

LANGUAGE IN TIME: A LESSON FUNCTIONALISTS MAY LEARN  
FROM MARGARET SCHLAUCH

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ABSTRACT

In the article, we attempt to explore Schlauch's understanding of synchrony and diachrony as seen in the context of her views on language non-autonomy as well as to relate the findings to the ongoing discussion within functional linguistics on the synchronic *vis-a-vis* diachronic dimensions of "subjectivity in grammaticalization". As both tenets, the one of (i) a blurred distinction between synchrony and diachrony and that of (ii) a subjectively-motivated language change seem to belong to a set of the most eagerly attempted tasks within the program of functional linguistics, we aim to show why and how functionally-oriented research can benefit from Schlauch. On our account, Schlauch not only projects a kind of non-autonomous linguistics that resembles and anticipates what has come to be known now as cognitive linguistics, but she also grasps what has recently polarised functionalists in reference to one of the most hotly debated topics in historical and general linguistics, i.e. grammaticalization. The latter point we show by making a brief exposition of Langacker's view of subjectivity.

1. Introduction

There are two objectives behind the present contribution. One is to explore the notions of synchrony and diachrony as presented in Schlauch's publications, in the context of her views on language (non-)autonomy. In this respect, our quest is expected to result in "the reconciliation view" (after Winters 1992: 503) of the synchrony/diachrony relationship. The other purpose is to relate the findings to the ongoing discussion within functional linguistics<sup>1</sup> on the synchronic *vis-a-vis*

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<sup>1</sup> Among the latest rough attempts at delimiting the scope of functional linguistics in the context of the grammaticalization issue, one finds Newmeyer (2001: 187-188, 191-192, 224-225), Janda (2001: 283, 303), and Traugott and Dasher (2002: 5-7). The first two build an opposition between functionalists and generativists/formalists and, more specifically, they relate the former to "predominantly psycholinguistic ("cognitive") and "discourse-based (pragmatic) orientation" (Janda

diachronic dimensions of the so-called subjectivity in grammaticalization (*cf.* Langacker 1998, 1999 vs. Traugott 1999a and Traugott and Dasher 2002). As both tenets, the one of (i) a blurred distinction between synchrony and diachrony (*cf.* Langacker 1987: 14-20; Heine *et al.* 1991: ch. 9), and that of (ii) a subjectively-motivated language change, including a unidirectional development of lexemes into grammatical items (*cf.* Traugott and Dasher 2002: 81-99), seem to belong to a set of the most eagerly attempted tasks within the program of functional linguistics, it is to the benefit of functionally-oriented research that Schlauch's views are subjected to our critical scrutiny here.

## 2. Schlauch on synchrony and diachrony

On the one hand, Schlauch's ideas on the temporal organization of language reflect the typically-structuralist conceptions of (i) the synchrony-diachrony dichotomy and (ii) the priority of synchronic system over diachronic change, respectively. Accordingly, the synchronic approach to language is defined as "the study of linguistic elements as they appear at a given period, without regard to their historical background", whereas the diachronic point of view embraces "a study which concerns itself with these elements as they have developed over the course of centuries" (Schlauch 1967: 56). This, naturally, must present "the fundamental method [in "the procedure for historical study"] as the comparison of one synchronic description with another, without preference for one above another" (Schlauch 1967: 59).

Yet, on the other hand, in her identifying synchronic states, Schlauch makes an extensive use of "external tendencies", "the social and cultural environment", or "the social and cultural trends" (*cf.* Schlauch 1959), which, on principle, are all historical developments. This, in turn, stems from her conviction that "the [diachronic] shifts in usage sometimes throw very interesting light on the way people of an earlier age envisaged themselves in relation to the universe and one another" (Schlauch 1967: 57).

## 3. Schlauch on language (non-)autonomy

Moreover, for Schlauch, the synchrony/diachrony dilemma is not so much a question of time, as a question of language autonomy. In the context of investigating unrecorded languages, she sees the problem as follows:

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2001: 304). Similarly, Traugott and Dasher see "functional issues" closely related to "cognitive studies of the structuring of semantic domains", "the pragmatics of the conventionalising of implicatures", and "discourse analysis conceived as the interaction of grammar and use". For that reason, they claim their "approach is in principle consistent with the variety of theories associated more or less directly with Construction Grammar and Cognitive Linguistics".

On the one hand, the technique of dealing with unknown languages lacking any written records led some investigators to regard them as systems in isolation, self-contained and self-explanatory. On the other hand, the use of such languages for purposes of sociological study inevitably raised the question: How, if at all, is the structure of a language related to its speakers' patterns of social behaviour and even their patterns of thought?

