Abstract:
Grammaticalization is argued to involve ‘structural simplification’ (Roberts and Roussou (R & R) (2003), van Gelderen (2011)), and the outcome of grammaticalization (functional categories) is assumed to be defective at Spell-Out (R & R (2003:218ff) cf Selkirk’s (1984) ‘Principle of Categorial Invisibility of Function Words’). Tse (2013a, b, forthcoming) analyses ‘lateral’ grammaticalization which consistently produces functional elements that are phonologically, morphologically and semantically strong. This paper analyses the interface effects in syntactic change, namely the causes behind the weakening of phonology (‘phonological weakening’), morphology (‘univerbation’) and semantics (‘semantic bleaching’), which occur in grammaticalization but not in ‘lateral’ grammaticalization. This comparison reveals a correlation between syntactic features and the Spell-Out of phonetic and logical form which seems to support Chomsky’s (2004) ‘best case scenario’ (parallel derivation between narrow syntax, semantics and phonology).

R & R (2003:201) define ‘structural simplification’ as the reduction of ‘feature syncretisms’, while van Gelderen (2011:16-21) argues that uninterpretable features are ‘simpler’ than interpretable features. R & R (2003:200) further characterise grammaticalization as the loss of Agree/Move in favour of Merge at higher functional positions. Tse (2013b:99) therefore defines grammaticalization as the loss of probe features in Agree/Move and a concomitant upward shift (Merge) of probe features (cf Roberts (2010:50-51)). ‘Lateral’ grammaticalization describes the geneses of copula verbs from determiners (e.g. Chinese shi) and deverbal case-markers (e.g. Chinese ba), which involve ‘structural simplification’ but no upward feature analysis (Tse (2013a, b, forthcoming)): Chinese shi is originally used in equational constructions where it has Agree with the apposed topic and predicate (Li and Thompson (1977:422-423)), and when it is re-analysed as a copula verb in Pred, Agree is lost and the interpretable phi-features of shi become uninterpretable as they agree with the new subject (Lohndal (2009:14-15), van Gelderen (2011:130-131)); Chinese ba originally undergoes V-to-v Move (Feng (2002), van Gelderen (2011:189-191)), and as case-markers, it loses Move and is merged as a functional preposition in little v where its interpretable verb features become uninterpretable as they select the second (main) verb (Feng (2005:4, 7, 10), van Gelderen (2011:189)). However, both Chinese shi and ba hold features that are re-analysed not from below but from pragmatic implicature, since the Pred features of shi are re-analysed from the implied identity between the apposed elements in equational constructions, while Chinese co-verbs hold K(case) features which do not exist Chinese which has never had morphological case (Lamontagne and Travis (1986, 1987, 1992), Tse (forthcoming)). This can be correlated with the fact that all cross-linguistic examples of ‘lateral’ grammaticalization do not display ‘phonological weakening’/‘univerbation’ (see Lohndal (2009:13ff) for copula verbs derived from determiners, Lord (1993) for deverbal case-markers) or ‘semantic bleaching’, since there is a gain of features from pragmatics that are not in the original ‘cue’ (Tse (2013b:107)). These pragmatically inferred features seem to reinforce not only semantics but also prosodic boundaries, while the loss of probe features and an upward shift of goal features give rise to the weakening of PF and LF in grammaticalization.

References:


