Li11 Historical linguistics
Supervision 1: Mechanisms of morphosyntactic change
http://ling.cam.ac.uk/li11/

**ESSAY TITLES**
Write an essay on ONE of the following topics:

1. ‘Reanalysis is the main mechanism of syntactic change.’ Discuss.

2. ‘While a reanalysis is an abrupt event, its entry into a language and its actualisation are gradual.’ Discuss.

3. ‘Models of change based on reanalysis beg the question of why the input to reanalysis changed in the first place.’ Discuss. [Start with McMahon (1994: 92–7) and Roberts (2007: 122–32). It is also recommended you read Timberlake (1977) and the critique of De Smet (2009).]

4. Discuss the relationship between the processes that historical linguists have labelled reanalysis and extension, and actuation, actualisation, and diffusion.

5. ‘Linguistic change is usually best modelled as a series of discrete steps.’ Discuss.

6. Review De Smet’s (2009: 1751) claim that ‘the notion of reanalysis is seriously hollowed out and appears to become primarily a descriptive label for a certain type of change that has to be explained as the outcome of more fundamental mechanisms.’

7. ‘Reanalysis is licensed by ambiguous forms, while extension is licensed by missing forms.’ Discuss.

8. ‘Where plentiful data allow us to examine the course of a change in fine-grained detail, the picture that emerges is often very different from what we would posit if we only had evidence of the “before” and “after” states.’ Discuss.

**READING**

* Core reading

  - Harris, Alice C. & Lyle Campbell. 1995. *Historical syntax in cross-linguistic perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are the essential ones for this topic. Focus in on Chapter 3 if you are doing an essay on reanalysis.]
  - Timberlake, Alan. 1977. Reanalysis and actualization in syntactic change. In *Mechanisms of syntactic change*, ed. Charles N. Li. Austin: University of Texas Press, 141–77. [Sets out the reanalysis-actualisation model in an essentially generative context, using Finnish participial clauses as its main example. On these, see also the discussion in Harris & Campbell, 77–81.] [UL 760.c.97.673 (N4)]
  - Andersen, Henning. 2006. Synchrony, diachrony and evolution. In *Competing models of linguistic change*, ed. Ole Nedergaard Thomsen. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 59–90. [More advanced and more difficult than some of the other readings here. Read one of the other sources first. Sets out a basic model of language change identifying adaptive innovation, extension, reanalysis and adoption as the sole processes of change.]
**Functionalist versus formalist views of syntactic change and language change**

**General**

Maling, Joan. 1983. Transitive adjectives: A case of categorial reanalysis. In Frank Heny & Barry Richards (eds.), *Linguistic categories: Auxiliaries and related puzzles*, vol. 1, Categories, 253–89. Dordrecht: Reidel. [A very clear case study of the reanalysis of English *like* and *worth* from adjective to preposition, analysed within a classic generative framework.][UL 760:01.c.27 (N6) and college libraries; also downloadable from the author's website.]


**Specifically on gradualness vs. discreteness (qu.5)**


Bybee, Joan. 2010. *Language, usage and cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 6–8 present the extreme functionalist position.] [MML L5.B.22; online via UL]


**Other general reading**


Andersen, Henning. 1987. From auxiliary to desinence. In Martin Harris & Paolo Ramat (eds.), *Historical development of auxiliaries*, 21–51. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. [A discussion of the emergence of past tense endings in Polish from earlier independent auxiliaries. The big theoretical issue is how you decide when the reanalysis happened, and how to interpret the patterns of data over several hundred years in the light of this. Andersen suggests the change maintained a continuous direction because the reanalysis occurred very early, and the subsequent history was merely the actualisation of this reanalysis. There are summaries of the paper in Andersen (1990: 2–8) and Hopper & Traugott 135–8.]

Andersen, Henning. 1990. The structure of drift. In Henning Andersen & Konrad Koerner (eds.), *Historical linguistics 1987: Papers from the 8th International Conference on
Amsterdam: John Benjamins. [More on the Polish past tense, essentially an extension of Andersen (1987). Focuses on the question of what mechanisms ensure that reanalyses and other linguistic changes that occur over many centuries maintain their momentum.]

Andersen, Henning (ed.) 2001. Actualization: Linguistic change in progress. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. [Not an easy read, but includes some interesting case studies investigating the order of actualisation of syntactic change in different grammatical contexts.]


Janda, Richard D. 2001. Beyond 'pathways' and 'unidirectionality': On the discontinuity of language transmission and the counterability of grammaticalization. Language Sciences 23, 265–340. [Focus in on the sections on the discontinuity of language transmission from generation to generation, and models of change, that is, sections 2 and (especially) 3.]


Other case studies (for examples of reanalysis)

