Historical linguistics
Grammaticalisation
http://www.ling.cam.ac.uk/li11/

1 DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND
‘the dynamic, unidirectional historical process whereby lexical items in the
course of time acquire a new status as grammatical, morphosyntactic forms,
anid in the process come to code relations that either were not coded before or
were coded differently’ (Traugott & König 1991)

a change ‘where a lexical unit or structure assumes a grammatical function, or
where a grammatical unit assumes a more grammatical function’ (Heine,
Claudi and Hünnefelder 1991a: 2)

‘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 derivative formant to an inflectional one’
(Kuryłlowicz 1965: 52)

The term goes back to Meillet (1912) and was well-known as an idea even in the
nineteenth century (e.g. Franz Bopp in his 1833 comparative Sanskrit grammar).

Examples
English going to / gonna ‘future marker’
French pas ‘negation’ < pas ‘step’
German man ‘one, indefinite pronoun’ < Mann ‘man’
French humblement ‘humbly’ < Latin humile mente ‘with a humble mind’
Russian -ja (plural suffix e.g. brat ‘brother’, brat’ja ‘brothers’) < collective suffix
French -(er)al etc. ‘future suffix’ (e.g. arriveral ‘I will arrive’) < ‘have’ (cf. also
other Romance languages and Ukrainian)

Clines of grammaticalisation (reduction of form accompanies generalisation of
function):

LEXICAL ITEM > GRAMMATICAL ITEM
(or LESS GRAMMATICAL ITEM > MORE GRAMMATICAL ITEM)
FREE WORD > CLITIC > AFFIX

2 PROCESSES INVOLVED IN GRAMMATICALISATION (CAMPBELL & JANNA
2001)

2.1 Reanalysis
Many examples of grammaticalisation can be formulated as reanalysis +
actualisation / extension e.g.

Let us go > Let’s go

2. Actualisation: appearance of a new negative Don’t let’s go.

All grammaticalisation involves reanalysis, whereas not all reanalysis involves
grammaticalisation (Campbell 2001), but cf. Haspelmath.
Possible cases of grammaticalisation without reanalysis involve demonstrative > definite article e.g. Latin *ille* > French *le*.

### 2.2 Phonological reduction

Grammaticalised items are reduced phonologically e.g. *let us go* > *let’s go* > *let* *go* > *səg*; *will* > *‘ll*; *going to* > *gonna*, contrast:

1. a. Bill is going to college.
   b. *Bill’s gonna college.

2. a. Bill is going to go to college.
   b. Bill’s gonna go to college.

- perhaps a response to the increase in frequency in use
- perhaps related to the loss of stress (sometimes) associated with acquiring a grammatical function in place of a lexical one.

#### Old Norse middle voice (‘passive’)

(3)    

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>he</th>
<th>offer/PAST</th>
<th>himself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hann</td>
<td>baub</td>
<td>sik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hann</td>
<td>bauzk</td>
<td>sik</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sik*, originally a reflexive pronoun, grammaticalises as an affix. A whole paradigm develops e.g. *kallask* ‘be called’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old West Norse</th>
<th>kallask ‘be called’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sing.</td>
<td>plur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first person</td>
<td>köllumk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td>kallask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person</td>
<td>kallask</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old East Norse</th>
<th>kallas ‘be called’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sing.</td>
<td>plur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first person</td>
<td>kallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td>kallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person</td>
<td>kallas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ottosson 2008: 186)

The first-person singular ending *-mk* derives from the first-person singular accusative pronoun *mik* ‘me’, while the rest of the paradigm derives from the third-person reflexive accusative pronoun sik ‘(his, her, one)self’.

### 2.3 Loss of syntactic freedom / narrowing of scope

Scope narrows in the sense that the element begins to combine with a smaller unit e.g. French *pas* requires a verb to modify. This is inherent in the emergence of affixes cf. French *-ment*, Old Norse *-s(k)*. In practice, this is very difficult to apply. Widening of scope has also been suggested as a feature of grammaticalisation (e.g. *hopefully* VP scope > CP scope).

### 2.4 Semantic bleaching = generalisation of meaning

After grammaticalisation, only the ‘semantic core’ remains e.g. in German *Mann ‘man’ > man ‘one*, only the meaning component *(some) human being* survives;
when going to grammaticalises, it loses the idea of motion and direction; after Latin clara mente > French clairement, the subject need no longer be animate.

In the case of the Norse middle, semantic generalisation accompanies grammaticalisation: in addition to reflexive interpretations, the affix functions as a reflexive, reciprocal (*peir hittusk* ‘they met one another’) or anticausative (*jörð bifask* ‘the earth shakes’) marker, depending on the verb to which it is attached (Ottosson 1992: 66–8).

### 2.5 Pragmatic inferencing

Central claim: pragmatic meanings may be inferred in context e.g. adjacent clauses are likely to be interpreted (interpretatively enriched) as temporally ordered. For instance:

(5) a. The road was icy. She slipped.
   b. She slipped. The road was icy.

Such meanings become predictable and conventionalised. It is therefore possible ‘for what starts life ... as a conversational implicature to become conventional’ (Grice 1975: 58), and thereby to grammaticalise.

Tendencies (pathways of change) are also identified: the main path of development in grammaticalisation is propositional (> textual) > expressive, i.e. objective/extralinguistic meanings shift to meanings grounded in text making (connectives, anaphoric markers) to meanings grounded in speaker attitude. These shifts are unidirectional e.g. temporal meanings may give rise to concessive ones but concessive meanings cannot give rise to temporal ones.

