ON THE ROLE OF GRAMMATICALIZATION IN CREOLIZATION

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Introduction

In the recent past, the phenomenon of grammaticalization has attracted a lot of attention in both functionalist and formalist circles (e.g. Traugott and Heine 1991a, Heine et al. 1991b, Hopper and Traugott 1993, Roberts 1993, Bybee et al. 1994, Harris and Campbell 1995, Lehmann 1982/1995). Roughly speaking, grammaticalization is the gradual drift in a grammar towards tighter structures and less freedom in the use of linguistic expressions. Content words become function words, free morphemes become clitics or affixes, and syntactic constructions become subject to stronger constraints.

Research on grammaticalization has also inspired a growing number of investigations of creole development. Although the nature and mechanisms of creole formation are still much under debate[1], there seems to be a consensus that grammatical expansion and restructuring play an important role in this process. In other words, creolization involves the creation of new grammatical categories and the development or acquisition of the formatives to express them. It is therefore not surprising that some authors (e.g. Mühlhäusler 1980, Romaine 1988, Plag 1994, Mufwene 1996) have argued that the evolution of grammatical categories and structures in creolization can be explained by universal principles of grammaticalization that are operative in creoles and non-creoles alike.

In a number of recent diachronic investigations, the role of grammaticalization in creole formation has been studied extensively (e.g. Plag 1993, Bruyn 1995 and the papers in Baker and Syea 1996). Building on ideas developed in Bruyn (1996), the present paper examines the results of these studies and discusses their implications for further research perspectives. I will argue that most

of the studies of grammaticalization in creoles demonstrate that the developments investigated are not instances of grammaticalization in the traditional sense. This does, however, not mean that the search for grammaticalization processes in creolization is in vain. Rather, the absence of grammaticalization in the emergence of grammatical structure is indicative of structural transfer. Hence, the exclusion of grammaticalization constitutes independent evidence for other explanations, and the rejection of grammaticalization as an important factor in creole formation re-opens the view on alternative explanations.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, the notion of grammaticalization is laid out in more detail to prepare the discussion of the role of language contact in grammaticalization. This is followed by a review of a number of phenomena in creole languages with regard to the question as to whether these phenomena can be subsumed under the notion of grammaticalization developed earlier. The final section summarizes and evaluates the results.

What is grammaticalization?

In order to investigate whether certain phenomena in creole formation are instances of grammaticalization, it is necessary to define as precisely as possible what is meant by this term. Which properties must a certain development possess in order to be classified as a case of grammaticalization? In this section I will summarize some possible answers to this question and discuss a number of presumed general properties of grammaticalization processes.

The term grammaticalization[2] is attributed to Meillet (1912), although 19th century authors already discuss pertinent phenomena (see Lehmann 1982/1995:1-8 for discussion and references). As indicated by the short definition given in the introductory section above, the term grammaticalization is used for two different, though related phenomena.

The first of these, and probably the one most commonly referred to, is the evolution of a grammatical morpheme, i.e. a function word or affix, out of an earlier lexical morpheme. For example, verbs may become adpositions, which may then turn into affixes. Traugott and Heine (1991b) label this kind of development the 'lexical item > morpheme model'. The second phenomenon concerns the evolution of syntactic and morphological structure through fixing of discourse strategies, a process called 'syntacticization' by Givón (1979). As pointed out by Traugott

and Heine (1991b:3), processes of the latter kind often involve developments that can be subsumed under the lexical item > morpheme model. In what follows I will primarily deal with this model.

A number of general properties are attributed to grammaticalization processes: gradualness, unidirectionality, semantic bleaching, layering, divergence, specialization, persistence, decategorialization (e.g. Hopper 1991, Lichtenberk 1991, Hopper and Traugott 1993). Many of these properties are controversial in that it is not clear whether the generalizations observed are indeed exceptionless, and if not, how the exceptions can be explained. I will focus my discussion on the two closely related properties of gradualness and unidirectionality because they are the most relevant ones for the argument developed in the subsequent sections.

Gradualness involves at least three different aspects: the Principle of Gradual Change in Function (Lichtenberk 1991), the idea of (universal) pathways, and the rate of change. As we will see, the first two are closely related to the concept of unidirectionality.

Lichtenberk proposes the Principle of Gradual Change in Function (henceforth referred to as Lichtenberk's Principle), which he explains as follows (1991:39)

> If an element that has a function A acquires a new function B and if subsequently the element that has function B (and possibly still function A) acquires a function C, the change from A to B will be smaller than the change from A to C would have been.

Schematically, this can be represented as in (1) (Lichtenberk 1991:39):

(1)   a. $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$

     b. $*A \rightarrow C \rightarrow B$

Lichtenberk's Principle encapsulates the wide-spread idea that changes of category are not a matter of all or nothing, but that words acquire new properties piecemeal, with complete category shift being one of the potential results. Although Lichtenberk's examples show that the size of the steps may be language-specific, it is nevertheless evident that there are strong cross-linguistic tendencies in the implementation of Lichtenberk's Principle. These tendencies are usually captured in the form of universally observable pathways of grammaticalization, the so-called grammaticalization chains, channels, clines, or continua (e.g. Givón 1979, Lehmann 1982/1995, Heine und Reh 1984, Hopper and Traugott 1993:6ff), which depict the gradual transitions from one category to another. For

illustration, consider the development of nouns into fusional case affixes, which proceeds cross-linguistically along the following cline (Lehmann 1985:304):

(2)   noun > secondary adposition > primary adposition >
        agglutinative case affix > fusional case affix

To mention one more example, the development of the general speech act verb (SAV) into a complementizer follows universally the pathway given in (3)(Ebert 1987):

(3)   The most general SAV is repeated before the complement >
        The morphological markers are reduced >
        The former SAV becomes an indeclinable particle. >
        The quotative particle is shifted to the embedded clause and becomes a conjunction >
        The conjunction may take on a final and/or causal interpretation >
        The conjunction marks conditional and/or relative clauses.

Lichtenberk's Principle makes the prediction that the points on such clines could not be arranged in a different order.

        At this stage it is not quite clear whether Lichtenberk's principle is exceptionless or whether it is possible in at least some domains to reverse the cline. Oft-cited controversial cases include affixes that became clitics or clitics that seem to have become reanalysed as independent words. Lehmann (1985/1992) dismisses some such cases by questioning the historical development assumed by other authors and proposes alternative analyses of the historical development. Since I am not aware of any unequivocal cases of cline reversal, I will assume a strong version of Lichtenberk's Principle.

        Another aspect of gradualness is that the changes along the clines are usually a matter of hundreds of years and do not occur within only a few generations. However, as pointed out by Traugott and Heine (1991b:10), even in different domains differential speed of grammaticalization can be observed. Particularly, studies of African languages suggest that certain kinds of developments proceed faster than others, for example, tense-aspect systems seem to emerge in a much smaller period of time than, say, noun class systems. A clearer assessment of possible time spans remains an objective of future research.

Having clarified some of the key properties of grammaticalization we may now turn to the question of how this relates to creolization.

Grammaticalization, language contact and creole formation

As conceded by Hopper and Traugott (1993: 209) most researchers in grammaticalization have worked under the assumption of a monogenetic model of language change. Thus, the notion of grammaticalization presented above completely ignores issues arising through language contact. Obviously, such an approach is insufficient to deal with the special problems of contact situations, carried to their extreme in creole formation. In the words of Hopper and Traugott, "a strictly monogenetic view of grammaticalization is ultimately inappropriate" (1993:220). Unfortunately, no model of grammaticalization in contact situations exists, which leaves the creolist with two options, both of which can be found in the pertinent publications. One of the options is to apply the notion of grammaticalization as is, i.e. ignoring the distinction between contact-induced and internal changes, the other option is to differentiate between these two kinds of development. I will argue that only by differentiating internal and contact-induced changes can we reach important new insights into the nature of both creolization and grammaticalization. The undifferentiated application of grammaticalization theory primarily means sticking a new label to well-known facts without providing a deeper understanding of the mechanisms involved in creole formation.

