On the role of context in grammaticalization

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1. Introduction

In many studies on grammaticalization the procedure adopted is to contrast a historically earlier form-meaning unit or construction (A) with a later reflex of it (B) and, by describing the difference between the two, offer an interpretation on what has happened on the way from A to B. What is frequently underrated in such studies is that the process from A to B is a continuous one, involving a multitude of intermediate stages, and that without a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of these intermediate stages, generalizations on the overall process must remain preliminary.

Unfortunately, most processes of grammaticalization that have been studied so far are conventionalized and buried in history – to the extent that much of what happened on the way from A to B is no longer historically clearly recoverable. But there are cases, especially cases involving more recent processes, where the whole range of intermediate stages is accessible in the form of synchronic contextual variation. As has been pointed out in numerous works on this subject, the evolution of grammatical categories is to quite some extent context-driven, and an analysis of contextual variation therefore offers a powerful tool for reconstruction: Different stages of evolution tend to be reflected in the form of different context clusters.

The present paper focuses on what happens on the way from A to B. It is argued that there is one stage in particular, called the switch context stage, which can be held responsible for this process. This stage is characterized by an interaction of context and conceptualization, leading to the rise of new grammatical meanings.
2. Context-induced reinterpretation

2.1 The variables

A survey of a larger corpus of data suggests that there is a catalogue of factors that have been associated with the evolution of new grammatical meanings. These are in particular:

- a. Context
- b. Frequency of use
- c. Reasoning processes (inferencing)
- d. Mechanisms of transfer (metaphor, metonymy, etc.)
- e. Directionality (Abstraction/Concretization)
- f. Semantic implications (bleaching, generalization)

My concern will be exclusively with context, more specifically with the following question: What are the contextual requirements for grammatical meanings to evolve?

I will propose a scenario which, I hope, will be of help to get closer to an answer to this question. For a better understanding of the following, a few technical terms need to be introduced. I will refer to the “original” meaning an item has prior to the process to start as the source meaning and the new grammatical meaning associated with the same form as the target meaning. Terms such as “is derived from,” “develops into,” “gives rise to,” and the like refer to diachronic processes, that is, their use is based on linguistic reconstruction work. There are three different kinds of context that need to be distinguished, which are:

Bridging contexts

The first kind can be described in terms of what Evans and Wilkins (1998:5) call “bridging contexts,” which they say are crucial in semantic change (at least of the type studied by them). Bridging contexts correspond roughly to what Diewald (1999) in her analysis of German modals calls the critical context. They are what in the literature since Grice (1967) has been described in terms of “inferences,” “implicatures,” or suggestions. They have the following properties:

- a. They trigger an inferential mechanism to the effect that, rather than the source meaning, there is another meaning, the target meaning, that offers a more plausible interpretation of the utterance concerned.
- b. While the target meaning is the one most likely to be inferred, it is still cancellable (see Grice 1967), that is, an interpretation in terms of the source meaning cannot be ruled out.
- c. A given linguistic form may be associated with a number of different bridging contexts.

Switch contexts

Bridging contexts do not lead straight to new meanings. What is required in addition are what I propose to call switch contexts. Switch contexts relate to what Diewald (1999) calls isolating contexts, where the target meaning “is isolated as a separate meaning from the older, more lexical meaning.” They have the following properties:

- a. They are incompatible, or in conflict, with some salient property of the source meaning.
- b. Hence, an interpretation in terms of the source meaning is ruled out.
- c. The target meaning now provides the only possible interpretation.
- d. Unlike conventional meanings, meanings appearing in switch contexts have to be supported by a specific context (or cluster of contexts).

Conventionalization

Most context-induced inferences remain what they are: they are confined to bridging contexts, they are what has variously been described as “contextual meanings” or “pragmatic meanings.” But some of them, i.e. those acquiring switch contexts, may develop some frequency of use, they no longer need to be supported by context, and they turn into “normal” or “inherent” or “usual” or “semantic” meanings (cf. Hopper and Traugott 1993:73–74). With reference to their source uses, conventionalized meanings have been described as “petrified” and “unpredictable.”

