

**Nouvelles perspectives diachroniques et historiques sur la grammaticalisation**

**New diachronic and historical perspectives on grammaticalization**

**Résumés / Abstracts**

*Conférences invitées / Invited speakers*

**Elena Smirnova** (Université de Neuchâtel)

***Recent changes in the notion of grammaticalization and the rise of alternative concepts***

In my presentation, I will be dealing with the “modern” notion of grammaticalization as it has been developed in the mid-eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is since the programmatic study by Lehmann (1982) that the research on grammaticalization has received increasing interest and resulted in a large body of work. However, for the last two decades the interest in research on grammaticalization seems to be rather fading. Even more, the concept of grammaticalization is being gradually ousted by alternative notions such as *constructionalization* and *constructional change* (Traugott & Trousdale 2013).

In this talk, I will be concerned with the question of how the concept of grammaticalization has changed over time and which consequences these changes have had for the past and will probably have for the future research.

I will focus on the relevant paradigmatic changes which have occurred within the framework of grammaticalization research dating from the mid-eighties. At least two significant shifts occurred during this time, mainly due to the steadily increasing amount of extensive studies on grammaticalization and related processes in the languages of the world, and due to the shift of interest from formal to functional aspects of diachronic processes. First, a shift occurred from the *loss*-aspect towards the *rearrangement*-aspect. Second, the conceptualization of the locus of change has been widened from single *elements* to *constructions*. With respect to the latter aspect, the appearance of and the growing interest in constructionist approaches to language structure have decisively influenced this shift of perspective.

In light of these recent changes, the ultimate question will be whether the concept of grammaticalization as it has been originally introduced is still needed or whether it would be better to abandon it altogether and to use instead other concepts proposed in the most recent literature. By airing this question, I hope to stimulate further discussion.

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Walter Bisang (University of Mainz)

***Grammaticalization — unity and diversity***

Text-book definitions of grammaticalization generally start out from the notion of diachronic change from a lexical item to a marker of a grammatical function. Meillet’s (1912: 139) classical definition is typically based on individual items and the assumption that “the weakening of the meaning and the weakening of the form of the auxiliary word go hand-in-hand” (*l’affaiblissement du sens et l’affaiblissement de la forme des mots accessoires vont de pair*). Starting out from this very strong universal prediction on the coevolution of meaning and form, my presentation will address two issues concerning the universal homogeneity of processes of grammaticalization.

The first issue is on the extent to which there actually is meaning/form coevolution. For that purpose, I will report on some results of a systematic quantitative analysis of 998 paths of grammaticalization across the world’s languages (Bisang & Malchukov 2020; MAGRAM project). As the detailed analysis of individual source concepts and target concepts with their different values for eight grammaticalization parameters based mainly on Lehmann (2015 [1982]) shows, general assumptions on the Parallel Reduction Hypothesis (= meaning/form coevolution) and the Meaning First Hypothesis (Narrog & Heine 2018) are both too coarse-grained for modeling cross-linguistic variation in scenarios of grammaticalization. In fact, Semantic Integrity (= semantic change) mainly covaries only with the two parameters of Paradigmaticity and Syntagmatic Variability. What is particularly remarkable and contradicts general assumptions is that the covariation between Semantic Integrity and the purely form-related parameters of Phonetic Reduction, Bondedness and Allomorphy is very limited. In general, the overall picture of how different parameters interact in processes of grammaticalization is more variegated than it is commonly reflected in the literature.

The second issue is on the extent to which pragmatic inference matters in processes of grammaticalization. While Meaning First Hypotheses as the one by Traugott & Dasher (2002) generally point out the importance of pragmatic inference at the initial phase(s) of grammaticalization, it will be shown with examples from Chinese and some Southeast Asian languages that pragmatics can play a more prominent role also at later stages of grammaticalization (Bisang 2020, 2021). Thus, there is evidence from an impressive number of examples from these languages that the extent to which pragmatics matter in processes of grammaticalization is subject to typological variation.

Even though scenarios of grammaticalization show considerable cross-linguistic variation, the overall observation that there are paths from a more lexical source to a more grammatical target is not affected by these findings.

What remains to be seen is to what extent constructionalization (Traugott & Trousdale 2013) can contribute to the modeling of the above variation. I will conclude my presentation with some evidence that this approach is necessary for integrating the environment in which grammaticalization takes place but that it also has several limitations and that it cannot fully replace more traditional approaches (Bisang 2017).

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*Autres communications / Other communications*

**Quentin Feltgen** (Université de Gand)

***Approches quantitatives de la grammaticalisation : fréquence, trajectoire, dispersion***

Les approches quantitatives de la grammaticalisation se heurtent à l'absence de définition empirique de la « grammaticalité » d'une unité linguistique, et emploient dès lors des mesures secondaires dont la pertinence pour la question de la grammaticalisation n'est pas garantie (Saavedra 2021). Nous présenterons trois de ces mesures : fréquence, paramétrisation de la trajectoire, et dispersion. La fréquence est souvent apparue comme un marqueur de la grammaticalité, avec l'hypothèse globalement vérifiée que plus une forme est fréquente, et plus elle est grammaticale (Brinton & Traugott 2005 : 209). Cependant, les processus de lexicalisation ou d'expansion sémantique d'une unité lexicale s'accompagnent également d'une hausse de fréquence systématique (Bybee 2006 : 721). La trajectoire de cette hausse, qui suit traditionnellement une courbe en S (Kroch 1989), n'est pas non plus spécifique de la grammaticalisation, mais elle permet d'éclairer quant aux mécanismes sous-jacents à celle-ci, notamment lorsqu'on cherche à en comprendre les principes génératifs à travers un effort de modélisation (Feltgen et al. 2017). Enfin, l'entropie d'une forme (son indépendance vis-à-vis du contexte sémantique), a été proposée comme mesure de la grammaticalité, sans trop de succès cependant (Schlechtweg & Walde 2018). Similaire dans son esprit, la dispersion (Gries 2008) mesure à quel point la forme est répandue à travers les textes, étant attendu d'une unité grammaticale qu'elle soit moins sensible au contenu du texte, et donc plus versatile dans ses emplois (Hilpert & Saavedra 2017). Il apparaît que la dispersion reste trop entremêlée à la fréquence d'usage pour servir de mesure efficace (Gries 2021). La conclusion qui se dégage de ces différentes analyses est que, si ces observables empiriques ne permettent pas de distinguer quels processus individuels relèvent de la grammaticalisation, ils apportent en revanche des éclairages irremplaçables sur le déroulement complexe et multi-facette de ces processus individuels.

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**Paul-Henri Got** (Paris Nanterre)

***La variation, une perspective stable pour comprendre le changement***

L'étude des phénomènes de grammaticalisation est dépendante de la façon dont le linguiste appréhende la grammaire (Diewald, 2011). Or, en 1987, Lakoff bouleverse la manière d'envisager la grammaire en présentant son approche par *construction*, permettant la formalisation de phénomènes jusque-là laissés de côté par les approches génératives. L'étayage pratique de cette approche – principalement l'étude des constructions anglaises introduites par *there* – consiste notamment en l'observation de l'acceptabilité des énoncés concernés. Cette observation évoque, mais sans s'y attarder, les cas où cette acceptabilité est mitigée et considérée comme « variation » (Lakoff, 1987 : 472). Nous souhaitons au contraire nous y attarder pour étudier dans quelle mesure la prise en compte de la variation peut continuer à faire évoluer la notion de grammaire. Nous étudierons la variation et sa relation avec deux éléments nécessaires au changement, la propagation (Croft, 2000 : 5) et l'acceptabilité croissante (Traugott, 2015 : 53) d'une innovation langagière, à travers un exemple en français, les formes *pallier* et *pallier à*. La concurrence entre ces deux formes, constatée sur corpus, évolue depuis un siècle et met en jeu des aspects cognitifs complexes, comme le lien avec la forme *remédier à*, ou encore la nature plus ou moins *grave* des compléments qui leur sont attachés. Si le changement fait partie du fonctionnement normal d'une langue (Croft, 2000 ; Coseriu, 2001 ; Bybee, 2010), l'étude des variations, caractéristiques de la période de transition décisive pour la réalisation d'un changement linguistique, éclaire ce dernier, révèle des liens unissant grammaticalisation et constructionnalisation et invite, potentiellement, ces courants théoriques à une réflexion sur leur manière d'appréhender la grammaire et les changements linguistiques.

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**Martin Haspelmath** (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology)

***Moving beyond the stereotypes of grammaticalization: How to replace coalescence, cliticization, and lexicalization***

Research on grammaticalization has a long history (Lindström 2004), and much work in this tradition repeats stereotypical claims and concepts. Since the 19th century, “agglutination” has been opposed to “flexion” or “fusion”, but without offering clear criteria or good non-anecdotal evidence (cf. Haspelmath 2009). Similarly, the notion of “coalescence” (Lehmann 1982; Haspelmath 2011) has been around for a long time (at least since Sapir 1921: 118, but probably going back to Brugmann and Jespersen), but it has rarely been made precise.

A newer stereotype is the idea that there is an intermediate “cliticization” stage between full lexemes and affixes (the LEXEME > CLITIC > AFFIX cline, e.g. Hopper & Thompson 2003: 7), but again, this has rarely been made precise, and Börjars & Harries (2008) point out that the scale must be thought of as consisting of several independent dimensions.

A further stereotypical idea is associated with the notion of “lexicalization”, namely that it is in some way opposed to or orthogonal to grammaticalization, or at least that one can usefully contrast the two notions (e.g. Lehmann 1989; Himmelmann 2004; Brinton & Traugott 2005). Again, the notion of “lexicalization” has never been made precise. In view of the well-known multiple ambiguity of the term “lexicon” (e.g. Jackendoff 1995), “lexicalization” seems to inherit these problems and can hardly serve to elucidate the notion of grammaticalization.

In this talk, I will trace the history of these stereotypes and attempt to address them by (i) providing clear objectively applicable terminological distinctions (e.g. a clear definition of “clitic” and of “lexeme”), and by (ii) highlighting three seemingly robust attributes of grammaticalization changes: [1] free form > bound form; [2] long form > short form; and [3] rigidification of order. I will argue that these concepts are much clearer than intuitive and stereotypical concepts such as “coalescence” or “autonomy” or “bleaching” or “fusion”, and that they go some way toward capturing the earlier intuitions in a precise way. Linguists of earlier times often had very good intuitions and many of the older ideas have continued to be relevant, but I will argue that we can make further progress by moving away from ill-defined stereotypical concepts and replacing them with well-defined ones.

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**Gerda Hassler** (Universität Potsdam)

***Grammaticalisation avant la lettre : contribution de la pensée linguistique des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles à la compréhension de la grammaticalisation***

Cette contribution se veut un plaidoyer pour faire commencer l'histoire de l'étude de la grammaticalisation en tant que changement linguistique tout comme celle de l'interprétation de ses résultats bien avant l'apparition d'un terme portant une désignation correspondante. Pour ce faire il faut donc identifier les caractéristiques de la notion de 'grammaticalisation' qui sont apparues des siècles auparavant et ont été désignées de différentes manières. Au XVIIe siècle, on parlait d'une division des mots en radicaux et particules et les différentes tentatives d'attribuer des significations aux particules ou de les remplacer par des mots porteurs de sens avaient un objectif d'explicitation. L'idée que la grammaire et le lexique sont deux composantes fondamentales de la langue qui, d'une part, se complètent nécessairement, mais qui, d'autre part, s'opposent, voire s'excluent, a été ébranlée au plus tard lorsque les missionnaires ont considéré des éléments de langue à la fois comme des morphèmes flexionnels, mais en leur attribuant également des significations lexicales. La plupart des missionnaires appelaient ces éléments particules. Au XVIIIe siècle, des tentatives de représentation des particules ont vu le jour, dans lesquelles on expliquait l'usage propre et différent de telles unités linguistiques précisément par l'évolution des significations lexicales vers les significations grammaticales et pragmatiques. John Horne Tooke, par exemple, a décrit des significations grammaticales abstraites sur la base de significations lexicales concrètes. Il y avait plusieurs tentatives en Espagne, dont le *Fundamento del vigor y elegancia de la lengua castellana, expuesto en el propio y vario uso de sus partículas* (1791) de Gregorio Garcés et la grammaire philosophique d'Eduardo Benot (1822-1907).

Meillet n'était pas le seul à introduire le concept de grammaticalisation dans la discussion linguistique professionnelle. Outre Humboldt et Gabelentz, plusieurs autres auteurs méritent d'être mentionnés. Cette idée avait-elle déjà été préparée par sa présence dans la pensée linguistique européenne au point de s'imposer ? Y a-t-il des critères pour déterminer le commencement de la notion scientifique de 'grammaticalisation' ? Certaines caractéristiques de la grammaticalisation telle qu'elle a été conçue aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles ont-elles été perdues et ne sont-elles pas prises en compte dans les conceptions récentes de la grammaticalisation ? Ces questions seront abordées sur la base d'une approche onomasiologique du concept de grammaticalisation.