For example, in a recent paper presented at the 1997 SPCL meeting in London, Lumsden (1997) applies the term grammaticalization to cases of relexification where the relexified word is used in the creole as a grammatical word, with the grammatical functions inherited from the substrate language. Examples of such concurrent relexification/ grammaticalization are abundant in the literature, I only mention a few here: the use of the superstrate word for 'give' as benefactive preposition, the use of the word for 'say' as complementizer, the use of the word for 'go' as future marker, the use of a benefactive preposition as complementizer, the use of a locative adverb as copula and preverbal aspect marker, etc. In all such cases, the application of the term grammaticalization seems justified by the fact that a lexical morpheme (taken from the superstrate) has somehow turned into a grammatical morpheme (in the creole). The problem with this kind of terminology is, however, that nothing is really gained by reclassifying the phenomenon under discussion as grammaticalization. In particular, the controversy is not solved whether we are dealing

with relexification, i.e. substrate transfer, or with independent, language-internal grammaticalization processes that must be accounted for by universal developmental tendencies, Universal Grammar, the bioprogram or the like. Hence, by broadening the notion of grammaticalization to incorporate relexification into grammatical morphemes one of the most important issues in the study of creole formation is not resolved.

If we, alternatively, assume the much more constrained monogenetic notion of grammaticalization presented above, we get hold of an important diagnostic tool that helps to unequivocally identify substrate influence in creole formation.

Given that the socio-historical conditions for transfer are met, the most important (and sometimes the only feasible) argument for transfer is the similarity between certain structures in the substrate and the creole. The problem with this argument is that there are often ambiguous cases, such that a given development might be due to universal tendencies of language development, due to transfer, or due to a conspiracy of both factors. An example taken from the domain of phonology (and hence not involving grammaticalization) is the insertion of epenthetic vowels to break up consonant clusters or to avoid word-final consonants. The wide-spread tendency towards epenthesis in Caribbean creoles can be explained both in terms of substrate languages and in terms of universal preferences regarding syllabic structure: light, open syllables are cross-linguistically unmarked, but they are also the preferred structure in most of the relevant substrate languages.

Analogous examples involving grammaticalization are the above-mentioned developments of a benefactive/allative/causal preposition into an infinitival complementizer (cf. *fu/fi/fə/pu/pa* in the Caribbean creoles), or of 'say' into a complementizer (cf. *se/taki* in the English Caribbean creoles). Both developments are by no means restricted to the substrate languages involved, but are widely attested in the languages of the world (cf. Haspelmath 1989, Ebert 1989). Hence, in order to substantiate substrate origin, independent arguments are needed.

I claim that the notion of grammaticalization can be used as a heuristic tool to provide such arguments. The rationale is quite simple: under the assumption that language-internal developments must accord to the principles established in grammaticalization theory, violations of these principles must be interpreted as caused by external factors. By this token, we arrive at an independent indication of substrate transfer.

This idea owes much to Bruyn (1996), who, on the basis of her investigation of certain grammatical constructions in Sranan, distinguishes between three types of grammaticalization in creole. The first type, 'ordinary grammaticalization', is the kind of phenomenon discussed in section

2, i.e. the gradual, language-internal development of a grammatical marker or structure. According to her analysis the evolution of the definite singular article in 18th to 20th century Sranan is an example of ordinary grammaticalization (see Bruyn 1995:chapter 3.5 for details). The second type, called 'instantaneous grammaticalization', differs from ordinary grammaticalization in that "developments that normally proceed gradually can take place within a short time span in creolization" (Bruyn 1996:39). The third category of grammaticalization proposed by Bruyn (1996) is the most interesting in our context, 'apparent grammaticalization'. Analyzing complex prepositional phrases in Sranan, Bruyn comes to the conclusion that what looks like grammaticalization is in fact "the transfer of the result of a process of grammaticalization that has taken place in another language." (p. 42). In other words, there is strong diachronic evidence that the complex prepositional phrases in (4a) and (4b) are modeled on similar structures in one of the two major substrate languages (Gbe), and not the result of a language-internal grammaticalization from noun to preposition, as the synchronic data may first suggest:[3]

(4)　　a.　　na baka a oso

　　　　　　LOC back　DET house

　　　　　　'behind the house'

　　　　b.　　na a oso baka

　　　　　　LOC DET house back

　　　　　　'behind the house/at the back of the house'

　　　　c.　　le xɔ á megbé

　　　　　　LOC house back

　　　　　　'behind the house/at the back of the house'

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Gbe, see Heine et al. 1991b: 65ff, 141)

This example highlights a problem that I call the synchrony-diachrony fallacy, i.e. the assumption that the synchronic variation is always an indication for a language-internal diachronic change. Thus many of the pertinent creole studies follow Lehmann's idea that "Given two variants which are related by the parameters of grammaticalization ..., we can always tell which way the grammaticalization goes, or must have gone" (1982/1995:19). As we will shortly see, diachronic data from creole languages (where available, I should add) often do not confirm this assumption.