Conventionalization has received quite some treatment in the relevant literature and I have not much to add to that. That a target meaning has been conventionalized can be concluded from observations such as the following:

- a. It can be used in new contexts, other than the ones characterizing bridging and switch contexts.
- b. While in switch contexts, the target meaning is incompatible with the source meaning, conventionalization contexts can violate or contradict the source semantics.
- c. This means that the source and the target meanings can co-occur side-by-side in the same clause.

2.2 A scenario

What the foregoing discussion suggests is that the rise of new grammatical meanings can be described by means of a four-stage scenario, as proposed in (1). At stage
3. Exemplification

As the preceding remarks may have shown, context is the crucial factor in shaping new grammatical meanings. In exemplifying the scenario sketched in (1), I will pay special attention to the nature of switch contexts. Context is a highly diverse and complex area; in the following discussion I will therefore aim at narrowing down the range of possible contexts to a minimum to illustrate the nature of the process concerned. No claim is made that there may not be alternative ways in which this process can arise. Furthermore, while the number of context types leading to grammaticalization appears to be limited, it is not possible here to treat even a fraction of them. Rather, I will be confined to two recurrent types of context-induced meaning change.

3.1 Treat inanimates as humans

Perhaps one of the most common type of meaning-change involves a participant role typically reserved for humans to be opened for inanimate participants. Agents, experiencers, and benefactives are such participant roles: Typically, they stand for human participants. But once they are placed in switch contexts, where an interpretation in terms of a human participant is ruled out, this may trigger a new grammatical meaning, while the old meaning is suppressed or eliminated in that context.

I will give two examples to illustrate this kind of context manipulation, dealing with the development from reflexive to passive morphosyntax (3.1.1) and from volition to proximative aspects (3.1.2). The first example involves a case role typically reserved for agents, and the second an experiencer case role. Both examples, thus, concern participant marking involving exactly the same kind of context manipulation, the outcome however is strikingly different in each case concerned.

3.1.1 From reflexive to passive

It is well-known that in some languages there is polysemy involving one marker which is used to express both reflexive and passive functions. Due to substantial diachronic evidence that has become available, there can be hardly any doubt that polysemy of this kind is the historical result of a process whereby the use of reflexive markers was extended to also express other notions, including that of a passive. The main contours of this process have been discussed in various works (Givón 1981, 1990; Kemmer 1993; Haspelmath 1990). In the present section I will try to account for this process by using the scenario of grammaticalization presented in Table (1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Resulting meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Initial stage</td>
<td>Unconstrained</td>
<td>Source meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Bridging context</td>
<td>There is a specific context giving rise to an inference in favor of a new meaning</td>
<td>Target meaning foreground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Switch context</td>
<td>There is a new context which is incompatible with the source meaning</td>
<td>Source meaning background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Conventionalization</td>
<td>The target meaning no longer needs to be supported by the context that gave rise to it; it may be used in new contexts</td>
<td>Target meaning only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) A scenario of how a linguistic expression acquires a new grammatical meaning (where source meaning = non-grammaticalized, temporarily prior; target meaning = new grammatical meaning derived from the source meaning)
In doing so, a number of points need to be considered, which will be taken for
granted in the following. Such points concern, first, the fact that reflexive meanings
do not necessarily constitute the beginning of the evolution concerned; in quite a
number of languages, they themselves can be shown to be derived from expressions
for more concrete concepts, in particular from nouns meaning ‘body’ or ‘head’. Second,
the evolution does not proceed straight from reflexive to passive but leads via a number of intermediate steps (see Givón 1990; Haspelmath 1990; Kemmer 1993; Schladt 2000; Heine 2000 for details).8

Nevertheless, a survey of data from 49 African languages suggests that the over-
all contours of this evolution can be described by means of the four-stage scenario
proposed in (1), adapted in (2) for the process in question.