**After and since (temporal sequence > inferred causation) (Traugott & König 1991)**

In Modern English some temporal complementisers (e.g. *after*) allow causal inferences (only) in context.

(6) a. After [= because] we heard the lecture, we felt greatly inspired.
   b. The minute [= because] John joined our team, things started to go wrong.

*Since* allows a causal interpretation independently of the temporal one. The implication has conventionalised. This shows that since has grammaticalised as a causal complementiser (in addition to being a temporal one).

(7) I have done quite a bit of writing since we last met. (temporal)
   Since Susan left him, John has been very miserable. (ambiguous)
   Since you are not coming with me, I will have to go alone. (causal)

Causal adverbs and complementisers arise through changes in the status of inferences e.g. English since, consequently; German infolgiedessen (‘following this’ > ‘therefore’); French puisque (‘after’ > ‘since’), Spanish pues (ditto).

Cf. also ‘not a step’ => ‘not even a step (not even the lowest point on a scale)’ (as in French *pas* ‘step’ > ‘not’) (Eckardt 2006).
3 PROBLEMATIC CASES

(a) Methinks (Wischer 2000) (cf. also I see, y’know)

(b) Complex prepositions (in English and elsewhere) (Brinton & Traugott 2005):

among < OE on gemang ‘in crowd’
beside < OE be sidan ‘by side’
instead of < OE in stede of ‘in place of’

c) today < OE to + dæge ‘at day.DAT’ (cf. also tomorrow)
Ger. heuer ‘this year’ < OHG hiu jaru ‘this year.DAT/INST’
Ger. heute ‘today’ < OHG hiu tagu ‘this day.DAT/INST’

An issue in some of these cases is the relationship between grammaticalisation and lexicalisation, ‘the process by which new items that are considered ‘lexical’ (in terms of the theory in question) come into being’ (Brinton & Traugott 2005: 32), including ordinary processes of word formation:

• compounding e.g. blackbird, cupboard, somebody
• derivation (e.g. examination, corkage) including English zero derivation (‘conversion’) (e.g. tug N > V, down P > V)
• ellipsis e.g. refrigerator > fridge, omnibus > bus, canary bird > canary
• blending e.g. breakfast + lunch > brunch, net + etiquette > netiquette
• backformation e.g. laze < lazy, enthuse < enthusiasm
• fusion e.g. garlic < OE gar ‘spear’ + leac ‘leek’, lord < OE hlāf ‘loaf’ + weard ‘guardian’

Some ‘grammaticalisations’ involve only ‘subjectification’ proposition > text > discourse (e.g. English deontic > epistemic modals may, Traugott 1989).

4 THEORETICAL ISSUES

4.1 The status of grammaticalisation and ‘grammaticalisation theory’

Two camps:

(i)
• grammaticalisation is a unitary phenomenon = grammaticalisation theorists
• grammaticalisation is an approach to language change

Grammaticalisation theorists emphasise that, in grammaticalisation, a more pragmatic mode of communication gives rise to a more syntactic one: discourse patterns are reanalysed as syntactic patterns:

LEXICAL > GRAMMATICAL
DISCOURSE > SYNTAX

i.e. language use (parole) influences language structure ( langue).

(ii)
• grammaticalisation is a constellation of other processes of change, typically reanalysis plus extension
• grammaticalisation is (merely) a phenomenon to be explained
'Most agree that grammaticalization is not a mechanism of change in its own right, but relies primarily on reanalysis (and also extension).’ (Campbell 2001: 141)

‘In short, grammaticalization is derivative, epiphenomenal, and has no independent status of its own.’ (Campbell 2001: 151)

4.2 Layering and gradualness
1. The old form typically survives (for a while at least) alongside the old e.g. the motion verb going to survives alongside the future marker going to:

   \[ A > A/B > B \]

2. Retention of earlier meaning e.g. English will (WANT > FUTURE) retains a willingness nuance in cases like:

   (9) I’m sure he’ll help you if you ask.

   This has often been used to justify rejection of categoriality (the idea that an item can belong to one syntactic category only).

4.3 Grammaticalisation and reconstruction (Lass 2000, Comrie 1980)
Related to unidirectionality is the usefulness of grammaticalisation in syntactic reconstruction:

‘To date there is no evidence that grammatical items arise full-fledged, that is, can be innovated without a prior lexical history in a remote (or less remote) past.’ (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 128–9)

‘Today’s morphology is yesterday’s syntax.’ (Givón 1971: 12)

This means that elements with no known lexical origin must have had one once.

But (Lass 2000):
- this implies there was once a time when all human languages were isolating (contra uniformitarianism)
- there is no evidence for a lexical origin for much grammatical material in Indo-European

FURTHER READING

Core reading

General
Fischer, Olga, Rosenbach, Anette, & Stein, Dieter. eds. 2000. *Pathways of change: Grammaticalization in English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. [The introduction is useful and outlines some major issues in grammaticalisation.]


Narrog, Heiko & Bernd Heine (eds.). 2011. The *Oxford handbook of grammaticalization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Use especially the earlier more issue-oriented chapters, plus chapters on specific languages for examples and problem cases.]


**On the Old Norse passive**


**Reconstruction and grammaticalisation**