Observing, describing, and analyzing grammaticalization and related processes of language change through corpus linguistics

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Introduction

- Integration of corpus linguistics and gzn. theory:

→ Corpus linguistics provides empirical methodology for the recognition and documentation of gzn. processes. (use of computerized corpora and established empirical practices).

→ Gzn. theory brings corpus linguistics beyond the purely statistical domain.

corpus linguistics → not merely "a cemetery of numbers, - an incoherent compilation of uninterpreted and hence pointless statistics." (Mair 2004: 139)

Introduction

- Aim of this presentation:

→ Discuss how corpus practices can be related to the concerns of gzn. theory.

→ Illustrate the interplay of corpus linguistics and gzn. Three case studies:

  - existential *there* (López-Couso 2011)
  - *looks like* parentheticals (López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2010a, b, c)
  - appositive marker *namely* (López-Couso, in prep.)

Some background on the relation between corpus linguistics and grammaticalization theory

Some background

- Antoine Meillet (1912) "L'evolution des formes grammaticales".

- Hopper & Traugott (1993); Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer (1991); Traugott & Heine (1991) → largely qualitative.

  Corpus data → self-compiled and relatively small corpora:

  For the past three years or so, I have been gathering data on the present topic. They are instances of ongoing changes or current fashions, occasionally encountered and unsystematically noted down. Some of them are tied up with my own dialect environment, which is Northwest Germany. For several of the phenomena to be mentioned below, I have no spontaneous data at all. (Lehmann 1991: 494-495)

Some background

→ Importance of studying "patterns of usage, as reflected by the frequency with which tokens of these structures may occur across time" (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 59; 2003: 67).

→ Relevance of statistical evidence in gzn.:

Statistical evidence is a valuable tool in providing empirical evidence for unidirectionality. For diachronic studies access to texts of comparable genres over a fairly long period is needed. It is only in a few languages that we are fortunate enough to have this kind of textual history. And it is for only a small subset of these languages that we have any statistical studies at all of the development of grammatical items. There is an urgent need for additional reliable statistic studies of a variety of phenomena in which early grammaticalization appears to be involved. […] More work is necessary to diagnose grammaticalization in its early stages and to develop the kinds of statistical parameters which will reveal it. (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 111-112)

Common ground shared by corpus linguistics and gzn. theory

- Both approaches give priority to the study of utterances in their discourse contexts rather than abstract systems of underlying rules.

- Both emphasise the importance of frequency data and statistics.

- Both agree that transitions between grammatical form and meaning are interdependent rather than constituting separate and autonomous domains.

- Both, finally, became "hot" in linguistics again in the late nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties after decades of relative neglect.

(Mair 2004: 121)

Bridging the gap between corpus linguistics and gzn. theory

→ Arne Olofsson. 1990. "A participle caught in the act: On the prepositional use of *following*." *Studia Neophilologica* 62: 23-35; 129-149.

Gzn. of the preposition *following* on the basis of data from the Brown and LOB corpora → the term 'grammaticalization' is not mentioned.

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→ Arne Olofsson. 2011. "Prepositional *following* revisited." *Studia Neophilologica* 83/1: 5-20.

The term 'grammaticalization' is frequently used in the follow-up article.

Bridging the gap between corpus linguistics and gzn. theory

→ Mair, C. 1994. "Is *see* becoming a conjunction? The study of grammaticalisation as a meeting ground for corpus linguistics and grammaticalisation theory". In U. Fries, G. Tottie & P. Schneider (eds.). *Creating and Using English Language Corpora*, 127-137. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

→ Rissanen, M., M. Kytö & K. Heikkonen (eds.). 1997. *Grammaticalization at Work: Studies of Long-Term Developments in English*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

→ Symposium "Corpus research on grammaticalization in English" organized by Hans Lindquist at Växjö University in 2001.

→ Lindquist, H. & C. Mair (eds.). 2004. *Corpus Approaches to Grammaticalization in English*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Illustrating the dialogue between corpus linguistics and grammaticalization studies

Looking for parallels between ontogenetic and diachronic gzn.
Case study 1: Existential *there*

- Locative *there* 'in/at that place' > Existential *there*

  (cf. Breivik 1983, 1997: 32; Johansson 1997; Pfenninger 2009: 49-53)

- The development took place in pre-OE times

  (cf. Breivik 1977: 346)

- OE as a transitional stage in the development

Case study 1: Existential *there*

- Point of departure: Christopher Johnson's (1999, 2001, 2005) analysis of the acquisition of existential *there* in Child English (data from the CHILDES archive; MacWhinney 1995).

- Johnson's theory of 'constructional grounding' or 'developmental reinterpretation':

  in the learning process, children use locative *there* as a source for existential *there*, via overlap utterances which share properties of both constructions.