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**Carita Klippi** (Tampere University & HTL) & **Therese Lindström Tiedemann** (University of Helsinki)

***Several terms, the same concept? Grammaticalisation in French linguistic thought before Meillet***

It is generally accepted in linguistics that Antoine Meillet (1866-1936) coined the term *grammaticalisation* (1912), and along with it the concept. However, the phenomenon had been studied before (Meillet 1921: 133) but in the directly preceding 40 years the Neogrammarian concepts of analogy and sound laws had predominated explanations of change. As demonstrated by Lehmann (2015) and Author (xxxx), and pointed out by different scholars (e.g. Itkonen 2005, McElvenny 2016), the concept of grammaticalisation has a long history. Similar ideas can be identified in the 17th and 18th century grammatical and philosophical traditions and it is a given in contemporary linguistics (e.g. Bisang & Malchukov 2020a, 2020b).

The history of concepts (Germ. *Begriffsgeschichte*) show that the same term does not necessarily carry the same meaning, different terms can be used for the same or similar concepts, and a concept can exist before it is given a name (cf. Koselleck 1985; 2002; Richter 1995). Delbrück (1989) wrote about three related phenomena of change: *agglutination*, *evolution*, and *adaptation*, all similar to grammaticalisation but wider in some senses and more narrow in others (Lindström Tiedemann 2004; 2005).

While previous studies have focused on the German tradition which clearly influenced Meillet, we have decided to look more closely at French-speaking linguists. Scholars like Jean Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye (1697-1781) and François-Juste-Marie Raynouard (1761-1836) are even mentioned in nineteenth century German texts on grammaticalisation, still they and senior colleagues of Meillet, like Bréal (1832-1915), Darmesteter (1846-1888), Henry (1850-1907), Saussure (1857-1913), have been largely ignored in previous work on the history of grammaticalisation.

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**Martin Konvička** (Freie Universität Berlin)

***Grammar in (the history of) grammaticalization studies***

As Meillet (1912: 131) famously put it, grammaticalization is “l’attribution du caractère grammaticale à un mot jadis autonome”. A plethora of case studies in typologically diverse languages were conducted and numerous theoretical issues pertaining to grammaticalization were discussed. Nevertheless, what still, to a large degree, remains an open question is what we mean by “grammatical character” (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 19).

In Himmelmann’s words (1992: 2), “work in grammaticalization [...] hardly ever makes explicit the concept of grammar underlying a given investigation.” This white spot in our understanding of grammatical status (Boye & Harder 2012: 1) manifests itself, for example, in debates about the relationship between grammaticalization and pragmaticalization (e.g. Diewald 2011).

Despite several important contributions (e.g. Lehmann 1982; Heine, Claudi & Hünemeyer 1991; Himmelmann 1992; Boye & Harder 2012, and see Konvička 2020 for an overview), two essential (and related) issues still deserve more attention.

The functional distinction of grammatical (but also lexical) status of an expression is often linked to formal properties such as phonological reduction (e.g. Lehmann 1982). This implicitly leads to the idea of “good grammar” (Diewald 2010: 22), prototypically realized as affixes. Grammaticalisation clines, where a free grammatical word is followed by a grammatical clitic which in turn is followed by a grammatical affix (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 7), illustrate this.

Although this conceptualization of grammatical status based on formal properties might be unproblematic in Indo-European-like languages (but see e.g. Bisang 2015), we should strive for a cross-linguistically valid and comparable concept of grammatical status (in the sense of e.g. Haspelmath 2018), as my paper will demonstrate.

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**Torsten Leuschner** (Ghent University)

***Constructionalization across clauses: the case of V1-conditionals in Germanic***

Constructionalization across clauses: the case of V1-conditionals in Germanic According to Narrog/Heine (2021: 263-270), the relationship of grammaticalization theory with Construction Grammar tends to be conceptualized in two ways in the literature: by integrating constructionalist insights into grammaticalization theory or by treating grammaticalization processes as part of constructionalization. In my paper, I will follow the latter line in proposing to re-think so-called “grammaticalization across clauses” (i.e. the historical rise of hypotaxis from parataxis, Hopper/Traugott 2003: 175-211) in terms of grammatical constructionalization (Traugott/Trousdale 2013: 94-148). This is instructive because “grammaticalization across clauses”-style changes have never been approached from a constructionalist point of view before, but also because Narrog/Heine (2021) fail to mention “grammaticalization across clauses”-style changes even in their dedicated chapter on “Grammaticalization from discourse structures” (ibid.: 179-183). Linguists should therefore be reminded of such changes so that the phenomena at hand, and their treatment under Construction Grammar, can be properly appreciated. For empirical substantiation I will refer to a particularly clear example of the rise of hypotaxis from parataxis in Germanic: conditionals with a V1-protasis as in *Should it rain, we’ll stay at home* (Van den Nest 2012). Using data from both recent and older German and English, I will show (a) how this sentence type can be characterized as a form-meaning pair in each language-particular network of constructions, (b) how its rise and further development can be conceptualized as “constructionalization across clauses” followed by post-constructionalization changes, and (c) how the grammaticalization of a V1 main clause as protasis fed into the original constructionalization process as part of a specific discourse routine (“pragmeme”, Mey 2001: 222, 227). I will end by arguing why an account conceptualizing the overall change in terms of grammatical constructionalization is desirable, highlighting in particular the interaction of the changes in question with earlier or on-going shifts in the respective language-particular construction.