The nature of this process can be illustrated with an example from !Xun, more
precisely from the northern dialect of !Xun, spoken in southern Angola. !Xun (also
known as !Kung, !Xù, Ju, Ju-!hàa-si, or Zhu-!hòa-si), spoken by traditional hunter-
gatherers in southern Angola, northern Namibia and northwestern Botswana, is a
dialect cluster of what is traditionally called the Khoisan (or “Click”) family. Within
this family it forms the northern branch of South African Khoisan.9 The language has
a fairly analytic-isolating morphosyntax, a noun class system, and nominal modifiers
mostly follow their head but possessive modifiers precede the head noun. Consider the sentences in (3).10

(3) !Xun (North Khoisan, Khoisan)
a. yà ke ñhùn yà |ê11
3SG PAST kill his self
‘he has killed himself’
b. ma ke ǃgǁé- à mǐ |ê ke ángolà
1SG PAST bear-my self TR Angola
‘I was born in Angola’
c. màlì ke te’á yà |ê
money PAST steal its self
‘the money was stolen’
d. ǃgǁá má ke ǂtʰ’ì’ kà’ì’ |ê ke mì
water TOP PAST drink its self TR 1SG
‘the water has been drunk by me’

(3a) is suggestive of stage I of Table (2): It is a canonical instance of a reflexive use
of the !Xun particle |ê: the reflexive particle, formally the object of the clause, is
cor-referential with the subject; and the subject referent can be understood to be at
the same time an agent and a patient (or undergoer) of the process concerned.

(3b) is an instance of a bridging context of stage II. It is found with a restricted set
of transitive verbs, where there is a human subject participant, but the contextual
frame makes it clear that this participant is unable to control the event; hence there
is an inference to the effect that the subject referent is an undergoer, even if the
possibility that the subject referent is interpreted as an agent cannot entirely be
ruled out.

In contexts like (3c), an interpretation of the subject referent as an agent is no
longer possible: we have an inanimate subject which must be an undergoer, and the
context strongly suggests that there is an implied agent. We now have an instance
of a switch context, that is, of stage III. The only reasonable interpretation of (3c) is
that we are dealing with an agentless passive sentence.

(3d) illustrates stage IV, the conventionalization stage: With verbs that can ap-
pear in such contexts, passive is the only possible meaning, and |ê is freed from the
contextual constraints of the preceding stages. An external agent is introduced by
means of the transitivizing preposition ke (TR).

The !Xun example illustrates a case of context variation that appears to char-
acterize a number of otherwise unrelated instances of grammaticalization. What
all these cases have in common is that there is a conventional construction involv-
ing an agent case role that is extended to be used in contexts where that case role
is made available to participants that cannot be conceived of as agents. Initially
it is human participants who, on the basis of the contextual clues available, are
disqualified from being interpreted as agents, figure in such contexts, as in (3b),
but once the erstwhile agent role can be filled productively with inanimate partic-
pants, there remains only an interpretation in terms of an alternative grammatical
meaning and construction, where instead of a reflexive construction there is now a
full-fledged passive construction.
3.1.2 From volition to proximate

It is a commonplace that a volition schema of the kind [X wants Y] forms one of the three main sources for developing future tense categories (Bybee, Pagliuca and Perkins 1991; Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994). But this schema may also give rise to a different grammatical function: that of a proximate aspect. The function of this aspect is to define a temporal phase immediately preceding the initial boundary of the situation described by the main verb. Proximate aspects are commonly translated by means of ‘almost’, ‘nearly’, ‘be about to’, ‘be on the point of’, and the like. The structure of the evolution from volition to proximate has been described in some detail (König 1993: 294–316; Heine 1992, 1994, 1997; Kuteva 1998; Romaine 1999); I am confined here to one example illustrating a few salient characteristics of this process.12 Consider the following examples (4) from Standard Swahili.

