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IN DEFENSE OF A PRAGMATIC VIEW OF REANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT This paper will defend a view of reanalysis as a key empirical phenomenon in grammatical change (defined broadly as including meaning change), arguing that an interactionist point of view offers independent justification for this assumption. I propose that reanalysis is a mechanism of change that is implemented at the level of individual language users, and which is fundamentally driven by hearers and by pragmatics. Having proposed a Constructionalist definition of reanalysis, I go on to distinguish two different subtypes, according to whether or not the hearer's mental grammar already includes an existing analysis of the construction that is reanalyzed. Subsequently, I discuss the roles played by context and by frequency in reanalysis, and I seek to place the phenomenon within an overall typology of forms of language change, partly with a focus on forms of change that do not constitute reanalysis, and what makes them different from the latter, and partly with a focus on the relationship between reanalysis and grammaticalization.

1 INTRODUCTION

Despite being often considered to be one of the most central mechanisms of language change (Lightfoot 1979, Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer 1991, Hopper & Traugott 1993, Harris & Campbell 1995, Croft 2001, Roberts 2007), the concept of reanalysis has been subject to some controversy. Not only have doubts been raised about its overall importance, but its definition, specific aspects of the phenomenon as often understood, its relationship with other forms of change, and its theoretical and empirical status, have been queried (Haspelmath 1998, De Smet 2009, 2012, 2013, Fischer 2011, Kiparsky 2012, Madariaga 2017, Whitman 2012).

This paper will defend a view of reanalysis as a key empirical phenomenon in grammatical change (defined broadly as including meaning change). In line with Detges & Waltereit (2002), I argue that reanalysis is a mechanism of change that is implemented at the level of individual language users, and

which is fundamentally driven by hearers and by pragmatics. The structure of the paper is as follows: immediately below, in §2, I offer a Constructionalist definition of reanalysis.¹ In §3, I argue that an interactionist point of view offers independent justification for assuming that reanalysis is a significant factor in language change. In §4, I distinguish two different subtypes of reanalysis, namely “neo-analysis”, on the one hand, and “re-analysis” on the other, according to whether or not the hearer’s mental grammar already includes an existing analysis of the construction which is reanalyzed. Section 5 discusses the role of context in reanalysis, arguing that reanalysis is not triggered by constructional ambiguity, but rather by the occurrence of constructions in contexts that fail to sufficiently constrain the meaning contribution that the target construction is perceived to make. This section leads on to §6, which deals with the role played by frequency, with respect to triggering reanalysis, on one hand, and in the process of entrenchment of a reanalyzed construction, on the other. Sect. 7 seeks to place reanalysis within an overall typology of forms of language change, partly with a focus on forms of change that do not constitute reanalysis, and what makes them different from the latter, and partly with a focus on the relationship between reanalysis and grammaticalization. Finally, §8 is a conclusion.

2 A CONSTRUCTIONALIST DEFINITION OF REANALYSIS

I take my point of departure in a Constructionalist conception of grammar (Hoffman & Trousdale 2013, Traugott & Trousdale 2013), whereby a linguistic construction is defined as the semiotic union of the form and the meaning of a linguistic item or multi-word expression. In other words, a construction functions as a sign, which may be simple or complex in nature.

Within this framework, I propose to define reanalysis as triggered by a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the contribution that an existing construction is perceived to make to the interpretation of certain (types of) utterances of which it forms a part, and, on the other hand, the contribution that the construction ought to make according to established convention within the speech community. In the first instance, such discrepancies result in hearers reinterpreting the meaning side of the construction. In accordance with the original definition of Langacker (1977: 58) and with Blinkenberg’s (1950: 42) prior definition of what he termed “metanalysis”², I assume that reinter-

1 Note that not all changes that have been described as reanalyses in the existing literature will necessarily qualify as such on this definition, cf. §7

2 Blinkenberg borrows Jespersen’s (1922) terminology, but his definition of metanalysis is broader than that of Jespersen, for whom the phenomenon seems to be synonymous with rebracketing. I will argue in §7 below that rebracketing is a separate mechanism of change,

pretation of its meaning may or may not entail further changes to the formal side of the construction, i.e. to its syntactic behavior and/or its part-of-speech categorization. Where formal changes are entailed, they will normally be the object of more or less gradual implementation, a process that is widely known as “actualization” (Timberlake 1977).

Several things should be noted at the outset:

First, the definition above excludes from the purview of reanalysis any changes to linguistic elements that are purely formal in nature, with no effect on meaning. This will be discussed in greater depth in §7 below.

