

Pragmaticalization as functional bleaching and expressive enrichment

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Abstract

This study offers a new view of pragmaticalization based on the development of Japanese *no* from complementizer to pragmatic particle. In the proposed model, the process Japanese *no* has undergone serves as a prototypical example of pragmaticalization as a process from the grammar to the lexicon in which *no* has lost its sentence-structuring function, making way for the rise of novel expressive meaning. I label this loss of grammatical function “functional bleaching”, and claim that it runs parallel to expressive enrichment via pragmaticalization. Grammaticalization, on the other hand, is the mirror image of pragmaticalization in the sense of a process from the lexicon into the grammar, in which the rise of novel functions is accompanied by loss of lexical meaning, or semantic bleaching.

1 From nominalizer to stance marker

Diachronic processes from nominalizer to complementizer have received relatively wide attention in the literature on grammaticalization in Japanese and other, in particular Asian, languages, with considerable variation in the classification of functions and in labels for stages in the process. For instance, Simpson and Wu (2001) offer an early comparative study of the development of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese “formal nouns and nominalizers”. As for diachronic processes going beyond sentence-structuring functions, Yap et al. (2004), building on the analysis of Japanese *no* in Horie (1998), propose grammaticalization paths for *no*, Mandarin Chinese *de*, and Malay (*em*)*punya*, all of which have pronominal uses and function as genitive and cleft-markers, but have also developed what the authors label “stance-marking” functions.

A number of grammaticalization paths have been proposed for Japanese *no*. Following recent studies such as Serafim and Shinzato (2009) and Shibatani (2013), both drawing on data from dialects other than Standard Japanese, and studies of similar elements in Ryukyuan such as Shibasaki (2011) and Shibatani and Shigeno (2013), I assume that the genitive particle *no*, while being a possible lexical source for the nominalizer/complementizer *no* in (Standard) Japanese, is not directly relevant to the origins of the stance marker, and that the ultimate lexical origins of *no* are unknown.

An example of a stance-marking function of *no* prominently featured in previous research is “explanation”, which I consider a discourse-structuring function. The particular instance of change I am interested in is that of *no* from sentence-structuring element (which I take to be a complementizer) to evidence marker (which I take to be a particle). While complementizer-copula phrases, such as Japanese *no-da* sentences, have discourse-structuring functions such as “explanation” in a number of languages (this also holds for English “It’s that...” to some extent), *no* as a pragmatic particle contributes expressive meaning independent of the complementizer’s sentence- or discourse-structuring functions, similar to Japanese sentence-final particles like *yo* or *ne*. This differentiation is the basis for setting the current proposal apart from the more familiar view of pragmaticalization as a shift towards

greater discourse-orientation. In the following section, I introduce cases I take to be clear examples of *no* as a pragmatic particle. For a classification of the structuring and non-structuring uses of *no-da* sentences, some of which similar to complementizer-copula in other languages, see Noda (1997).

2 Japanese *no* as a pragmatic particle

The example in (1) shows the cleft- and evidence-marking functions of *no*, respectively. Glossing over possible grey zones in categorization, I label the cleft-marking element *no*₁, the evidence-marking one *no*₂. The example is a *ka*-interrogative cleft with final falling intonation, a typical context being one in which the speaker has come across evidence supporting the truth utterance’s proposition — in the case at hand that of the focused alternative “it is *from Tokyo* that he came”.

- (1) *Kare-ga kesa kita no₁-wa Tokyo-kara na no₂ ka.*
 he-NOM morning came COMP-TOP Tokyo-from COP PRT Q
 “So it’s from Tokyo that he came this morning?”

Whereas *no*₁ in (1) is a complementizer, *i.e.* a syntactic operator with a structuring, cleft-marking function, *no*₂ is a pragmatic particle without syntactic function contributing to expressive meaning, *i.e.* a stance-marker, which I argue is of a particular kind. Crucially, when *no*₂ is added, a reading of the falling *ka*-interrogative conveying doubt that the proposition holds, *e.g.* in reaction to its assertion by the addressee, is unavailable. This can be explained assuming that *no*₂ is a marker of evidence (Davis 2011), a nuance approximated as a rising declarative with “So...” in the English paraphrase. However, a translation fully capturing the conveyed meaning of the Japanese utterance in the sense of reflecting its felicity conditions relative to different contextual factors is not possible, underlining that *no*₂ makes a clearly identifiable, lexically determined contribution to expressive meaning.

The assumption of an evidential contribution of *no*₂ is supported by further data, such as its function in polar questions (see Sudo 2013 and Ito and Oshima 2014 for relevant data), and in *daroo*-utterances expressing speaker assumptions, or results of inference. As intuitions in the latter case are somewhat sharper, I introduce example (2) from Morimoto (1994), via Hara (2006) to underline the point that *no*₂, as a pragmatic particle, is a kind of stance marker that warrants special attention.

- (2) *Kanojo-wa moo kekkon shita no daroo.*
 she-TOP already marriage did *no*₂ INFER
 “She must already have gotten married.”

In absence of *no*₂, *daroo* does not tolerate evidence supporting the speaker’s assumption — if, for example, the speaker of (2) sees that the last name of the person in question has changed, a bare version is not felicitous, while that with *no*₂ shown here is. Takubo (2009), who originally made this observation, sees *no* here as a scope-widener, allowing for the utterance to express abductive, rather than deductive inference. This is in line with a view of stance-marking ultimately being derived from the structuring function of *no*₁, as arguably is the case with the “explanation” use of *no(da)*-sentences. However, as this can not readily explain the observations regarding the felicity of falling *ka*-interrogatives like that in (1) with respect to evidence, I assume that here, too the evidence-marking function of *no*₂ is what influences felicity.

3 The process *no*₁ > *no*₂ as a case of pragmaticalization.

Diachronically, *no* gradually took over some functions of adnominal forms, some of which possibly stance-marking (Iwasaki 2000), before fully developing into a nominalizer / complementizer

(Frellesvig 2010), pronominal preceding sentence-structuring functions, sentence-structuring preceding stance-marking functions. In this section, I discuss how a process by which the pragmatic particle no_2 has emerged from the complementizer no_1 , henceforth $no_1 > no_2$, can (or can not) be captured by extant theories of grammaticalization and pragmaticalization.

Issues for extant theories of grammaticalization

- (i) Many of the criteria traditionally proposed for grammaticalization do not apply to $no_1 > no_2$:
 - There is no change from lexical to grammatical item (Heine 2002), *i.e.* no shift from lexical to functional category: no_1 is already of the functional category C (complementizer), thus semantically vacuous.
 - There is no shift towards less referential meaning (Hopper and Traugott 2003), as the complementizer no_1 in its sentence-structuring function is not referential at all.
 - There is no apparent loss in autonomy (Himmelmann 2004): as a syntactic operator, no_1 is entirely dependent on the construction it occurs in. On the other hand, no_2 , while occurring in a fixed position, can be considered *more* autonomous — as a pragmatic particle it is optionally added to convey its expressive meaning.
- (ii) While grammaticalization as left- and upward reanalysis as proposed in Roberts and Roussou (2003) and Roberts (2010) appears a promising alternative for the development from nominalizer to complementizer, no_2 has in essence lost its syntactic function. While no_2 is clearly more peripheral than no_1 , it is not clear where in the syntax, *e.g.* within a Split-CP framework (Rizzi 1997) it would occur, and whether it would be a projecting head.
- (iii) Within the processes Lehmann (2004) distinguishes from grammaticalization, $no_1 > no_2$ is not a case of “lateral conversion” to a sentence-final particle (SFP). Rather, *no* underwent “recategorization”: the position of no_2 , preceding force morphemes (assertive *da*, interrogative *ka*) is distinct from that of SFPs. Thus, while extant criteria for grammaticalization apparently do not apply, see (i) and (ii), we are looking at an innovative process of language change.
- (iv) While the emergence of expressive meaning makes it plausible that $no_1 > no_2$ is a process of pragmaticalization, extant definitions can also not fully capture it:
 - It is not a typical case of pragmaticalization as defined by Diewald (2011), *i.e.* there is no shift from propositional towards more discourse-oriented meaning, since the pragmatical meaning of no_2 arises from the semantically vacuous no_1 .
 - On a similar vein, the concept of pragmaticalization as a diachronic shift from at-issue to expressive meaning, as proposed by Davis and Gutzmann (2015), does not apply as there is no descriptive meaning in no_1 that could undergo such a process.