(4) Swahili (Bantu, Niger-Congo)  Stage

a. a- na- taka ku- ni- i ta
   he- PRES- want INF- me- call
   ‘he wants to call me’ I

b. a- na- taka ku- fa
   he- PRES- want INF- die
   (i) ‘he wants to die’;
   (ii) ‘he is about to die’ II

c. M- ti u- na- taka ku- anguka
   C3- tree C3- PRES- PROX INF- fall
   ‘the tree is about to fall’ III

Example (4a) illustrates the source meaning of ‘volition’, that is, a verb meaning ‘want, wish’, characteristic of stage I. At stage II, there is a situation where a human subject referent cannot really be assumed to ‘want’ what is described by the relevant predicition. Stage II-contexts crosslinguistically involve verbs meaning ‘die’, ‘fall down’, or ‘break a body-part’, and the like. The meaning foregrounded in such examples is proximate; an interpretation in terms of volition is possible but less likely. Finally, volition is ruled out in examples where instead of a human referent there is an inanimate referent, as in (4c), unless there is some metaphorical and/or culture-specific conceptualization to the effect that inanimate participants are, or can be, presented as willful beings. (4c) thus appears to be an instance of stage III.

Swahili has not proceeded beyond stage III, but there are other languages that have: some South African Bantu languages, Chamus, a Maasai dialect, or West African Pidgin English (see below).

A schematic description of the process concerned is presented in (5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Resulting meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Initial stage</td>
<td>S is a willful human participant</td>
<td>Volition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Bridging context</td>
<td>S can be assumed NOT to want what is described by the event concerned</td>
<td>Proximate foregrounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Switch context</td>
<td>Rather than a human participant, S is inanimate; an interpretation of ‘want’ as denoting volition does not make sense</td>
<td>Volition background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Conventionalization</td>
<td>The proximate can now occur with human subjects (not attested in Swahili)</td>
<td>Proximate only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 From temporal limitation to contrast

Finally, I will give an example of quite a different type of switch context, concerning a concessive marker.

In the following discussion I will be dealing with a sequence of two clauses and the kind of links existing between the two. Irrespective of whether the order of the clauses can be reversed, or of what kind of link is involved, I will refer to the first clause as S1 and the second as S2 in accordance with the way they are presented in discourse.

3.2.1 German Dabei

A look at the current literature suggests a few more general observations on the status of concessives (see especially König 1988):

a. In spite of all the research that has been done, it has not been possible to define the notion concessive in a more generally accepted way. One way of describing this notion is by contrasting it with causality, in that concessivity can be said to express a causal relation that remains unfulfilled or ineffective (Helbig and Buscha 1988: 691). Alternatively, concessive relations are defined in terms of concepts such as surprise, counter-expectation, or incompatibility, conflict or dissonance between a concessive clause (S1) and the second clause involved in a concessive relation (S2), or the non-concessive clause expresses known information and the concessive clause new information (see e.g. Quirk et al. 1985: 1089; König 1988). Third, on the basis of a discourse-functional analysis of concessivity, Thompson and Mann (1987; see Section 2.3) argue that with a concessive utterance the speaker tries to manipulate the hearer to have positive regards for the apparent incompatibility between S1 and S2. Without trying
to evaluate such notions, I will assume that concessivity is cross-linguistically somehow a semantic-functional primitive.

b. In many languages there is a wide range of different forms to express concessive contrasts and, as a rule, these forms are etymologically fairly transparent.

c. The question of how concessive markers arise has received quite some attention in grammaticalization studies (see especially Abraham 1976; König 1985a, 1985b, 1988; Traugott 1988). A seminal study by König (1988) suggests that concessive connectives (and concessive constructions) can be divided into five main types on the basis of their etymology, their historical development, and other more basic uses of their components.

d. While concessive connectives tend to be historically derived from such notions as concomitance or incompatibility between the two situations contrasted, they themselves do not give rise to other grammatical meanings; concessive relations are, to put it in König’s (1988:150) wording, “a dead-end street for interpretative augmentation.”

My concern here is with the fifth type proposed by König (1988), that is, with connectives that imply co-occurrence or co-existence of two facts as part of their source meaning (König 1988:155). More specifically, I will be concerned with the modern High German connective dabei, whose source meaning can be translated roughly as ‘at that (occasion), during that event’.

