A typology of linear and non-linear forms of pragmaticalization

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In this paper I address the diachronic evolution of pragmatic markers, with a focus on what I call linear *vs* non-linear forms of pragmaticalization.

The rise of pragmatic markers has been an increasingly popular research topic for more than three decades. The pathway that has hitherto been most frequently attested involves linguistic items or constructions that originally have truth-conditional meaning and belong to « core » grammar, but which more or less gradually evolve non-truth-conditional, more (inter)subjective, uses that lie outside « core » grammar. This form of evolution is widely assumed to be regular, unidirectional, and thus fundamentally linear in nature. Saliently, the study of such cases been used to argue for a redefinition of the notion of grammaticalization (e.g. Traugott 1995).

The literature has, however, reported examples of markers that appear to have taken more complex, non-linear, paths at the semantic-pragmatic and/or the syntactic level. Such paths include, but are not limited to, the cyclical ones described by Ghezzi & Molinelli (2014), and by Hansen (2014, 2018).

This paper argues that because of the existence of such non-linear paths, it is unhelpful to subsume the rise of pragmatic markers under the concept of grammaticalization. Nor is it preferable – as Traugott (2022) suggests – to use the broader notion of "constructionalization", which precludes a systematic account of the different "directions of travel" that a given marker may take in the course of its evolution. Instead, in order to arrive at a descriptively adequate model, it is more useful to draw on a distinction between grammaticalization, pragmaticalization (cf. Erman & Kotsinas 1993, Dostie 2004), and lexicalization.

I propose a typology of forms of pragmaticalization, which – besides what I have called "linear" pragmaticalization above – includes the following four non-linear forms:

(1) Grammatico-pragmaticalization
(2) Pragmaticalization-to-lexicalization spirals
(3) Gain-and-loss microspirals
(4) Cycles of pragmaticalization

The fourth category will be shown to comprise two subtypes, namely onomasiological *vs* semasiological cycles (Hansen 2018).

The typology is based on attested patterns of evolution prominently involving interaction between, on the one hand, two levels of meaning (what I call the Content Level and the Context Level, following Hansen 2008), and on the other hand, two levels of grammar (Micro-Syntax and Macro-Syntax, cf. Blanche-Benveniste et al. 1990, Berrendonner 1990, Haselow 2016, Heine et al. 2021).

Examples will be adduced from a range of Romance languages.

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