(Schlauch 1967: 161)

The answer to this question Schlauch gives on every second page of her (1956) work where English medieval literature is discussed in relation to such social structuring forces as Christianity, feudalism, or merchant capital. This justifies her (1967: 162-163) conclusive remark that

... human beings are quite capable of rising above the restriction of their linguistic systems when the need is pointed out to them. ... These who look upon a linguistic system as a prepared strait-jacket for thought forget that human beings are quite capable of modifying it consciously ... Whether or not the potentialities are to be realised will depend on non-linguistic factors of social history.

One notable example she gives is that of Bazaar Malay, a *lingua franca* developed by the Dutch merely for communicative reasons, yet turned into the national language of the Republic, having served the purposes of a tool of independence struggle.

To the same effect, the question of language autonomy crops up on a more general level of linguistic analysis. Schlauch (1959: 218) asks this: "Can any unit of language which has meaning ... be explained exclusively in terms of the internal structure of a language, or must recourse be made at some point or other to the objective world of phenomena outside of language?" In her answer (1959: 218), there are at least two generalisations that bear most directly on the contemporary linguistic scene.

Those who take the former position [of autonomy] believe that the meaning of a morpheme, whether bound or independent, is in effect the sum total of the environments in which it may appear in connected discourse. ... Those who take the latter position believe on the other hand that the definition of meaning on any level requires an appeal to the external objects and relations about which language speaks. ... They do not regard language as a closed, self-explanatory system, whether it is viewed as a structure divorced from human consciousness (the mechanist view) or confined to the private consciousness of individual speakers (the subjective idealist view).

One generalisation is that she projects a kind of non-autonomous linguistics that resembles and/or anticipates what has come to be known now as cognitive linguistics. Namely, Schlauch clearly places linguistics away from objectivism

and subjectivism, in a close relation to “human experience historically considered” (Schlauch 1959: 217). Years later, Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 192) would write:

What we are offering in the experientialist account of understanding and truth is an alternative which denies that subjectivity and objectivity are our only choices. We reject the objectivist view that there is absolute and unconditional truth without adopting the subjectivist alternative of truth as obtainable only through the imagination, unconstrained by external circumstances. The reason we have focused so much on metaphor is that it unites reason and imagination. Reason, at the very least, involves categorization, entailment, and inference. Imagination, in one of its many aspects, involves seeing one kind of thing in terms of another kind of thing...

At this point, Schlauch (1959: 217) would eagerly hasten to give an original example: “verbs meaning ‘to come’ and ‘to go’ readily give rise to terms of moral judgement (for instance: English *unbecoming* behaviour; French *inconvenable*)”.

In the other generalisation, Schlauch grasps what has most recently polarised functionalists in reference to one of the most heatedly, if not just hotly, debated topics in historical and general linguistics, i.e. grammaticalization. The generalisation is that linguistic meaning can be derived either from “connected discourse” or “the external objects and relations”. In other words, the question is whether their motivation for language, humans derive from “what is being said” (i.e. propositions in language organised in “connected discourse”) or from “what is talked about” (i.e. “external objects” in the world). This is precisely the difference between the two best-known readings of grammaticalization, or, rather, its rationale – subjectivity, that have evolved within functionally-oriented research.

#### 4. Subjectivity in grammaticalization<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, however well-established in cognitive linguistics, the notion of *subjectivity in grammaticalization* happens to be explicated with two competing proposals. What Traugott (1989, 1990, 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2001; cf. Traugott and

<sup>2</sup> As in the present contribution we concentrate on subjectivity, rather than grammaticalization, it is not our purpose to get involved here in the on-going reformulation of what grammaticalization should actually be, if anything at all (cf. Joseph 2001). Let it be enough here to say that grammaticalization studies seem to have indeed come a long way from Kuryłowicz’s (1965: 52) definition of the phenomenon (“the by now classic definition” (Heine *et al.* 1991: 3); “perhaps the one most commonly cited today” (Lyle Campbell and Richard D. Janda 2001: 95); “a benchmark study” (Joseph 2002)): “grammaticalization consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status, e.g. from a derivat[ional] ... formant to an inflectional one”. Yet, among the latest proposals we do find those that maintain the morphosyntactic characteristic found in Kuryłowicz: “grammaticalization is the change whereby

Dasher 2002) sees in subjectification is pragmatic strengthening of the speaker’s sense of discourse and rhetorical strategizing. Langacker (1998, 1999, 2000), in turn, applies subjectification to the weakening of the subject’s control of the event structure.<sup>3</sup>