Among the various conventional items that serve the expression of concessivity in German, dabei has found little scholarly attention. As a source item, it serves primarily as a temporal pronominal adverb (Helbig and Buscha 1988:340–341), referring to a limited time span. It is a member of a paradigm of anaphoric elements, formed on the same morphological pattern (adverb da ‘there’ + preposition) and functioning as complements or adjuncts, other members being dafur ‘for that’, damit ‘with that’, davor ‘on it, on that’, etc. All of these adverbs are associated with two different stress patterns, to some extent correlating with their respective role in discourse. For the present purpose this difference can be ignored, I will be concerned exclusively with [da/bei], that is, with the variant having stress on the second syllable. What distinguishes dabei from many other concessive connectives is, first, that in a concessive relation, S1-S2, it can only appear at the beginning of S2, and, second, that between S1 and S2 there is something like an utterance-final intonation break.

The various uses of dabei are illustrated in (6).

(6) German

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Karl geht schlafen; dabei trägt er einen Schlaflanzug.</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Karl is going to bed; (at that occasion) he is wearing a pyjama.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Karl geht schlafen; dabei ist er gar nicht müde.</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Karl is going to bed; still, he is not tired at all.’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Karl geht schlafen; dabei geht er um diese Zeit nie schlafen.         | III   |
| ‘Karl goes to bed; although he never goes to bed at this time.’          |       |
d. Karl geht schlafen; dabei war er eben noch überhaupt nicht müde.      | IV    |
| ‘Karl is going to bed, although a moment ago he wasn’t tired at all.’    |       |

(6a) is an instance of stage I: The dabei-clause is likely to receive a temporal interpretation, the two situations are described as occurring within the same time span. In such contexts, dabei can be placed either clause-initially or following the (auxiliary) verb, that is, instead of preceding the verb (trägt) in (6a), dabei can equally well follow the verb without any major difference of meaning.

Examples such as (6b) illustrate stage II: There is an inference to the effect that (6b) is meant concessively, since the information contained in the second clause is conceived of as being in contrast, or as being incompatible, with that of the first clause: It contradicts common experience according to which one normally does not go to bed unless one is tired. (6b) can therefore be paraphrased by using a conventional concessive connective like obwohl (although), as in (7a).

(7) German

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Karl geht schlafen, obwohl er garnicht müde.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Karl goes to bed, although he is not tired at all.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6b) is suggestive of a bridging context highlighting a new meaning: concessivity. Still, an interpretation in terms of the temporal source meaning is not entirely ruled out, as (7b) may show, which is a rough paraphrase of the source meaning of (6b):

(7) German

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. Karl geht schlafen; zu der Zeit ist er noch garnicht müde.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Karl goes to bed; at that time he is not tired at all.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6c) presents a new kind of context, the switch context of stage III: Instead of a temporally limited time span, the dabei-clause (S2) now refers to a time-stable situation, that is, it no longer involves a limited time span. A temporal source meaning is no longer possible – the only reasonable interpretation of (6c) is a concessive one.

In examples such as (6b) and (6c), dabei is now confined to the clause-initial position. It is possible to place dabei after the auxiliary, as in (7c), but only when the temporal source meaning is intended. As we noted above, the source meaning is free from this contextual constraint.

(7) German

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. Karl geht schlafen; er ist dabei gar nicht müde.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Karl is going to bed; as he is going to bed, he is not tired at all.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the meanings of dabei in (6a) through (6c) are context-dependent, (6d) is an instance of the conventionalization stage. The concessive meaning no longer
(8) Context-induced reinterpretation of German temporal *dabei* as concessive (\(S_1 = \) first clause, \(S_2 = \) *dabei*-clause)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Resulting meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Initial stage</td>
<td>(a) (S_1) and (S_2) co-occur within a limited time span;</td>
<td>Temporal simultaneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) <em>dabei</em> can occur either clause-initially or after the (auxiliary) verb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Bridging context</td>
<td>(a) The meaning of (S_2) is in contrast with that of (S_1);</td>
<td>Concessive meaning foregrounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) <em>dabei</em> can only occur clause-initially</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Switch context</td>
<td>(S_1) and/or (S_2) refer to a time-stable situation</td>
<td>Temporal meaning backgrounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Conventionalization</td>
<td>Concessive meaning is used in contexts violating the same-time constraint; (S_1) and (S_2) may refer to different time spans</td>
<td>Concessive meaning only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

