

A Discourse Traditions approach to Grammaticalization: cultural and discourse-oriented reflections on syntactic change

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Discourse traditions are “moldes normativos convencionalizados que guían la transmisión de un sentido mediante elementos lingüísticos tanto en su producción como en su recepción” (Oesterreicher 1997: 20). They are sometimes associated with discourse genres (Company Company 2012), but can also refer to different low-level discourse practices within established discourse genres (Kabatek 2013). Crucially, Discourse Traditions range from Communicative Immediacy (i.e. spoken and written interaction) to Communicative Distance (i.e. lack of interaction) (Koch & Oesterreicher 1985). In this presentation I will show that the actualization of grammatical change cannot be accounted for without examining Discourse Traditions.

I will first discuss the role of discourse organization and constructional environments in grammatical change. Petré (2014) shows how the Old English copular verb *weorðan* ‘become’ disappears due to its association with inversion. Brinton (1996) describes the role of framing subordinate clauses in the development of [BE *Ving*] in late Middle English. Eventually, [BE *Ving*] acquires a framing function in main clauses. Similar patterns can be examined for the pronominal passive in preclassical Spanish, which in the second half of the 15th century expands to the detriment of the periphrastic passive. These instances of discourse organization illustrate how specific discourse settings are the locus of change. We will link them to the changing reception of Discourse Traditions.

Secondly, I will focus on the role of Latin in the syntactic elaboration processes experienced by the languages of Europe. It is established knowledge that the written syntax of many European languages is heavily indebted with Latinate Discourse Traditions (cf. Blatt 1957). Yet, Latin also provoked other types of vernacular syntactic elaboration (cf. Cornillie & Octavio de Toledo 2015). In this paper I will deal with two of them: (i) syntactization and (ii) the grammaticalization of calques. Syntactization (Givón 1979) refers to the increasing tendency to syntactically encode what before was implicitly conveyed, e.g. the shift from medieval parataxis to renaissance hypotaxis. Interestingly, some of the new syntactic tools were commonly used in Latin (e.g. subordinating conjunctions), whereas others were not (e.g. anaphoric use of articles, some auxiliaries). Hence, Latin influence goes beyond the level of constructions and touches upon the discourse structure of a language. (ii) The auxiliary construction with *amenazar* or *threaten* + infinitive arises from a Latin calque, without being a calque itself. The shift from a nominal construction (e.g. *minare ruinam – amenaza ruina*) to an auxiliary (e.g. *amenaza de se caer*) involves further grammaticalization. Interestingly, this happens in many Western European languages at a different moment of the history. I will show that the auxiliary construction shows up at times when specific national languages flourish. Hence, the competition with Latin motivated new grammatical solutions explains the different diachrony of similar constructions in Latinate Discourse Traditions: Spanish auxiliary *amenazar* + infinitive arises at the end of the 15th century, whereas the Dutch counterpart *dreigen* only does so in the 17th century.

Finally, I will address the question of supporting constructional features and the actualization of grammaticalized calques. The success of the so-called subject-raising construction in English (e.g. *You are expected to leave rooms tidy*) is often explained in terms of Latin influence. Yet, if this were the only factor, the construction would be more pervasive in other languages of Europe such as Romance. Hence, the high frequency in English may also have a language-internal reason. Noël (2008) suggests the construction was favoured in

Late Modern English by a new English rule that subjects must be topics. The double association with Latinate and vernacular syntax makes its study especially interesting.

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