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**James McElvenny** (Universität Siegen)

***Grammaticalization theory and the nature of language***

A laudable quality of scholars working in grammaticalization studies is their general awareness of the fact that the questions they address have long been considered in linguistics and allied fields. Since at least Christian Lehmann's (2015 [1982]) *Thoughts on grammaticalization*, there has been a received history of grammaticalization, often rehearsed in the opening chapters of surveys and introductions to the field (e.g., Heine et al 1991; Hopper and Traugott 2003 [1993]). But what is perhaps overlooked – or at least downplayed – in these historical sketches are the great differences in conception and approach between these earlier efforts to address questions of ‘grammaticalization’ and present-day research.

In this talk, we examine several major milestones on the way to modern grammaticalization theory and see how they were in many ways motivated by different problems and represent different visions of the nature of language and grammar. We look first at the work of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835; 1905 [1822]), written in the period when modern disciplinary linguistics was beginning to take shape, followed by the contribution of Georg von der Gabelentz (1840–1893; 2016 [1891]) at the height of German linguistics around the end of the nineteenth century. We then turn to Antoine Meillet's (1866–1936; 1921 [1912]) coinage of the term ‘grammaticalization’ in the early twentieth century. We compare these to modern conceptions as found in such standard works as Lehmann (2015 [1982]), Heine et al (1991), Hopper and Traugott (2003 [1993]), but also look at outliers, such as Hopper's (1998) notion of ‘emergent grammar’.

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**Eric Mélaç** (Université de Montpellier)

***On the status of obligatorification in defining grammaticalization***

Obligatoriness is often presented as an essential property of the grammar of a language (Boas 1959: 492). Some languages are claimed to possess a grammatical category because it is encoded by ‘obligatory’ markers, such as number in English, gender in Spanish, evidentiality in Quechua, etc. (Athanasopoulos & Kasai 2008, Lew-Williams & Fernald 2007, Aikhenvald 2007). Obligatorification also is often considered one of the definitory processes of grammaticalization, even though Lehmann (1995) stated that its importance should not be overemphasized (Lehmann 1995[1982]: 123-128; see also McGregor 2013). The relative obligatoriness of the subject in German, be+V-ing in English, or a gender suffix in a Romance language cannot be analysed as one phenomenon.

This epistemological study will review what is usually meant by obligatoriness, and to what extent forms may grammaticalize without acquiring this property (Heine & Kuteva 2007: 34). Basing myself on a critical analysis of theoretical works and first-hand cross-linguistic data, I will argue that obligatoriness is a cover term which may only be investigated by distinguishing three levels, i.e. morpho-syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. For the first two levels, the constraint may be intra-paradigmatic or extra-paradigmatic (Lehmann 1995[1982]: 123-128). Furthermore, the degree of systematization of a notion may determine how obligatory this grammatical category is in a given language.

This review will lead me to delve into the causes of obligatorification, which might appear contradictory to the principle of economy as one of the main motivators of grammaticalization (Gelderen 2004). I will argue that chunking, zero grammaticalization, and the Gricean maxim of quantity are necessary concepts to explain how a form may obligatorify (Ellis 2003, Bybee 1994, Grice 1975).

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**Wiltrud Mihatsch** (University of Tübingen)

***Paths of grammaticalization – paths of lexicalization***

While there is now an impressive amount of literature on grammaticalization, studies on lexicalization (in the sense of unguided, unconscious processes of lexical change leading to an increasing integration into the lexicon) are still scarce. One reason for this asymmetry is the sheer size and the general openness of the lexicon for enrichment through heterogeneous sources compared to the closed class of grammatical expressions.