needs to be supported by the context that gave rise to it: Stage-III contexts are incompatible with the same-time-span constraint, still, they do not violate it: Even if \(S_2\) denotes a time-stable situation, \(S_1\) and \(S_2\) are not in temporal contrast. In stage IV, there is now a more dramatic context expansion: the *dabei*-clause contradicts the same-time constraint, in that \(S_1\) and \(S_2\) refer to different time periods in (6d). That *dabei* is now a fully conventionalized concessive connective is suggested by the fact that it fulfills all three criteria that I proposed for conventionalization (see 2.1).

To conclude, we are dealing with an evolution as sketched in (8).

4. A typological dimension

The scenario proposed is based on diachronic reconstruction, but it can also be made use of for comparative purposes, more precisely for synchronic typology: Since the four stages distinguished can be expected to follow one another in the sequence established, and since languages differ with regard to which stage they have reached, it is possible to establish a crosslinguistic scale on the basis of the degree of grammaticalization a grammatical category has attained in a given language, or in languages in general.

The example of the evolution from reflexive to passive marker and from verb of volition to proximative marker may indicate how evolutionary chains like the ones discussed above can be arranged in a way that allows for a typological description of grammatical meaning. Thus, languages can be arranged along a scale of increasing grammaticalization according to which stage they have attained, as in Tables (9) and (10). Note that the purpose of these tables is merely to illustrate typological diversity; the information contained in them is based on a restricted set of languages only.

While type A languages are confined to the source meaning, type B languages may be said to have an incipient, contextually defined grammatical meaning which has not developed beyond the bridging stage II. In type C languages, the target meaning has established itself as a distinct meaning, and in type D languages the target meaning is a conventional meaning, no longer in need to be supported by context, and open to further grammaticalizations.

The content of Tables (9) and (10) can be presented in the form of an impacational scale, allowing for generalizations of the following kind: If a given language is found to have reached a certain stage (e.g., II, III, or IV), then it can be expected to also distinguish all preceding stages. The phrase "is expected to" signals that we are not dealing with a law but rather with *probabilities*: It may happen that, in the

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(9) Stages along the reflexive-to-passive chain in selected languages (for details, see Givón 1990; Kemmer 1993; Heine 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language type</th>
<th>I Initial stage</th>
<th>II Bridging stage</th>
<th>III Switch stage</th>
<th>IV Conventionalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Yoruba (<em>ara + Poss</em>), Supiyire (<em>-ye</em>)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Kxoè (<em>-can</em>)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Lugbara (<em>i</em>), Logone (<em>zi</em>), Spanish (<em>a</em>), Spanish (<em>e</em>)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: Xun (<em>i</em>-e)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(10) Stages along the volition-to-proximative chain in selected languages (For details, see Heine 1997; Kuteva 1998; and Romaine 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language type</th>
<th>I Initial stage</th>
<th>II Bridging stage</th>
<th>III Switch stage</th>
<th>IV Conventionalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: English (<em>want</em>)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Zulu (<em>-funa</em>)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Swahili (<em>-taka</em>), Ewe (<em>di</em>), Tok Pisin (<em>laik</em>)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: Chamus (<em>-yeye</em>), Tswana (<em>-bata</em>)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
course of historical development, a certain contextual use pattern falls out of use, is discontinued, which may have the effect that there will be a gap in scales such as (9) and (10).\(^1\)

5. Conclusions

A review of the literature on grammaticalization processes suggests that most previous studies have concentrated on stages II and IV, while there is hardly ever any information on switch contexts, which are usually subsumed under conventionalization. There are a few exceptions, e.g., Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca (1994), where some examples are provided that can be interpreted in terms of stage III situations.