Case study 1: Existential *there*

López-Couso, M.J. 2011. "Developmental parallels in diachronic and ontogenetic grammaticalization: Existential *there* as a test case." *Folia Linguistica* 45/1: 81-102.

→ Analysis of the prose texts of the OE and EME sections of the Helsinki Corpus (HC).

→ Historical scenario for the emergence of existential *there* parallel to the three developmental stages proposed by Johnson in child language acquisition.

Case study 1: Existential *there*

Stage 1: Both ontogenetically and diachronically, *there* is a distal deictic adverb, meaning 'in/at that place.'

(1) a. *There's Mommy.* (CHILDES; Naomi, age: 1;10)

b. ***Đar**   was se cing gehaten Sæbyrht. Ricolan sunu.*
   there was the king called   S.   R.'s   son

(HC; O2, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, R 604.3)

Case study 1: Existential *there*

Stage 2: Locative *there* begins to occur in overlap contexts, in which it performs both a deictic and an existence-informing function.

(2) a. *There's cup for Mom* (CHILDES; Naomi, age: 2;5)

   b. *Ac þa strengstan weras wuniað on ðam lande &*
      but the strongest men   live   in the land and

      micele burga ðær   synd &   mærlice   geweallode
      great cities there are and splendidly walled
      (HC; O3, *The Old Testament, Numbers* 13.29)

Case study 1: Existential *there*

Stage 2: 'Double-locative overlap deictics' (co-occurrence of *there* with an additional locative expression in the clause) as bridging contexts.

(3) a. *There's a table on the house* (CHILDES; Nina, age: 2;1)

b. *for þær wæs an forehus æt þære cyrcan duru.*

for there was a porch   at the church door

(HC; O4, *An Old English Vision of Leofric, Earl of Mercia*, 31)

Case study 1: Existential *there*

<u>Stage 3</u>: First instances of *there*-existentials, incompatible with the deictic reading.

(4) a. *There's money in here* (CHILDES; Peter, age: 2;5)

   b. *ȝef þu   get wite   wult hwucche wihtes   **þear** beon*
     if   you yet know want which   creatures there are

     ***þear** […] Ich þe   ontswerie;*
     there   I   you answer

     (HC; M1, *The Katherine Group*, 40)

Case study 1: Existential *there*

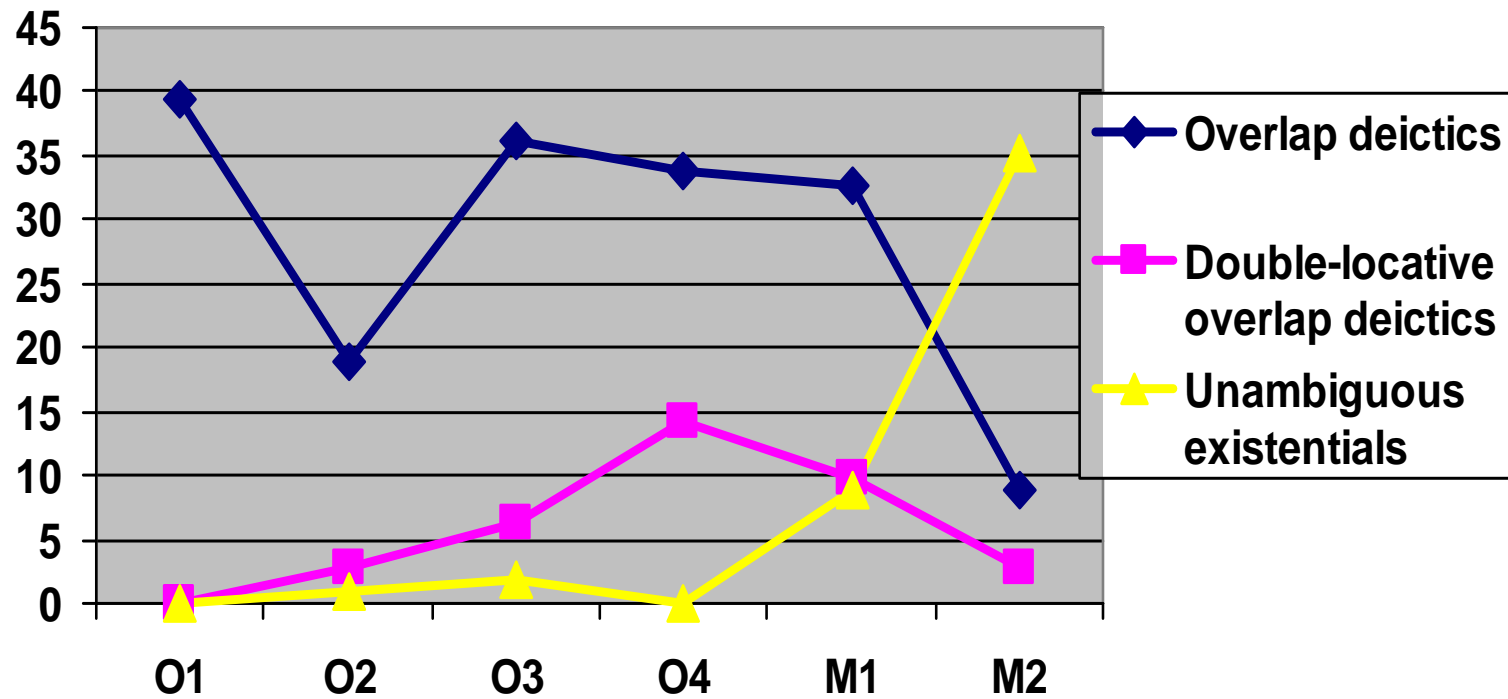Stage 3: Unambiguous existentials occur first in affirmative clauses and then spread to negative contexts.