The review of number of recent studies of creole developments presented in the next section shows that violations of gradualness and unidirectionality are rather common in creole formation.

Some case studies: grammaticalization versus substrate transfer

The studies were selected on the basis of the simple criterion that they make allusion to the notion of grammaticalization. Most of them were taken from Baker and Syea 1996, which I consider to be the state-of-the-art volume concerning grammaticalization in contact languages (Plag in press a). The following languages are included in my survey: Ghanaian Pidgin English, Mauritian Creole, Melanesian Pidgin English, Saramaccan and Sranan. I will discuss studies relating to unidirectionality first, then studies relating to gradualness.

Syea (1996), Bruyn (1997) and Keesing (1991) present data that might be interpreted as evidence against unidirectionality. Syea (1996) investigates the historical development of *la* as a marker of definiteness in Mauritian and comes to the conclusion that it developed from affix to clitic. This would be an interesting case of degrammaticalization and thus an apparent violation of unidirectionality. However, the evidence is not unequivocal. While Syea gives some explicit arguments for the clitic status of *la* in contemporary Mauritian, there is no discussion in the paper why *la* must be analyzed as an affix in the earlier stages of the language. In the examples presented, *la* could just as well be considered a free form, especially since it is identical in form and meaning with the free form *la* 'there'. Syea's data may thus be reinterpreted in such a way that *la* underwent the much less spectacular development from a deictic adverb to a cliticized definite article.

More convincing data against unidirectionality can be found in Sranan. Bruyn (1997) observes that a number of English prepositions surface (also) as verbs in Sranan:

(5) *abra*   'cross'   < English *over*

     doro   'put through, go through'   < Dutch *door*

     lontu 'surround'   < Dutch *rond*

     opo   'rise, raise, lift up'   < English *up* (Dt. *op*)

Given the uncontroversial assumption that prepositions are more grammatical (or less lexical) in nature than verbs, this constitues an interesting case of cline reversal. However, Bruyn is able to

show that the striking similarities between the pertinent structures in Sranan and its substrate languages form a syndrome which escapes any other plausible diagnosis apart from substrate transfer. Thus, both Gbe and Sranan can be characterized by the absence of simple locative prepositions (such as English *in*, *on*, *under* etc.), and by the existence of complex PPs (of the type given in (4) above). Furthermore, the items in (5) and their Gbe equivalents share some peculiar properties. For example the word for 'cross$_V$, across$_P$' may appear as a locative element in complex PPs, as a verbal particle, and as a verb in both languages. These similarities alone may already convince many linguists that we are dealing with a contact-induced development, i.e. transfer from the substrate languages. For those who would consider these similarities as uncompelling evidence, the violation of unidirectionality is another independent, theoretically grounded indication of transfer.

A similar point is made by Keesing (1991) who treats the development of the Melanesian Pidgin temporal preposition *fastaem* (< E. *first time*) into a locative one, or the development of prepositions into prepositional verbs. Both processes are rather unexpected because they go against established directions of change, i.e. from the spatial to the temporal (e.g. Heine et al. 1991a, 1991b), and from verb to preposition (e.g. Kortmann and König 1992). Both Melanesian phenomena can, however, straightforwardly be accounted for under the assumption of substrate transfer.

These observations may also provide relief for many grammaticalization theorists because in the cases under discussion, the apparent reversal of directionality can be explained by external influence.

We may now turn to cases where gradualness plays a prominent role. Keesing's (1991) study is again relevant in this context. In his investigation of a number of Melanesian verbal grammatical categories he comes to the conclusion that these categories are transferred from the Eastern Oceanic substrate languages, his main argument being the close similarity between Pidgin and Eastern Oceanic. He shows, however, that at least some of the developments, in particular the evolution of *go* as an auxiliary verb, are short-cutting established grammaticalization chains, thus violating Lichtenberk's Principle.