In the preceding discussion a number of factors had to be ignored that would need to be also considered:

a. Grammaticalization paths: First, the examples presented illustrate only one way in which target meanings may evolve: passive, proximative and concessive markers have a number of different conceptual sources, and, conversely, the source meanings discussed may give rise to more than one target meaning (for more details, see References).

b. Time depth: Second, the process that I have sketched takes generations to happen, normally centuries. The speakers proposing bridging contexts are not normally the same as those who create\(^1\) switch contexts.

c. Context and other parameters.

The description proposed here might seem to be at variance with an analysis in terms of metaphor, metonymy, and other kinds of strategies of meaning transfer. As a matter of fact, however, it is not. Metaphorical transfer, as far as it shapes grammaticalization, has been described in terms of transfers across conceptual domains (see Heine, Claudi, and Hünemeyer 1991), where domains located farther left serve as metaphorical vehicles for domains to their right. (11) presents a catalogue of such domains.\(^1\)

(11) PERSON > OBJECT > SPACE > TIME > QUALITY

What the scale in (11) suggests, for example, is that concepts of the PERSON domain, i.e., human concepts, may serve as metaphorical vehicles to describe concepts of the OBJECT domain, that is, inanimate concepts. This is exactly what we were confronted with in switch contexts in Tables (2) and (5): The effect of switch contexts is that participant roles reserved for human referents can be filled with inanimate participants. In creating such switch contexts, therefore, the speaker appears to be guided by exactly this metaphor, whereby inanimate concepts are described in terms of human ones.

Our third example, (6), can be interpreted with reference to another kind of metaphor. The domain of QUALITY consists of abstract concepts, including "logical relations" such as causality, concessivity or adverativity. Now, the switch context that was identified in (8) induces an interpretation of temporal simultaneity in terms of a "logical, that is, concessive, contrast." What this amounts to is that contrast manipulation, as discussed here, leads to a transfer from the TIME domain, i.e., a temporal relation, to that of QUALITY, i.e., of a "logical relation."

To conclude, in spite of everything that seems to argue against it, there is some underlying conceptual transfer strategy, best described in terms of metaphorical transfers between different domains of experience, most of all of human conceptualization and communication. The main purpose of this paper was to show that a study of the various kinds of contexts figuring in grammatical evolution is a sine qua non for understanding why existing meanings give rise to new meanings. But such a study does not provide a meaningful answer to the question of why this evolution is necessarily unidirectional; what is required in addition is an understanding of the overall conceptual processes that guide context selection and semantic manipulation.

Abbreviations

- C1, C2, C3: noun class 1, 2, 3, etc.
- INF: infinitive marker
- PAST: past tense
- PRES: present tense
- PROX: proximative
- R: relational suffix
- S: subject referent
- S1, S2: first clause, second clause
- SG: singular
- TOP: topic marker
- TR: transitiveizing preposition
- 1, 2, 3: first, second, third person

Notes

1. Grammaticalization is a unidirectional process, that is, it leads from less grammatical to more grammatical forms and constructions. However, this process is not without exceptions: A number of examples contradicting the unidirectionality principle have been pointed out (see especially Newmeyer 1998: 260ff.). Still, as acknowledged by most of the scholars who have identified exceptional cases, such examples are few compared to the large number of cases that conform to the principle (cf. Haspelmath 1999). Furthermore, such examples can frequently be accounted for with reference to alternative forces, and finally, no instances of "complete reversals of grammaticalization" have been discovered so far (cf. Newmeyer 1998: 263; see Heine and Kuteva [in press]).
A critical context is characterized by multiple structural and semantic ambiguity, inviting different interpretations, including the target meaning (Diewald 1999).

The term “suggestion” is taken from Geis and Zwicky (1971), who consider it to be a sub-group of invited inferences.

