles of grammaticalization theory?

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