Secondly, the definition explicitly speaks of changes to the “perceived contribution” of the construction because I consider reanalysis to be a mechanism of language change that is fundamentally hearer-driven. As we will see in §4.1 below, a hearer may reanalyze a construction even though the speaker intended to use that construction in complete accordance with established convention. Conversely, while speakers may sometimes stretch the potential of existing constructions by using them in ways that are less than fully accounted for by existing conventions, this will only lead to reanalysis (and *a fortiori* to lasting change) if such discrepancies are perceived by hearers, enabling the latter to integrate the usage in question into their own grammars and subsequently adopt it in their role as speakers (see further §5).

Thirdly, following Timberlake (1977: 141), I take actualization to be a different type of further changes which, although they result from reanalysis, must nevertheless be kept separate from it. Partly, this is because reanalysis does not have to be followed by actualization, and partly it is because actualization – unlike reanalysis – is a process that is driven by speakers who tailor their linguistic production to what they believe to be the underlying grammatical rules and norms of usage.

3 A PRAGMATIC BASIS FOR REANALYSIS

The existence of reanalysis and its central role in language change is hardly surprising when considered in a pragmatic perspective. As the ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel (1984 [1967]: ch. 2) has shown, interactants do not, indeed arguably cannot, say literally and exactly what they mean. Interpersonal understanding is achievable only to the extent that participants tacitly and persistently draw on not just linguistic, discourse-related, and situational knowledge, but also on background socio-cultural knowledge, to fill in gaps and/or resolve vagueness and (minor) ambiguities.

which need neither involve nor be involved in what I deem to be reanalysis.

Thus, when interpreting other people's words, interactants systematically make use of what [Garfinkel \(1984 \[1967\]: ch. 3\)](#), following Karl Mannheim, calls the "documentary method of interpretation". In a nutshell, the documentary method consists in treating other people's actions as documents of underlying meaningful patterns. In terms of linguistic behavior, at the most basic level, that means that hearers not only assume, for as long as they possibly can, that speakers' words are intended to make sense, but that they work actively to make sense of what they hear. Hearers do this in four ways:

- i They assume reciprocity of perspectives, such that each participant to the interaction would have similar experiences if they were to change places;
- ii They employ an "etcetera" principle to fill in missing information, and they let minor unclarity pass, trusting that those unclaritys will subsequently be clarified;
- iii They try to overlook problems or discrepancies unless such phenomena directly threaten coherence; and finally,
- iv They search for underlying "normal forms" of what is said.

As a result, as the Conversation Analyst John [Heritage \(1984: 95\)](#) puts it, "[a] staggering range of assumptions and contextual features [...] may be mobilized *ad hoc* to sustain a particular 'documentary version' of a sequence of events". The vast majority of these assumptions and contextual features are never made explicit, let alone thematized within any given exchange, and substantial overlap, rather than identity, between the speaker's and the hearer's version of what was said is therefore the best that can be expected in terms of mutual understanding.

Seen in this light, reanalysis is simply a by-product, indeed a natural consequence, of the implementation of the documentary method of interpretation. Thus, it takes place in contexts where a given language user, in the role of hearer, is trying to make sense either of an unfamiliar construction (cf. §4.1 below) or of a familiar construction used in such a way as to suggest a new and distinct interpretation (cf. §4.2). In many – perhaps most – instances, the hearer may go about the sense-making in a way that differs, to a greater or lesser extent, from what the speaker intended. Crucially, when that is the case, the discrepancy is not perceived by either party as central enough to the overall purpose and/or direction of the interaction at hand to surface as a discrepancy within that interaction. It therefore remains unresolved, and the hearer is allowed to depart from the interaction under the assumption that they have correctly interpreted the speaker's use of the construction in question. In other instances, hearers may reanalyze a construction if a speaker uses

it in a way that appears to be at odds with, or simply not fully accommodated within, the conventionally established meaning that is familiar to the hearer (see further §5.1 below).

This pragmatic perspective is entirely in line with the Constructionalist tenets that it is symbolic relations between meaning and form, rather than syntactic relations, that are at the core of grammar, and that linguistic change is driven chiefly by language users' attempts to convey or derive meanings in the context of interpersonal communication (Croft 2001: 366). In the context of the proposed framework, critiques of reanalysis such as that of Whitman (2012), who assumes that the phenomenon is caused by syntactic misparsing and argues that misparsing is too insignificant to be a central factor in language change, thus miss the mark.

4 NEO-ANALYSIS VS RE-ANALYSIS

As suggested above, there seem to be two subtypes of reanalysis, namely one that implies language acquisition, and which *may* therefore predominantly be performed by immature language users³, and another type that may be performed by users at all levels of proficiency. Following Andersen (2001: 231fn) and Traugott & Trousdale (2013), I will refer to the former type as “neo-analysis”. The second type, I will call “re-analysis” (with a hyphen, to distinguish it from the umbrella term).