Among other differences,<sup>4</sup> the two proposals differ in the choice of time perspective (cf. Traugott 1999a: 188) – Langacker’s weakening is principally synchronic, whereas Traugott’s strengthening is exclusively diachronic. Yet, this choice (of time perspective) seems only to be a derivative, a natural consequence, of the assumed conception of subjectivity-motivated grammaticalization. In what follows, we concentrate exclusively on Langacker’s model of subjectivity as we believe it gives a more typical expression to the functionalist claim of linguistic motivation and, thus, provides a clearer point of convergence with Schlauch’s ideas.<sup>5</sup>

lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions or grammatical items develop new grammatical functions” (Traugott 2001), or “grammaticalization is (a) the making of a grammatical formative out of something other than a grammatical formative, or (b) the making of a grammatical formative out of a grammatical formative with a weaker degree of grammatical function” (van der Auwera 2002: 21), or “a grammaticalization is a diachronic change by which the parts of a schematic construction come to have stronger internal dependencies” (Haspelmath 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Langacker (2000: 297): “Subjectification is a shift from a relatively objective construal of some entity to a more subjective one. The cases ... involve attenuation in the degree of control exerted by an agentive subject.”

<sup>4</sup> It is not clear in the literature whether these two proposals should be seen as compatible and complementary to each other, or, rather, as divergent and exclusive. As a proponent of the former view, Carey (1995: 101) concludes that “[t]he two models of subjectification [i.e. Traugott’s and Langacker’s] are linked by the nature of the underlying process, that is, the fact that conversational implicature plays a crucial role in instigating semantic change. While they differ in their surface characterisations, the two models are, in effect, simply highlighting different facets of the same process.” Similarly, Langacker believes that his “position is compatible with Traugott’s” (1998: 87), or that “there is no point ... in trying to decide between Traugott’s version of subjectivity and [his] own... The issue is purely terminological” (1999a: 150), or that “Traugott’s version of subjectivity and [his] own will both figure in an overall account of grammaticization” (2000: 394n). However, Traugott herself has repeatedly insisted that “the issue is not ‘purely terminological’ as Langacker ... had suggested” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 99). Although “[she agrees] with Langacker that subjectivity and objectivity are matters of linguistic perspective” (2002: 21), and “although Langacker’s and [her] views on the ubiquity of subjectivity coincide, [they] are using the term ‘subjectification’ to refer to substantially different phenomena, and from different perspectives on theory and methodology” (2002: 99; cf. Traugott 1999a: 87-88).

<sup>5</sup> Traugott’s theoretical standpoint with regard to language non-autonomy seems to lack consistency at times. For example, although Traugott and Dasher (2002: xi) “consider linguistic phenomena ... so closely tied to cognitive and social factors as not to be self-contained”, they work “on the assumption that experience is largely determined by language” (2002: 21). Furthermore, in her definition of subjectification, Traugott speaks of “perspectives and attitudes as constrained by the communicative world of the speech event, rather than by the so-called ‘real-world’ characteristics of the event or situation referred to” (Traugott 1999b; repeated in Traugott and Dasher 2002: 30) only to

## 5. Grammaticalization as a discovery of the world

For Langacker, subjectivity comes with “how the conceptualizer chooses to construe the situation and portrays it for expressive purposes” (Langacker 1990: 5), or, in other words, is a dimension of the construal that happens to be imposed on the content an expression evokes. In practice, the question is whether and to what extent an entity can be identified with the perceiving individual and whether and to what extent an entity remains outside the perceiving individual. Langacker (1990: 6-7; [the emphasis is original]) illustrates this point as follows:

If I take my glasses off, hold them in front of me, and examine them, their construal is *maximally objective* ...: *they function solely and prominently as the object of perception* ... By contrast, my construal of the glasses is *maximally subjective* when I am wearing them and examining another object, so that they fade from my conscious awareness despite their role in determining the nature of my perceptual experience.

