

Workshop: Reanalysis in cross-linguistic perspective: Theoretical and empirical implications

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The concept of reanalysis has been the subject of several well-known controversies over the decades, with debate focusing, for example, on the syntactic vs. semantic and pragmatic nature of reanalysis, its gradual or abrupt character, the role of ambiguity, or the delimitation of reanalysis relative to other phenomena in language change, such as grammaticalization and analogy (see Madariaga 2017 and Detges et al. 2021 for comprehensive overviews). Despite these controversies, there is general consensus in the literature that reanalysis—broadly understood as a change in a user’s interpretation of an existing construction, both at the structural and at the functional level—plays a major role in the emergence of grammatical structure cross-linguistically.

In particular, grammaticalization studies and other studies of language change carried out from a cross-linguistic perspective have shown that reanalysis is responsible for the development of new grammatical structures in a wide variety of domains across languages, including e.g. TAM, word order, nominal morphology, grammatical relations, and clause combining (Givón 1979; Heine and Reh 1984; Aristar 1991; Lord 1993; Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994; Harris and Campbell 1995; Gildea 1998; Evans 2007; Creissels 2008; Malchukov 2008; Mithun 2008; Cristofaro 2016, 2023, 2024, among many others).

This research has gathered extensive cross-linguistic evidence about the starting and endpoints of various processes involving reanalysis, specifically the source constructions and the resulting structural and functional changes (see, for example, Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994; Heine, Claudi, and Hünemeyer 1991; Hopper and Traugott 2003; Lehmann 2015; Bisang and Malchukov 2017, 2020; Heine et al. 2019). However, as noted by several scholars (Diewald 2006, Garrett 2011, Petré and Van de Velde 2018), comparatively less attention has been devoted to the specific mechanisms driving these changes.

In many cases, reanalysis has been argued to ultimately originate from a process of form-meaning redistribution that occurs during language use as the relevant constructions are reinterpreted due to context-induced inferences (Gildea 1998; Croft 2000; Hopper and Traugott 2003; Eckardt 2006; Detges and Waltereit 2002; Moosegard Hansen 2021, among others). These inferences broadly fall into two types, sometimes referred to as metonymization and generalization (Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994; Traugott and Dasher 2005). In metonymization, the relevant forms are inferred to encode a meaning originally associated with a co-occurring element or the overall context. In generalization some component of their origi-

nal meaning is inferred to be the main meaning as other meaning components are deprofiled.

For other scholars (Fischer 2007; De Smet 2009, 2012), reanalysis is better understood as a result of analogical influence, where particular constructions are given a novel interpretation based on patterns from other constructions in the language. Yet another mechanism is chunking—the loss of the boundaries within elements within a construction, leading for example to affixes being reinterpreted as part of the stem, the development of affixation, or the emergence of phrase structure (see e.g. Bybee 2001, 2007; Beckner and Bybee 2009).

These mechanisms have been proposed based on specific, often well-known cases of reanalysis. However, for most instances of reanalysis that have been described in the literature—both in grammaticalization studies and elsewhere— they have not been discussed in detail or compared, and there is generally no investigation of the specific factors that may have triggered them in individual languages.

For instance, metonymization and generalization are commonly assumed to be related to the relative communicative relevance or contextual prominence of different meaning components within the source construction, which may lead to a form-meaning redistribution (Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994, among others). Yet, these factors are often not explored for individual source constructions, nor is the role of other potential triggers for reanalysis, such as the possible analogical influence of other constructions in the language, the relative discourse frequency of the source construction (in regard both to metonymization and generalization, and chunking), or prosodic factors, which have been argued to play a critical role in affixation and the emergence of phrase structure (Himmelmann 2014, 2022).

The aim of the workshop is to foster reflection on the factors that may trigger reanalysis across languages, with particular focus on two general research issues:

- (i) The elaboration of a comprehensive typology of these factors. This would make it possible to systematically compare different instances of reanalysis across languages, to further address yet unresolved question such as the scope of reanalysis with respect to other phenomena (analogical extension, grammaticalization), and to formulate hypotheses about why reanalysis takes place or fails to take place under similar conditions in different languages. While research on specific factors triggering reanalysis may be difficult in the absence of corpus evidence (particularly evidence from historical corpora), examination of these factors for languages where such evidence is available may point to new ways to investigate these factors in other languages as well.
- (ii) The potential implications of reanalysis for the explanation of recurrent cross-linguistic patterns. In classical typological explanations of these patterns, particular constructions recurrently occur cross-linguistically because they comply with functional principles, such as economy or processing ease (see, e.g., Croft 2003; Hawkins 2014; Haspelmath 2021). However, these constructions often develop through reanalysis, and the mechanisms involved in reanalysis are not usually explained in terms of such principles. Instead, they are generally assumed to be related to properties of the source construction, e.g. contextual properties leading to particular inferences, relationship with other

constructions, or repetition and automatization of the construction (leading to chunking). This suggests that the development and cross-linguistic distribution of the resulting constructions are ultimately motivated by these properties, rather than the assumed functional principles (Bybee 2008; Cristofaro 2019, among several others).

The workshop includes a number of confirmed participants, who will address these issues either on the basis of individual languages, or based on cross-linguistic comparison. Additional papers will be invited through a call for papers. We especially welcome typologically oriented contributions on the following topics:

- Language-specific and cross-linguistic investigation of the factors driving reanalysis, including empirical ways to test the role of these factors.
- Ways to compare instances of reanalysis across languages, both in regard to both terminology and analytical parameters.
- Novel paths of reanalysis from lesser-known languages.
- Implications of reanalysis for classical functional principles pertaining to the synchronic properties of the resulting constructions, such as economy or processing ease. Can these principles still be assumed to play a role in the emergence and cross-linguistic distribution of these constructions, or does reanalysis point to different explanations for these phenomena?

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