Ling 97: Morphological Change
Syllabus

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OH: W 3:30 – 4:30 or by appointment

1. Goal of this Tutorial

In this tutorial we’ll examine two of the principal types of language change: analogy and grammaticalization.

We’re all familiar with analogies (e.g. foot : sock :: hand : X, X = glove), but we’ll see just how prevalent analogy is in language change (e.g. it’s why we use cows rather than kine for the plural of cow, why for many people dove -- instead of the inherited dived -- is the past tense for dive, and why many others say [fɛbjuəri] for February). Grammaticalization is the process by which “content” words become “function” words, which resulted in the creation of the English modals (can, may, must, etc.), the Romance inflectional future (e.g. Lat cantare habeo → Fr. chanterai), and the English expressions try and and be gonna.

Our focus will be on examining the various types of phenomena within each type of change, and then looking critically at the current theoretical attempts to explain them (and hopefully coming up with some of our own explanations along the way). In the end, we’ll look at whether these two processes are really, as has recently been suggested, part of a single process of language “optimization”.

2. Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to language change, types of analogy
HW: Problem set #1
Reading: Hock - ch.9 & 10, Kuryłowicz – “The Nature of the so-called Analogical Processes”

Week 2: Are there principles of analogical change? Can we predict which types of analogical change are more likely to occur?
HW: Problem set #2

Week 3: What drives paradigm leveling? Does UG want uniform paradigms?
HW: Problem set #3
Reading: Hopper & Traugott – ch. 1 & 3.3

Week 4: Introduction to
HW: Problem set #4
grammaticalization, types of grammaticalization

Week 5: What enables grammaticalization to occur? Is grammaticalization unidirectional?

Week 6: Wrap-up of grammaticalization. Are analogy and grammaticalization part of a single process (“optimization”)?

3. Requirements

- We’ll usually have 1-2 required readings for each week, which will relate to the topic(s) to be discussed that week.
- For the first five weeks there will be short problem sets which will require application of what we’ve covered in class that week.
- Everyone will write a short final paper (5-10 double-spaced pages) on a topic of his or her choice (but relating to some aspect of what we cover in the tutorial). Possible topics include the analysis of an example of analogical change or grammaticalization that we have not discussed in class and that has not been covered in the readings.

- All readings and problem sets will be posted on the web: www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~kplaster.

4. Grading

- Attendance and participation: 25%
- Problem sets (5): 50%
- Final paper: 25%