The aim of this talk is to explore the similarities and differences between grammaticalization and lexicalization paths. Bréal (1897) already observed regular processes of specialization of abstract nouns in the lexicon, which he called „*épaississement du sens*“. I will review both late 19th and early 20th century texts such as Bréal (1897) as well as more recent studies of tendencies of lexico-semantic change such as Blank (2001), Koch (2001) and Brinton/Traugott (2005). The talk will then focus on selected Romance cases of lexicalization and grammaticalization processes starting out from common nominal sources, in some cases even specific lexical expressions, for instance, Latin *res* ‘thing, possession’ grammaticalized into the French pronoun *rien* ‘nothing’, but also developed increasing lexical uses as in Spanish *res* ‘cattle’. I will take a look at paths of lexicalization and grammaticalization in the domain of deverbal nouns, body-part nouns and taxonomic nouns, with a focus on semantic processes such as metonymy, metaphor, generalization and specialization, prosodic and morphosyntactic changes as well as the neurological underpinnings, notably the distinction between storage in the declarative and procedural memory, in order to elucidate the relation between the two paths.

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**Cendrine Pagani-Naudet (BCL) & Bernard Colombat (HTL)**

***Les futurs français dans le discours des grammairiens (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)***

Le futur et le conditionnel français sont souvent présentés comme des cas exemplaires de grammaticalisation. La périphrase (composée de l’infinitif et de l’auxiliaire) à l’origine de leur formation est signalée au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle par les romanistes. En général, on attribue à Raynouard et à Diez cette découverte. Leur analyse, rarement discutée (à l’exception de Lanly 1996), constitue un argument en faveur du reclassement du conditionnel sous l’indicatif.

Les grammaires du français ont toutefois tardé à admettre ce classement, perpétuant une analyse modale du conditionnel (assimilé à l’optatif), et à s’interroger sur l’origine de ces deux formes spécifiquement romanes.

Cependant dès les premières descriptions du français, la proximité du futur et du conditionnel a été signalée par les auteurs (voir ainsi Sylvius 1531, ou Meigret 1550). Dans les chapitres consacrés à la formation des temps, les auteurs indiquent une genèse (en synchronie) à partir de l’infinitif.

Pourquoi en dépit d’une analyse assez juste de la morphologie, et de l’intuition précoce de phénomènes de grammaticalisation en français (y compris dans le cas du verbe), les grammairiens ont-ils tardé à articuler ces deux approches et à proposer une hypothèse sur la formation du futur et du conditionnel ? Quand, et comment, émerge la prise de conscience d’une spécificité romane en matière d’expression de l’ultériorité ? Qu’est-ce qui permet de changer de paradigme et de basculer d’une vision a-chronique vers une interprétation historique des données linguistiques disponibles ?

L’objectif de cette communication sera à travers l’histoire du discours sur les futurs français de comprendre ce qui a permis (ou entravé) l’analyse de la genèse du futur et du conditionnel de la part des grammairiens.

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Floris Solleveld (KU Leuven)

***Grammaticalization, Creolization, and the Revaluation of the ‘Primitive’ in 19th-Century Ethnolinguistics***

The insight that indigenous languages are not ‘primitive’ played a crucial role in 19th-century ethnolinguistics, and in the making of comparative linguistics in general. That insight had already been reached by early modern missionaries remarking upon the lexical richness and grammatical complexity of the languages they were documenting (cf. Peetermans 2020, Kilarski 2021) and in particular by Clavijero (1780-81: vol. VI, 240-247); but that grammatical complexity and the variety and formation of grammatical structures only became the subject of linguistic theories in the 19th century. As I will argue in this paper, that theory formation also included notions of what was later called grammaticalization, particularly in the work of Wilhelm Bleek (1827-1875) and Horatio Hale (1817-1896). Bleek’s tract *Über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1868) [drafted 1853] included a table of various stages of grammaticalization, in which (1) ‘simple words’ are (2) compounded, (3) prefixed or suffixed, (4) reinforced by initial/final emphasis, (5) inflected, and (6) fused. Hale (1846: 636–644) gave a detailed analysis of creolization in the Chinook trade jargon of the Oregon Territory, later expanded as Hale (1890), and formulated a theory that ‘the origin of linguistic stocks is to be found in what may be termed the language-making instinct of very young children’ (Hale 1886: 191). My presentation will explore how these proto-theories of grammaticalization figured in Bleek’s and Hale’s philological revaluation of indigenous languages, and was part of broader speculations about language, culture, and history.

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