

ELIZABETH CLOSS TRAUOGOTT and RICHARD B. DASHER, *Regularity in semantic change*. (Cambridge Studies in Linguistics.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xx + 341pp.

Reviewed by URSULA LENKER

In *Regularity in semantic change*, two authors who are both well-known for their seminal work on language change at the interface between semantics and pragmatics in English (Traugott) and Japanese (Dasher) now approach their data from a shifted theoretical perspective: the findings of their famous case studies on the developments of modals, discourse markers, speech act verbs, and honorifics are no longer analyzed as a semantic-pragmatic subtype of grammaticalization, but are now seen as “regularities in semantic change”.

This explicit focus on semantics will certainly help to streamline the term and concept of grammaticalization, which has with its fame become increasingly fuzzy and meaningless over the past years (i.e. the notion has at times become so all-encompassing as to lose its explanatory force). The process of grammaticalization is given back its original explanatory force and is restricted to morphosyntactic phenomena which fulfill the criteria of increased bonding or syntactic scope reduction. Even more importantly, this shift of focus opens up new perspectives for research on semantic change: the authors argue that prototypical semantic changes are replicated cross-linguistically (examples are taken primarily from English and Japanese, but also from Dutch and Chinese) and that these recurring patterns provide evidence for unidirectionality, and, eventually, predictability in semantic change. This new view is particularly challenging because semantic change has for a long time been thought to elude systematic analysis: in contrast to phonological and morphological changes, meaning changes seemed far too idiosyncratic, diverse, and irregular to be grasped by overarching principles. This has led to often incongruous or even conflicting taxonomies which suggested that meaning changes are bidirectional (cf. the terms generalizing and narrowing, amelioration and pejoration, metaphor and metonymy, etc.).

Traugott and Dasher develop the widely recognized hypothesis that the chief driving force in processes of regular semantic change is pragmatic, and they explicitly integrate recent findings in Cognitive Linguistics in their well-known semantic-pragmatic approach. Metonymy—not metaphor—is given the prominent role and is reconceptualized as the major language-internal force in semantic change, in particular lan-

guage-internal metonymy arising out of the syntagmatic contexts of language use, association, contiguity, and indexicality. Central to the approach is therefore a kind of metonymy related to phenomena which in pragmatics are referred to as “(generalized) implicatures”, or in Traugott and Dasher’s terms, “invited inferences”. Accordingly, the authors argue for an “Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change” (IITSC) to account for conventionalizing of pragmatic meanings, i.e. implicatures or invited inferences, and their reanalysis as semantic meanings (cf. Levinson 2000). Following Levinson, this dynamic theory of language change builds on the distinction of three levels of meaning: coded meanings (convention of a language at a given time), utterance-type meanings (generalized invited inferences; GIINs), and utterance-token meanings (invited inferences which have not yet been crystallized into commonly used implicatures; IINs). Historically, according to the hypothesis, there is a path from coded meanings to utterance-token meanings (IINs) to utterance-type, pragmatically polysemous meanings (GIINs), to new semantically polysemous (coded) meanings.

In the interactive process of language use, the prime initiators of change are the speaker or writer—not the addressee. Such a production-oriented view of language change accounts for why the major type of semantic change is subjectification. This key notion of Traugott’s concept is—in contrast to fundamentally different conceptions of the term by e.g. Langacker—understood as a diachronic process, focusing on the subject of a discourse because subjective valuations are emphasized or because the new sense has acquired a pragmatic function at the speech-act level. The authors thus retain the (repeatedly challenged) key notions of their earlier research—(inter)subjectification and unidirectionality—which are now not seen as prototypical mechanisms of grammaticalization, but as “regularities” in semantic change.

