

**From P to higher functional elements:
two case studies on secondary grammaticalization in Old and Middle Irish**

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This paper explores the syntactic nature of the so-called secondary grammaticalization, namely the reanalysis of grammatical items into more grammatical ones (Kurylowicz 1965:52; Givon 1991). The focus will lie on the shift from prepositions to higher functional elements. The shift from grammatical to more grammatical items is well documented in the literature (see for example Heine and Kuteva 2002, Roberts and Roussou 2003): e.g., demonstratives becoming articles, wh-pronouns becoming complementizers or bare quantifiers becoming sentential negative markers. The phenomenon is often treated as a type of grammaticalization, i.e., upward reanalysis in formal approaches (Roberts and Roussou 2003, among many others), which, among other things, implies the semantic bleaching of the grammatical element, in our case the preposition (Hopper and Traugott 1993). Roberts (2010) attempts to formalize the intuitive notion of semantic bleaching and to link it to upward reanalysis, by suggesting that, roughly, higher categories have a smaller semantic import, are more “bleached”, i.e. more purely grammatical in content, than those lower down. Here, I will argue that reanalysis affecting prepositions involves neither upward reanalysis nor semantic bleaching. Rather, I will propose that the shift of a functional item to other functional elements is the by-product of a categorial change originated in the lexical item (verb or noun) in the lexical portion of the phase. In other words, if a noun is reanalyzed as a verb, all the functional projections related to it change from being nominal (i.e., NumP, DP, KP) to being verbal (i.e. vP, TP, CP). I will module this claim on Grimshaw’s (1991, 1997, 2000) proposal of extended projection updated according to Hinzen & Sheehan’s (2013) architecture of phases and on the analysis of prepositions in terms of points and vectors outlined in Svenonius (2008) and refined in Cinque and Rizzi (2010). The empirical domain investigated in the paper are two spatial prepositions in Old Irish, *do* “to” and *cen* “besides, apart”, whose change from preposition as in (to functional elements, and from aspectual head in (1b) and negative complementizer is illustrated in (1) and (2) respectively.

(1) From P to Asp

a. *Téicht [do róim]*

going to Rome

“going to Rome” (Thes II, 296)

b. *cia itconnaire [a secht maccu do marbad i n-oen lo in-a fiadnaise]*

although see: PRET.3SG her seven children to kill:VN in N-single day in-her presence

“Although she saw her seven children killed in a single day in front of her [...]” (PH 6610)

(2) From P to Negative C

a. *Ar-atá brithem and cenut-su .i. deus*

Since-ESIST:3SG judge therein without.2PL-ENF:2PL i.e. deus

“Since there is a judge therein apart from you, namely Christ.” (Wb 6b 25)

b. *atubairt ris can techt i-sin cath in lá sin*

tell:PRET.3SG to.3SG.M without go:VN into-ART battle:ACC ART day that

“She asked him not to go into battle on that day.” (TTr 1940)

I will show that the source of the change from (1/2a) to (1/2b) is the reanalysis of the lexical item which is the head of complement of the prepositions, namely the verbal noun (in the gloss as “VN”; a sort of infinitival form), which was at a previous stage a nominal category and was then

reanalyzed as a verbal one. This reanalysis was triggered by independent morphological cues in the VIII century: the verbal noun was not overtly specified for case and for the classes in which case endings were morphologically different, the dative form of the verbal noun was used instead of the expected one, e.g. nominative or accusative (Strachan 1903: 70, 491; Thurneysen 1946: 446-454). Hence, the relabeling of the infinitival item instantiates a chain of syntactic reactions which occur in a cascade fashion and simultaneously, resulting in a change of the entire system along the lines of Lightfoot (1979, 1997). Evidence for the simultaneity and rapidity of this change is provided by the texts examined, where I observed that in a brief time span of twenty-five years all the changes are already in place and stable. The cascade nature of such reanalyses can be captured adopting Grimshaw's proposal of extended projections: an extended projection is headed by a lexical category, which is paired with a functional specification. Updating Grimshaw's proposal to phase theory, I will argue that when the nominalizer/ verbalizer head changes, all the heads in its extended projections need to change till the phase edge and further till the next selecting phase on the basis of the fact that there is a relation of whole-part between phases (Hinzen & Sheehan 2013), e.g., the CP phase entails the vP phase. That is to say, when the infinitival form changed its categorial status, i.e. from a N it became a V category – step (3a), all the projections up to the end of the vP and CP phase change as well: the prepositions *do* and *cen*, originally located at the edge of a nominal phase changed as well and become the edge of a sentential domain, readjusting themselves to the major structural change as in (3b).

- (3) a. [N] > [V]
 b. [P [D [NumP ... [nP [NP]]]]] > [C2 [C1 [T ...[vP [VP]]]]]

The change in (3b) is exemplified by the Middle Irish example (4), where both the preposition *do* and the preposition *cen* are present, the former lexicalizing the aspectual head, the latter the negative complementizer.

- (4) *nír fáemastar Fer Báeth cen in comrac do dénam*
 NEG accept:PRET.3SG Fer Báeth without ART battle to do:VN
 “Fer Báeth refused to escape the battle.” (TBC_LL 1897)

During the talk I will provide evidence that the relabeled functional heads have indeed the same semantic feature specification like the preposition, only changing the formal one, namely the original meaning of the spatial relation is maintained in the new structure: *do* still encodes a directional relation, whereas *cen* still encodes a relation of separation, reinterpreted as the absence of its complement. Summing up, these two case studies enable us to show that the reanalysis of an isolated functional item is strictly related to the whole system and to further suggest that reanalysis of a categorial nominal/verbal head affects all the functional categories in its extended projection, i.e. the entire thematic phase and the functional phase above, in a kind of concatenate way. Such changes arise when an initial categorial change creates a system, which then is not only prone to, but need to change. This means that at least in some cases reanalysis does not crucially depend on the properties of the items itself but on general properties of the system. Moreover, this also implies that in the reanalysis of prepositions their abstract semantic value remains invariant.

Selected references

Cinque Guglielmo & Luigi Rizzi (2010). *Mapping spatial PPs. The Cartography of Syntactic Structures*. Vol. 6. Oxford: OUP. *Grimshaw Jane (1991). *Extended projections*. Ms. Brandeis University. Waltham, MA. *Roberts Ian & Anna Roussou (2003). *Syntactic Change: a Minimalist Approach to Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: CUP.* Hinzen Wolfram & Michelle Sheehan (2013). *The Philosophy of Universal Grammar*. Oxford: OUP.