One might also draw attention to the fact that the nature of the target meaning is severely constrained, not only by context, but in much the same way by the concretization strategy. This is actually implied in the work of these authors (Evans and Wilkins 1998) on the evolution from ‘hear’-verbs to cognitive verbs in Australian languages: It is unlikely that a cognitive verb meaning ‘know’ will provide the source meaning in a bridging context where the target meaning would be ‘hear’. A semantic change from ‘hear’ to ‘know’ is well attested whereas a reverse change has not been observed so far.

Diewald’s isolating contexts mark “the completion of the grammaticalization process,” hence they also appear to include what is called here the conventionalization stage (see below).

Nevertheless, some relics of the Stage 1 meaning tend to survive in certain contexts, cf. Hopper’s (1991) principle of persistence.

It goes without saying that this is not the only way in which passive markers can arise; see Haspelmath (1990) for details.

I will not deal with what tends to be referred to as “middle” uses of the markers concerned (see Kemmer 1993).

Khoisan consists of three sub-families, which are South African Khoisan, Sandawe and Hadza, the latter two spoken in north-central Tanzania (Greenberg 1963). Following Greenberg, a number of other scholars have presented evidence to prove that Khoisan is a genetic unit; still, there are some who would not consider the evidence available to be sufficient to “prove” genetic relationship. The data presented in this paper are taken from my field notes on Northern !Xun, collected during a field research trip to northern Namibia in October/November, 1998. I wish to express my gratitude to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Society) for having sponsored this research, to the Republic of Namibia for granting research permission, and to Joao Dumba for his services as a devoted and always patient consultant of the !Xun language.

In the following examples, two different third person possessive modifiers occur: yâ (noun class 1), and kâ(i) (noun class 4).

The reflexive marker /é is historically derived from the Proto-!Xun noun */ ae ‘body’; yâ /é means historically ‘his body’. The possessive modifier (yâ) in this example is co-referential with the subject.

My concern will be exclusively with proximate meanings derived from the Oblition Schema (involving verbs of obligation as a predicate nucleus; see Heine 1992, 1994, 1997; Kuteva 1998; Romaine 1999 for details); I will therefore ignore proximates derived from the Location Schema. Furthermore, I will not deal with avertive uses of obligation verbs (Kuteva 1998).

The following items are mentioned in the literature as expressing concessivity in German: bei all, allerdings, demnoch, derweil, gleichwohl, indessen, mogen + auch, obschon, ob-

wohl, unbeschadet, auch wenn, selbst wenn, wenngleicht, wiewohl, zwar (see Abraham 1976; König 1988).

Note that Helbig and Buscha (1988:341) classify them as pronouns or “substanntival words” rather than as adverbs.

Spanish can be said to present an incipient stage IV, that is, it has acquired some uses of a “canonical passive,” introducing agents by means of oblique phrases headed by por by with’ (cf. e.g. Givón 1990:604–605).

Such a case is reported e.g. by Gabrielle Diewald (p.c.) with reference to the evolution of German modal.

Concerning the terms “create” and “creativity,” see Heine, Claudi and Hünemeyer (1991).

In a number of works on grammaticalization, “metaphor” and “metonymy” have been described as mutually exclusive strategies, and much energy has been spent on whether a certain process is due to metaphor or to metonymy. I have described the structural changes discussed in this paper as being due to metaphorical transfer. However, as pointed out by Traugott and König (1991) and others, there would also seem to be justification to treat such changes, at least in part, as being due to metonymy. As demonstrated by Heine, Claudi and Hünemeyer (1991), the two notions are in no way contradictory, rather they complement one another in accounting for grammatical change. The main reasons for ignoring metonymy here are the following: As more recent psychological research on metaphor and metonymy suggests, the way “metonymy” is applied in studies of grammaticalization is not entirely in accordance with orthodox uses of the term. Second, in spite of all research that has been carried out so far, it remains largely unclear how the kind of directionality characterizing grammaticalization can be accounted for satisfactorily in terms of metonymy processes.

References