I propose that $no_1 > no_2$ is a process of pragmaticalization, in which new lexical meaning arises in the vacuum left by the loss of syntactic function accompanying the process from sentence-structuring element to stance-marking element with functions such as “explanation”. While I take this new meaning to be expressive in the sense of Davis and Gutzmann (2015), it does not originate in descriptive lexical meaning, but is innovated in a process of expressive enrichment.

In order to account for $no_1 > no_2$ on these lines while sidestepping the issues enumerated above, in the following section I propose an idealized model in which pragmaticalization comes with a parallel process of “functional bleaching” by which grammatical function is lost, giving rise to enrichment with new, expressive meaning. The notion of “functional bleaching” is the mirror image of semantic bleaching: semantic bleaching means loss of meaning, making room for functional enrichment in a grammaticalization process, while functional bleaching means loss of function, making room for (expressive) meaning enrichment in a pragmaticalization process.

4 Pragmaticalization: out of the grammar, into the lexicon

In order to ground the model within a concept of lexicon and grammar, the two poles which many analyses place at the core of grammaticalization (I ignore how lexicalization fits into the picture for space), I define lexicon and grammar by the simple criterion of whether an element has any kind of lexical meaning, be it descriptive or expressive, or is only a syntactic operator which relates or stands for lexical elements. Using labeling familiar from generative approaches in formal linguistics, for instance, I take N and V to be prototypically lexical (with the possible exceptions of semantically vacuous formal nouns and nominalizers as mere category shifters from V to N, see ‘open issues’ below); D, T, and C to be functional categories. This only covers independent words in the descriptive meaning dimension, however — it is not a trivial question how to integrate particles with only expressive meaning. Taking any kind of lexical meaning into consideration, however, the distinction should be fairly intuitive, especially in the case of no_1 and no_2 : the former is “(syntactic) function only”, and is thus part of the grammar, the latter “(expressive) meaning only” and thus part of the lexicon.

The model I propose to thus account for $no_1 > no_2$ is illustrated below: grammaticalization is a process from lexical to functional category accompanied by semantic bleaching in which new function emerges, pragmaticalization a process in the opposite direction accompanied by functional bleaching in which new meaning emerges. Both “lexical words” with descriptive meaning and “pragmatic markers” with expressive meaning are part of the lexicon.

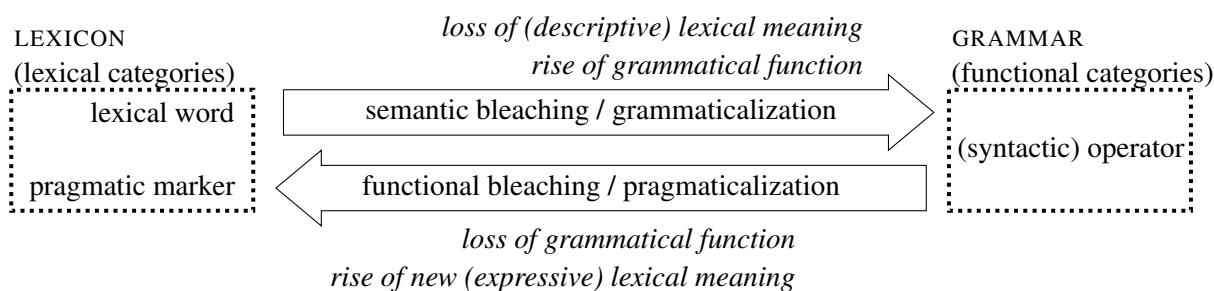


Figure 1: Proposed model of grammaticalization and pragmaticalization relating lexicon and grammar.

In this model, $no_1 > no_2$ is a case of pragmaticalization in which the syntactic (scope-adjusting and cleft-marking) functions of the complementizer erode, and new (stance-marking, evidential) expressive meaning arises as *no* moves out of the grammar and into the lexicon.