These basic assumptions are described in a very clear and systematic way in the first two chapters—“Framework” (pp. 1–50) and “Prior and current work on semantic change” (pp. 51–104). In the remainder of the book, several empirical studies of “semantic change” are presented from the perspective of IITSC. These case studies—all of them concerned with verbal and adverbial, not nominal developments—are rather disparate, but are presented as sharing several commonalities, in particular “modality”. This is most obvious in the case study on the development of modal verbs (pp. 105–151), where the history of English *must* and *ought to*, e.g., shows the development from non-modal (“be able, be permitted”) to deontic (*Jane must go*) to epistemic use (*Jane must be tired*). Chapter 4 deals with the development of adverbials with dis-

course marker function, such as English *indeed*, *in fact*, *actually*, *well* and Japanese *sate*, a deictic manner adverb “thus” which developed into a discourse marker signalling global connectivity (pp. 152–189). The development of performative uses of locutionary verbs such as *promise*, *recognize*, *insist* (ultimately derived from spatial and mental terms) and the recurrent path of language change from (pre-speech act) event verbs to speech act verbs to performative (discourse deictic) verbs and parentheticals is the centre of chapter 5, a discussion of the development of the English commissives meaning “promise” (OE *ge-/behātan*, PDE *promise*) and also the origin of the declarative use of Chinese *bao*, originally “defend”, now an expression for the act of “guaranteeing”. In the last case study, the development of honorifics or social deictics (pp. 226–278) are exemplified by changes of English *pray* (*prithēe* and *pray* without a pronoun) and *please* and the development of two Japanese honorifics, *kadusaru*, which demonstrates the path from non-honorific (“wait on”) to a referent honorific, and Japanese *suburahu*, which develops along the same lines to finally become an addressee honorific. It is, however, extremely irritating that this last case study suddenly uses a completely new terminology for phenomena labelled differently in all the other chapters of the book (cf. e.g. CDE “conceptualized described event” and CSE “conceptualized speech event”).

Apart from the shifts from one semantic domain to another summarized above, all the lexemes studied share the pragmatic-semantic tendencies in Table 1 (cf. p. 265).

Since the theory of GIINs requires pragmatic polysemies in the early stages—which later develop into semantic polysemies—language change necessarily involves polysemy, and loss of original meaning is relatively rare. Old and new meanings (*M*) typically coexist in the same text and semantic change is therefore characterizable as $M_1 > M_1 \sim M_2 (> M_2)$, with polysemous layers at each (innovated) stage. It is also important to note that no given lexeme is required to undergo the changes; the hypothesis suggests predictability, however, in so far that “if a lexeme with the appropriate semantics undergoes change, it is probable that the change will be of the type specified” (p. 281).

This new approach is extremely stimulating and will thus certainly provoke a number of case studies. I do not at all doubt its explanatory force, but I fail to see why these recurrent patterns should be—in the form presented here—seen as regularities in *semantic* change. The authors explicitly stress that they choose a discourse perspective and it is indeed to be agreed with them that the force or the dynamics of semantic change are pragmatic and that these are recurrent and regular. I think, however, that it is misleading to refer to them as regularity in

Table 1

non-subjective	>subjective	>intersubjective
content	>content-procedural	>procedural
scope within proposition	>scope over proposition	>scope over discourse
truth conditional	>	>non-truth-conditional

“semantic change”: they may *affect* the semantics of a rather small number of words, but are only one single force among many others which affect the meaning of a word, such as formal grounds (homophony, etc.), structural grounds (influence of other members of the word field) or loan influence (which the authors deliberately exclude!). An obvious sign that we may perhaps not be dealing with semantic change in full is that the examples which are quoted in the research report on “semantic change” (Bréal, Ulmann etc.) and which are commonly cited as the standard cases of semantic change, such as OE *dēor* “animal” > *deer*; Lat. *nescius*, OF *ni(s)ce* “stupid” > *nice* etc.) do not turn up again in the book. These examples—most of them nouns and adjectives—are, however, the prototypical examples for certain identifiable patterns of semantic change and I wonder whether one can ignore them when promoting a case of a comprehensive theory on semantic change (for an alternative new approach on semantic change proper cf. Blank 1999). Since I do not think that the verbs and adverbs chosen in the studies here are the correct testbed for the whole theory of regularity in semantic change, it would be interesting to see if and how the proposed theory can be applied to the standard examples of semantic change. For the time being, however, I do not see why we should not allow the clear methodological approach and the most valuable findings to be placed where they are—at the interface between pragmatics and semantics.

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