This type of short-cutting also characterizes a number of other creole developments. Bruyn (1995, 1996) reanalyzes the data in Plag (1993, 1995) concerning the development of *taki* 'say', showing convincingly that the facts can be better explained if substrate transfer is taken into account. The crucial point of her argument is that there are otherwise inexplicable gaps in the

grammaticalization chains proposed in Plag (1993, 1995). Parallel arguments apply to the complex prepositional phrases of the type given in (4).

Huber (1996) puts forward grammaticalization chains for the development of aspect markers in Ghanaian Pidgin English. For reasons of space, I will restrict my comments to the nonpunctual markers, which is the only one for which diachronic data are presented.[4] With regard to these markers, Huber (1996:67) argues for the existence of a grammaticalization chain *live (for)* from verb to aspect marker. However, one page earlier Huber shows that "there are ... relatively strong arguments for a substratum influence in the 19th century WAPE [West African Pidgin English, I.P.] *live (for)* constructions" (Huber 1996:66). In Bruyn's words, we are faced with a case of apparent grammaticalization. The later, sudden replacement of *live (for)* by *dey* is best accounted for as a borrowing from Krio (Huber, p.c.). It remains to be shown whether *dey* is the result of a grammaticalization process in that language.

Smith (1996) investigates the Saramaccan focus marker *wɛ*, which appears to be grammaticalized from English *well*. It is shown, however, that there is no conceivable grammaticalization chain from discourse particle to focus marker for this item, but a striking parallelism to substrate structures. Again, the absence of internal grammaticalization enhances arguments for external influence, in this case the borrowing of a grammatical morpheme from the substrate.

Let us now turn to a typical case of the synchrony-diachrony fallacy, Veenstra's (1996a, 1996b) synchronic studies of grammaticalized verbs in Saramaccan. He explicitly assumes that the complementizer and/or prepositional use of the verbs *mbéi* 'make' and *dá* 'give' result from a language-internal development. However, Veenstra's assumption rest exclusively on the analysis of the present-day language and still needs to be tested against historical data. A preliminary historical investigation of the Sranan equivalent of Saramaccan *mbéi*, *meki,* shows that the earliest 18th century sources feature already the same kinds of constructions as Modern Sranan does (Schaper 1997). In other words, in Sranan there is no development observable, we are dealing with a case of instantaneous grammaticalization at best (in Bruyn's terminology).

This brings us to the problem of rate of change. As mentioned above, it is still unclear what the regular rate of development in grammaticalization is. The discrepancies in time span between certain processes in creoles and non-creoles strongly indicate that creoles develop much faster than non-creoles. This observation is neither new nor particularly striking. The difference itself can of course be explained in terms of discontinuity of transmission and communicative pressure that exists

in the situation in which the new creole language emerges. However, this explanation cannot answer the question whether instantaneous grammaticalization is qualitatively different from ordinary creolization.

Consider, for example, the emergence of Sranan *wan* as indefinite singular article, which is claimed by Bruyn (1995, 1996) to be a case of instantaneous grammaticalization. Wheras Sranan needed less than one hundred years for this development, the corresponding process in English took a number of centuries (Hopper and Martin 1987). What does this difference tell us? Not much, I'm afraid. First, it is unclear what exactly is meant when we talk about a "relatively short time span". Is one century a short period, or only 50 years, or even less? What about 200 years? Second, and this is more important, it is unclear whether the quantitative difference in time span is accompanied by a qualitative difference in terms of the mechanisms involved. With regard to the problem of definite articles in Sranan, for example, we do not know whether the difference in time span between the respective developments in Sranan and English is significant, and if so, of what. It is conceivable that even cases of instantaneous grammaticalization show all the properties of ordinary grammaticalization apart from time span.

The future

The points laid out above call for the development of a research agenda in which the search for putative grammaticalization processes may ultimately lead to a better understanding of contact-induced developments in the emergence of creole languages. Grammaticalization continua postulated on the basis of synchronic evidence must be critically assessed in the light of diachronic linguistic data in order to avoid the pitfalls of the synchrony-diachrony fallacy. Second, the data must be carefully scrutinized with respect to possible violations of the general principles of grammaticalization. Where such violations can be detected, researchers should investigate corresponding structures in the languages involved in the contact situation in order to find alternative explanations to language-internal grammaticalization. Although the case studies discussed above may have illustrated how such an agenda can be fruitfully implemented, some general practical and theoretical problems remain, to which I now turn.

The first problem is that, unfortunately, for many of today's creoles we lack reliable historical linguistic data, which often makes it impossible to investigate the putative grammaticalization process

diachronically. However, more and more historical texts are being discovered, and a lot of available, even published, material has never been used for grammaticalization studies. The case studies cited above show that, where historical linguistic data are lacking, synchronic variation does not necessarily reflect diachronic language-internal change

In those cases where diachronic sources are available we have to be aware of the fact that, for some reason or other, the sources may convey a distorted picture of the historical development in question. For example, the data may not give evidence of grammaticalization, even if it exists. In such cases we would erroneously jump to the conclusion that we are dealing with external influence. This brings us back to the rationale of the main argument formulated above. Of course not all violations of the principles of grammaticalization are necessarily caused by external factors. There are other language-internal mechanisms of change possible, such as analogy, reanalysis, reinterpretation, levelling and the like. In order to substantiate external factors such as substrate transfer, complementary independent evidence is certainly needed (along the lines suggested on p. 6 above). I have argued that grammaticalization research can add one important piece to the jigsaw, it cannot replace all other pieces. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that in most of the cases discussed in the preceding section, violations of grammaticalization principles go hand in hand with a close similarity of substrate and creole structures, indicating that contact-induced processes are the most important alternative explanation.

Another problem concerning the proposed research agenda is that the creolist's conclusions are dependent on the findings of the grammaticalization theorist. Given the - admittedly - still immature state of current grammaticalization theory, creolists run the risk that their working assumptions may crumble down. If it turned out, for instance, that Lichtenberk's Principle or other principles of (mono-genetic) grammaticalization were untenable, this would seriously question the rationale of the main argument proposed of this paper.

It should also not go unmentioned that a number of scholars have argued for the outright rejection of grammaticalization as a useful theoretical construct. For example, Harris and Campbell (1995: 50) do not assign any specific status to grammaticalization as a mechanism of linguistic change. They see grammaticalization as a specific instance or consequence of other mechanisms, i.e. reanalysis, extension and borrowing.[5]

As long as the jury is still out on these theoretical issues, it seems legitimate to use the tools developed by grammaticalization theorists to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in the emergence of new languages through language contact. The creolist's findings concerning

contact-induced change may even help grammaticalization theorists to solve some of the unsolved problems in their field.

Conclusion

To summarize, I have tried to demonstrate in this paper how the notion of grammaticalization can be fruitfully employed as a heuristic tool in the study of creole formation. I have put forward that, starting out from a restricted, basically monogenetic theory of grammaticalization, violations of the principles of grammaticalization may provide independent evidence for transfer in the emergence of creoles.

One of the key problems in any account of transfer is selection. There is no theory of transfer which is able to predict what can be transferred and what cannot. Attempts to constrain transferability are often confronted with annoying counterexamples (e.g. Thomason 1993:283, but see Muysken 1996 for a different position), so that cross-linguistic similarity often remains the crucial argument for linguistic continuity between substrate and creole. But even striking similarities can be accidental, as e.g. Veenstra (1996a:175-177) nicely illustrates. Especially in cases where both transfer and universals may play a role, the absence of ordinary grammaticalization can provide a theoretical argument for transfer *ex negativo*: if there is no language-internal grammaticalization, external influences are all the more likely.

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Notes

[1]   See Winford (1997) for a recent survey.

[2]   The competing term 'grammaticization' can also be found in the literature. In this article we will use the term grammaticalization, disregarding possible minor differences between the two (see Traugott and Heine 1991b:1f, Hopper & Traugott 1993:xvi for discussion).

[3]   See Plag (in press b) for a synchronic account of complex prepositional phrases in Sranan.

[4]   Concerning the markers *finish* and *come*, Huber only presents synchronic data. It remains to be shown whether a diachronic investigation can substantiate Huber's claim that these markers represent grammaticalization chains, or whether this is an instance of the synchrony-diachrony fallacy.

[5]   See also Halspelmath (in press) for discussion.