On a side note, while the lexical origins of *no* are contested, data from Japanese dialects and from Ryukyuan languages hint towards a process from lexical noun to nominalizer in related cases, which means that some cases of pragmaticalization could be a *return* to the lexicon. This is an interesting prospect for the analysis. For now, I focus on the claim that $no_1 > no_2$ is a process out of the grammar and into the lexicon, regardless of the origins of no_1 . In the following and final section, I discuss some of the implications the present model, developed based on this process, might have for the analysis of cases of grammaticalization and pragmaticalization discussed in the literature.

5 Conclusion: Implications for studies of language change

The case of $no_1 > no_2$ is ideal in the sense that lexical meaning has been lost completely (not only are the lexical origins of no_1 ’s predecessors not transparent, they have not been recovered at least in Standard Japanese). This is not necessarily so in other cases, where both semantic and functional bleaching may be partial or gradual processes. Below, I discuss some case studies in the literature in the light of the present model, followed by a discussion of potential areas for improvement.

Diewald (2011) For instance, pragmaticalization cases like the German pragmatic markers discussed by Diewald take part within the lexicon assuming the model proposed here. Their meaning merely shifts from the more proposition-oriented (descriptive) to the more participant- or even discourse-oriented (expressive), similar to the “explanation” case.

Davis and Gutzmann (2015) The case of negation as discussed by Davis and Gutzmann, on the other hand, is more complex: negation operates on the descriptive level, but does not have lexical meaning in itself. In this sense, negation must be categorized as a functional element, thus a shift from descriptive towards expressive level could be assumed to take part within the grammar. In contrast to this, I assume that “expressive negation” actually means that the functional (morphosyntactical) operator negation takes on new expressive meaning via enrichment, and is thus also a case of pragmaticalization, moving negation from the grammar into the lexicon (if possibly not completely).

Barth-Weingarten and Couper-Kuhlen (2002) The case of English *though*, which developed from a conjunction to a pragmatic marker according to Barth-Weingarten and Couper-Kuhlen, also involves functional bleaching, thus movement from the grammar to the lexicon. In this case, I assume that the adversative meaning (which is famously expressive, cf. Grice 1975) conveyed by *though* is fully retained, while its function as a subordinating conjunction erodes. This is a case of pragmaticalization in our sense, but without (much) expressive enrichment — the adversative meaning was there to begin with. Such cases expose a possible weakness of the present proposal which is based on the ideal example $no_1 > no_2$: the line between grammar and lexicon is not as clear as the model suggests. This is a general problem of models of language change positing discrete categories, however.

Roberts and Roussou (2003) Comparing the generative model of grammaticalization as initially proposed by Roberts and Roussou (upward reanalysis within a split CP) with the model proposed here, there is the possibility that elements such as sentence-final particles “fall out” of the grammar and fully move back into the lexicon. This does not necessarily mean that they do not have a place within the syntax any longer, but merely that they have lost (much of) their function and contribute to the utterance in other ways, such as by adding expressive meaning. This is an intuitively welcome prediction, capturing cases not covered by Roberts and Roussou’s concept of grammaticalization.

Open issues, future research

There is a possible grey zone between lexicon and grammar in the process of category climbing from N to C, which can be assumed to occur when a nominalizer becomes a complementizer. In the present model, this process takes part within the grammar if semantic vacuity is taken as the decisive criterion for inclusion in the lexicon, but is a process from lexicon to grammar if lexical category (N vs. C) is taken as the decisive criterion for membership in grammar or lexicon. This issue has to remain for further research, as it requires principled consideration on the nature of functional and lexical items, touching on the ongoing debate of how “more grammatical” can be defined.

An example for a potential target for widening the empirical basis is Kikaijima Ryukyuan (KR). As discussed in Rieser and Shirata (2014), the KR element *su* is a nominalizer and sentence-structuring element, for instance used as a cleft-marker, but also has expressive (e.g. mirative) uses. What is interesting about *su* is that it has a much smaller range of referential functions than *no*, and that it is distinct from the genitive particle, making it a potentially even “purer” example of pragmaticalization, where inference from other uses or functions of a homophonous element are less likely.

In summary, the present proposal straightforwardly accounts for cases where pragmatic markers develop from syntactic operators, offering a new perspective on pragmaticalization, grammaticalization and their relation to the lexicon. Further case studies on these lines will test the capabilities of the present model in accounting for and categorizing instances of language change.

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