(4) c. *There's no fire* (CHILDES; Peter, age: 2;7)

    d. *And þou for-seʒest alle myn waies, for þer nis no*

       and you know   all my ways for there not-is no

       worde in my tunge.

       word in my tongue

       (HC; M2, *The Earliest Complete English Prose Psalter*, Psalm 138.3)

Case study 1: Existential *there*

Recognizing and documenting incipient or ongoing gzn.
Case study 2: *Like*-parentheticals

A sceptical note:

The study of grammatical change on the basis of synchronic (or, at best, brachychronic) variation in the contemporary stage of a language is subject to a serious problem of verification. Given presently available methodological means, it is next to impossible to know which of the changes that speech habits currently exhibit are synchronic manifestations of ongoing genuine language change, and which of them are but ephemeral fashions. In this situation, a study such as this can hope to elucidate the synchronic dynamism of the language; it cannot hope to tell which innovations will result in changes and which ones will disappear without a trace in future synchronies. (Lehmann 1991: 532)

Case study 2: *Like*-parentheticals

Looks like, seems like, and *sounds like* parentheticals in Contemporary AmE; data from COCA (cf. López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2010a, b, c).

(5) a. *Going to be a big one, **looks like**. (COCA, 2009, FIC, Goolrick A Reliable Wife: a novel).*

b. *These animals are very delightful in a zoological park from the standpoint that the children love them. They can all relate to, **it seems like**, the kangaroo, the wallabee family. (COCA, 1995, SPOK, CNN_King)*

c. *He swaggered back and wiped his hands off on his pants. "So. You tell me. Crazy?" # "**Sounds like**." (COCA, 2005, FIC, Raboteau Singing for the Cardinal)*
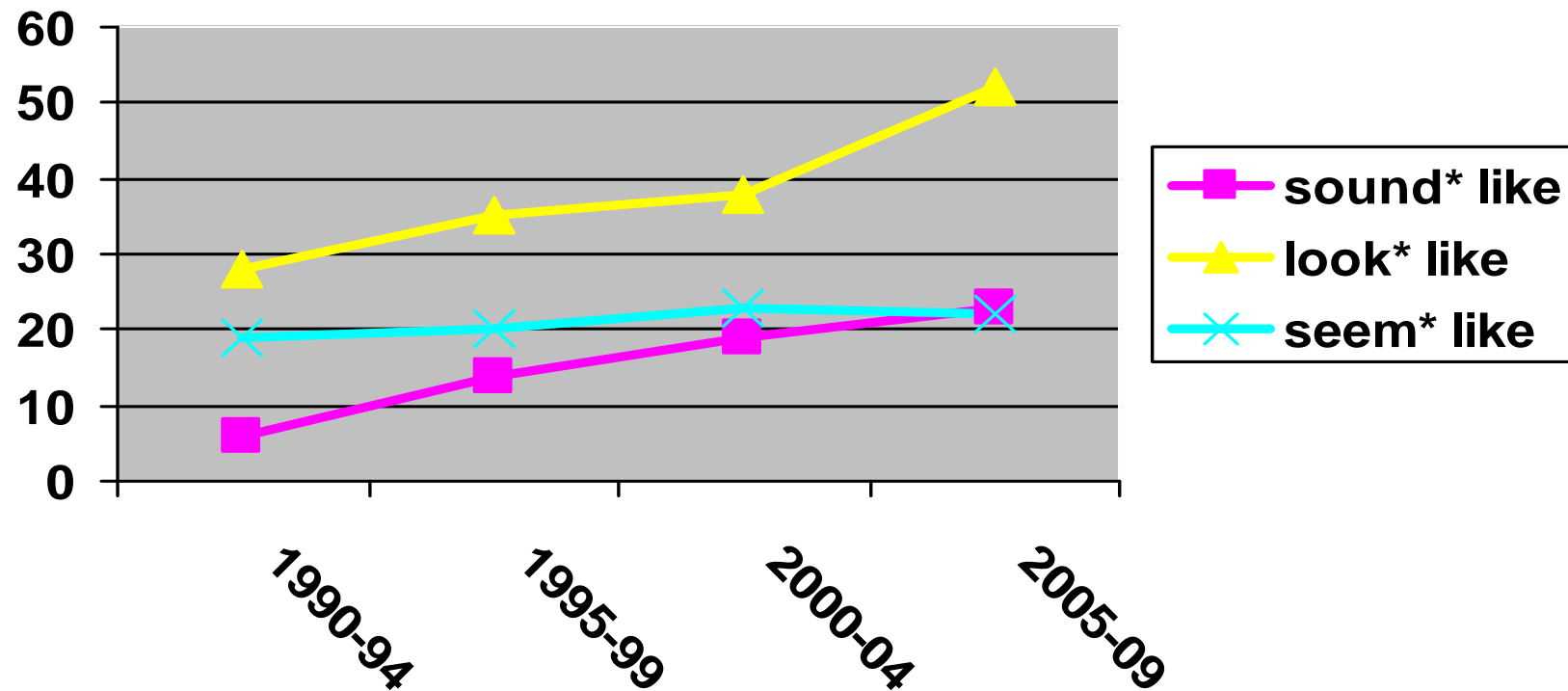
Case study 2: *Like*-parentheticals

