

Feature cyclicity as constructional change

This presentation focuses on the notion of feature cyclicity, i.e. a specific type among cyclical patterns of language change. It addresses the first question from this call for papers: What kinds of pattern in language change do we accept as instances of a cycle?

Previous research on the evolution of discourse markers in Sicilian has provided instances of gain-and-loss micro-spirals (cf. Hansen 2022). Building on these empirical studies, a general reflection on cyclicity is carried out, around two theoretical distinctions.

First, the basic concept of cyclicity is discussed, arguing for the need to disentangle renewal (portrayed by the metaphor of the wave) from back-and-forth change (portrayed by the metaphor of the spiral). Second, the object of cyclical changes is considered, which can be either a whole language item, i.e. a construction (a full-fledged form-meaning pair), or a specific aspect, i.e. a feature (a property of the item). In fact, the latter distinction can function within the framework of construction grammar, paralleling the one between constructionalization and constructional change (Traugott & Trousdale 2013).

Intersecting these two distinctions, a typology emerges of four different interpretations of how to detect a cycle. These four types are illustrated drawing on the recent research on cyclicity.

References

- Hansen, M-B. M. (2022). “Non-linear pragmaticalization: cycles, spirals, and other roundtrips”. Plenary speech held at *DisRom 7: Discourse Markers in Romance Languages*, University of Craiova, 16-18 June, 2022.
- Traugott, E.C., Trousdale, G. (2013). *Constructionalization and Constructional Changes*. Oxford: OUP.