As a driving force of grammaticalization, subjectivity evidently is not an obvious choice, because it remains a function of the viewing arrangement, of “the relative positions of the subject and object of conception” (Langacker 1999: 149), and thus enters a tug-of-war with objectivity.<sup>6</sup>

In his terminology and argumentation, Langacker brings up the theatre metaphor. There are two ends in a typical theatre performance situation. One is the event that takes place on the stage, with its actors and settings. The other is the audience, with its members that occupy space off the stage. The former is the object of apprehension (the explicit focus of attention), and the latter is the subject of apprehension (the implicit locus of consciousness). Against this background, subjectification is a unidirectional process on the part of the offstage audience of gradually getting involved in the onstage event. The role of the

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move freely, within one and the same section (Traugott 1990: 513-515), from “what is being said” (i.e. linguistic propositions) to “whatever is talked about” (i.e. events in the world). Similarly, giving the common basis for the tendencies in semantic change, Traugott says that “the later meanings presuppose not only a world of objects ..., but ... of linguistic relations that cannot exist without language” (1990: 501). Cf. Łozowski, forthcoming.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Langacker (2000: 297): “... Subjectivity/objectivity is a matter of vantage point and role in a viewing arrangement.” Generally speaking, his notion of subjectivity Langacker has provided with two readings. In the earlier version, Langacker (1985, 1990, 1991) assumed that subjectification is a reorientation from the objective to the subjective dimensions of the conception, or from “a relationship that is originally objective, in the sense of holding between objectively-construed participants, ... to the subjective axis, so that an analogous relationship holds instead between the subjectively-construed conceptualizer and some entity in the original objective scene” (Langacker 1990: 5). The newer proposal (Langacker 1998, 1999, 2000) presents subjectivity as “a gradual diminution in salience of the objective component” (Langacker 1998: 76), or “the laying bare of subjective factors immanent in more objective conceptions” (1998: 87).

onstage actors in staging the event is thus progressively weakened by the audience’s growing awareness and, thus, their assessment of what’s going on on the stage. Consequently, grammaticalization appears to be an offstage discovery of the subjective potential that has always been immanent in the conceptualization of the onstage event. That this potential does not hit the surface already at the start of the process (of grammaticalization) is because the event does not happen to be apprehended from an appropriate perspective.<sup>7</sup>

If we were then to follow Langacker’s theatre metaphor, we would say that language users are like subsequent generations of theatre goers who in old plays discover old meanings, yet present them from a novel perspective. Ignorant of the past and arrogant of the future, language users derive whatever they can from ongoing events. In other words, what is to be discovered is already there, and what is already there is constrained by the event staged. Language users cannot be anything more or less than the events they apprehend or experience. In the last resort, subjectivity resides not in the speaker, but in the event, projects not from fancies latent in the human mind, but derives from inherent properties (structures) of the world. The reality of the event is taken for granted, while the rest of conceptual experience comes with changing points of view. Seen as a process of perspectivization, grammaticalization must necessarily be synchronic in the sense that it feeds on the here-and-now of the situation as apprehended from a particular vantage point.

## 6. Concluding remarks

On this account, there is, naturally, no place for “human experience historically considered”, or parameters like Christianity and feudalism, which is how Schlauch would motivate grammaticalization as a language change. She would point to one’s social and creative attempts at exploiting and exploring the linguistic collective awareness of a given speaking community. This she shows most convincingly in her literary studies (cf. Chaucer or Shakespeare as presented against the background of their times).

For that reason, her approach to grammaticalization would be showing an individual’s conscious and directed linguistic attempt made in relation to some uninterrupted historical continuation. As a reflection of “external tendencies”, “the social and cultural environment”, “the social and cultural trends”, this historical tradition would be a social force that limits, controls, monitors, guides the individual, yet the individual is free to externalize his subjectivity, i.e. attitudes

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<sup>7</sup> And thus, for example, one has to conclude that epistemic meanings were already there in the conception of the main verbs in OE, but this simply became transparent as late as the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, perfects were an inherent component of resultatives already in the times of Alfred (EOE) and Aelfric (LOE), but they became evident only in early Middle English (cf. Carey 1995).

(knowledge and intuition, experience and expectations, conviction and imagination) with regard to that force. As Traugott and Dasher (2002: 20-21) put it,

... [speaker/writer] selects not only the content, but also the expression of that content ... In the dynamic production of speech or writing, linguistic material may be used in novel ways to express that subjectivity. ... Choices are correlated with register..., and with degree of attention to an audience ... In all cases choices are particularly highly correlated with strategic intent and explicit coding of that intent.

What remains to be shown is that, indeed, it is at the juncture of individual and social forces that a language change is brought about. More specifically, we need to trace grammaticalization as a set of choices an individual speaker/writer makes to give expression to how he/she understands those aspects of their subjectivity that they have selected to communicate along the socio-historical continuum. In Schlauch's (1967: 165) words,

... [o]ne thing alone is certain: in language as in all other human affairs, the only permanence is change. As for the direction of change, that depends on the interplay of many factors, both internal and external. In all of these, men's directed social effort is of primary importance.

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