

Workshop call for SLE 2024 in Helsinki

Origin of Discourse Particles: Borrowing and Grammaticalization

Keywords: discourse particles, origin and development, language contact,

Discourse particles (henceforth DiPs) are short, usually unstressed items, sometimes clitic, which are more prominent in oral rather than in written speech, typically have no propositional meaning and display textual and interpersonal pragmatic functions. These functions may include connecting current with prior talk, claiming the hearer's attention, organizing discourse – e.g. indicating a new topic, initiating or closing discourse, denoting old and new information, initiating repair – , and indexing the speaker's stance, attitudes and evaluation towards the addressee and their contribution (e.g. Zimmermann 2011, Forker 2020: 340–342, see also Fischer 2006). Due to their phonological shortness and their complex semantics, their origin is more than often non-transparent. This is especially true for languages without a long written history.

Just like any other lexical item, a DiP may have a language-internal source or be borrowed through language contact. Instances of the latter alternative have been identified and discussed in great numbers, a fact that has a natural explanation. In borrowing hierarchies, DiPs together with connectors occupy high places (Matras 2009: 193–194), and borrowed DiPs are often easily identifiable, e.g. Russian DiPs like *ved'*, *zhe*, or *vot* in contact languages of Russian (Majtinskaja 1982: 138–139). Language contact and the transfer of DiP-related linguistic matter and patterns can have several dimensions beyond the mere identification as a loanword:

- a certain DiP may be used by a multilingual speaker across different languages
- a DiP may be borrowed from one language into another but develop different usage patterns in the two languages as e.g. with Russian *ved'* in Komi, Udmurt and Erzya (Zubova et al. 2021)
- a DiP may wander across different languages and form an areal pattern, e.g. NU/NĀ, (Auer & Maschler 2016), or the originally Turkic emphatic identity particle *ok* in the languages of the Volga-Kama area (Zakirova 2019)
- an areal pattern may develop through a mix of borrowing and calquing, e.g. Metslang et al. (2017: 497) observe widespread interrogative particles with an original meaning 'or' in the Baltic region like Estonian *või/vä*, Livonian *või*, South Estonian, Votic, Finnish and North Sami *vai*, Central-Southern Sami *vaj*, Veps *vā*, Latvian *vai*, Latgalian *voi* and *ci*, Old Lithuanian *angu* and *-gu*, Latvian *-g*, as well as the clitic *li* in Slavic languages and sentence-final *oder* in German spoken language.

A complicating factor are misleading cases of homonymy. The particles *uk* in Tatar and Udmurt provide an example: what looks like (and has been claimed to be) a case of borrowing at first glance is in fact the result of language-internal grammaticalization in Udmurt (Arkhangelskiy forthc.). More famous cases of grammaticalization are German modal particles like *auch*, *denn*, *doch*, *ja*, *wohl*, which are often characterized as overlapping with and/or originating from other functional categories like adverbs or interjections (Burkhardt 1994, Zimmermann 2011), or Estonian *ikka* 'always; contrary to what was thought in the meanwhile' < **ikä* 'time, lifetime' (Pajusalu & Pajusalu 2011: 78), or Russian *ved'* from a verb 'to know' (Panov 2020: 16) (see more in Majtinskaja 1982: 124–125). Grammaticalization may also be contact-induced (Heine & Kuteva 2005: 13–21). In case of DiPs, however, the notion of grammaticalization is not uncontroversial, often they are understood as a result of pragmaticalization or even lexicalization (see Onodera 2012 for a discussion). Note that DiPs may overlap or interfere with other types of particles as for instance demonstrative particles (e.g. equivalents of Russ. *vot!* 'here!'), restrictive (or focus) particles (e.g.

‘only’), specifying particles (e.g. Hung. *éppen* ‘just, exactly’), degree particles (‘almost, hardly’), affirmative particles (e.g. Est. *küll* ‘of course, well’), negation particles (‘not’), question particles (e.g. Finn. =*kO*), modal particles of doubt, uncertainty, conviction, wish, admission, hortativity, subjective quotes (Majtinskaja 1982: 123–135)

The focus of this workshop is on explanations of small DiPs as the result of grammaticalization and/or borrowing or calquing. We are particularly interested in:

- grammaticalization paths of DiPs
- identification of a DiP as a borrowed or calqued element
- differences in the use of a DiP in the donor and the borrowing language
- repeated borrowing of particles at different times
- influence of a borrowed DiP on the genuine system of DiPs in a language, functional changes
- interaction and competition of borrowed and genuine DiPs in a language
- double marking and mixing of autochthonous and borrowed particles
- contrast between borrowed and native particles in a language
- parallel formation of DiPs with the same meaning in contacting languages
- identification of routes of wider distributed DiPs
- stable use of one and the same particle in the different languages of a multilingual speaker

While we are principally interested in these phenomena from a cross-linguistic perspective, we can’t deny a special interest in Uralic and families in contact with Uralic like the Baltic, Slavic, Germanic, Turkic, Tungusic, and Yeniseic.

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Call for papers: Preliminary abstracts of no more than 300 words (excluding references) in .doc, .docx, .rtf or .odt format should be sent before November 16, 2023, to one of the workshop organizers:

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If the workshop is accepted, it will take place at the 57th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea in Helsinki, 21–24 August 2024 (for more information on the conference see <https://societaslinguistica.eu/sle2024/>). All preliminary workshop participants will be invited to submit their full abstracts before January 15, 2024. Any questions or suggestions regarding the workshop are very welcome.