Figure 2. *Look*/*seem*/*sound* *like* parentheticals in COCA

Case study 2: *Like*-parentheticals

Complement constructions with the 'comparative complementizer' *like*:

(6) a. *It looks like we're going to spend the night where we are.* (COCA, 2008, MAG, *Field and Stream*)

   b. *It seems like he doesn't want any vetting going on.* (COCA, 2008, SPOK, Fox Hannity and Colmes)

   c. *It sounds like we need a review of the hospital's notification policy.* (COCA, 2009, NEWS, *The Denver Post*)

Case study 2: *Like*-parentheticals

- **Decategorialization**:

CTP-clause   *It looks/seems/sounds like + clause*

        ↓

parenthetical clause   *, (it)looks/seems/sounds like,*

        ↓

quasi-adverb?   *looks/seems/sounds like*

Case study 2: *Like*-parentheticals

- **Layering**.

- **Morphosyntactic fixation**: tendency to occur in the present tense, affirmative forms, with no adverbial modification vs. complementation patterns (wider range of variability).

- **Fusion**: predicate and *like* are bounded.

- **Bleaching**.

- Development of **(inter)subjective meanings and functions** (e.g. mitigation, reformulation, confirmation).

Corpora as a source for qualitative analysis of gzn. phenomena.
Case study 3: Marker of apposition *namely*

- Not all gzn. processes "leave a statistical imprint" (Mair 2004: 133) in corpora.

- Particularly relevant problem for historical studies of low-frequency items and constructions.

Case study 3: Optional marker of expository apposition *namely*

- Late 12th century: particularizer *namely,* 'particularly, especially, above all' (cf. OED s.v. *namely* adv. 1; MED s.v. *nam(e)li* adv. 1).

(7) *for no doute he shal fynde ful manye biblis in Latyn ful false, if he loke manie, **nameli** newe;* (HC; c1388, John Purvey, *The Prologue to the Bible*, I, 58)

- Mid-15th century: Optional marker of expository apposition *namely* 'to wit, that is to say, videlicet' (cf. OED s.v. *namely* adv. 3; MED s.v. *nam(e)li* adv. 2).

(8) *[…], let me assure you, that even with the other part that is wont to flye away, (**namely** the Flowers) and Antimonial Glass may without an addition of other Ingredients be made.* (HC; 1675-6, Robert Boyle, *Electricity & Magnetism*, 23)

Case study 3: Optional marker of expository apposition *namely*

- Possible gzn. route from the particularizer *namely* to the appositive marker *namely*:

(9) *His syns sal þan be shewed ful many, Als I tald byfor <u>in þe thred part</u> **namly**.* (HC; M3, *The Pricke of Conscience,* 80)

(10) *Þis word oure. ous tekþ to hatye <u>þri þing</u> **nameliche**. Prede. wreþe. and auarice.* (HC; 1340, *Ayenbite of Inwyt* I, 102).

↓

(11) *Þis word 'oure' techeþ vs to hate þre þinges,* **namely**: *pride, hate, couetise.* (HC; c1450, *Vices and Virtues* 4, 98).

Concluding remark

[…], we need corpora for two reasons: sometimes because they provide a lot of data (which can be analysed statistically), but on other occasions because they provide authentic data (which allow us to analyse language in performance qualitatively without reducing its complexity). (Mair 2004: 139)

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