It should be noted that which of the two types is instantiated in any given case is not something that can be read directly off any piece of corpus data. The distinction is nevertheless conceptually relevant, in as much as it allows us to explain certain instances of reanalysis where the speaker could not plausibly have intended the innovative interpretation to apply. It also accounts for the fact that, as a matter of principle, following the spread of a re-analysis, individual language users may (and often will) continue to make active use of the older representation of a given construction in production along with the newer one for at least some time, whereas at least some cases of neo-analysis make such “layering” (Hopper 1991) within the grammar of the individual highly implausible.

4.1 *Neo-analysis*

Schematically, neo-analysis takes the following form:

³ New constructions (in the Construction Grammar sense) can of course be added to our linguistic repertoire throughout our lives, so neo-analysis as defined here should by no means be understood as exclusively performed by children.

- (1) A given speech community (SC) has a construction C in its linguistic repertoire. Standardly, members of SC attribute a particular analysis A to C.
- An individual hearer (H) happens to be unfamiliar with C, and thus has no existing analysis of C in their grammar.
- H becomes aware of C in a given context Cxt_i and have to work out an analysis of C that appears plausible to them in Cxt_i.⁴
- H assumes a non-standard analysis A' of C. While A' makes sense in Cxt_i, it may nevertheless not be the analysis that the speaker (S) intended.
- Subsequently, when assuming the role of S in other contexts, H will employ C with the new analysis A', giving A' the opportunity to diffuse to other parts of SC.

A small handful of words in contemporary Danish offer seemingly clear examples of neo-analysis: these are autoantonyms, so-called “pendulum words”, which to younger generations of language users convey a meaning that is more or less the direct opposite of what they mean to older speakers. A salient example is the verb *forfordele*, which to older speakers (roughly, that term here applies to Danes born before the mid-1960s) means ‘to give someone *less* than their fair share’. Many younger speakers, however, use *forfordele* with the meaning ‘to give someone *more* than their fair share’ (*Den danske ordbog*: <https://ordnet.dk/ddo/ordbog?query=forfordele>). It seems inconceivable that this change could have been anything other than a neo-analysis performed by hearers who were drawing on context in an attempt to make sense of an unfamiliar word, and who – from the point of view of speaker intentions – got it wrong.

It is not in any way difficult to imagine contexts in which misunderstandings of this type may have taken place: suppose, for instance, that a man, Jørgen, and his wife Kirsten sometime in the 1960s are discussing Jørgen’s mother’s recent will in front of their six-year-old daughter, Anette. The couple know that Jørgen’s mother has always treated her youngest son, Erik, unfavorably compared to his siblings, but the little girl is not aware of this history. Anette now hears the following dialogue between her parents:

⁴ This scenario will typically imply that the hearer is exposed to the construction in question for the very first time. However, the scenario is compatible with the hearer having previously encountered the construction on occasions where they chose simply not to process it. Anecdotally, this seems to be not uncommon with young children, in particular (J. van der Auwera, p.c.).

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- (2) Jørgen: *Mor har fortalt mig hvem af os der skal arve hvad. Det ser ud til at Erik som sædvanlig bliver forfordelt.*

'Mom has told me which one of us will inherit what. It seems that Erik will **get less than his fair share** as usual.'

Kirsten: *Det er så uretfærdigt!*

'It's so unfair!'

Jørgen: *Det sagde jeg også til hende, men hun var hverken til at hugge eller stikke i.*

'That's what I told her, but she was adamant.'

The linguistic context is in and of itself compatible with both the old and the new interpretation of *forfordele*. Very plausibly, however, Anette may interpret her mother's words as referring to an injustice done to her father, rather than to her uncle; in other words, she may understand that Erik will get *more* than his fair share in her grandmother's will. Such an interpretation is easily reinforced by the fact that *forfordele* is a derivation from the verb *fordele* ('share out') + a prefix *for-*. *For-* as a prefix is common in Danish, and frequently conveys a meaning along the lines of 'before, in front of, of higher status' (e.g. *forberede* 'prepare (in advance)', *formand* 'chairman'), and Anette may well infer that its role in *forfordele* should be interpreted in analogy with such uses.⁵

If the above is correct, Anette's neo-analysis involves both of the two principles posited by Detges & Waltereit (2002: 156, 159) as governing reanalysis, viz. the Principle of Reference ("Assume that the conventional semantics of the sound chain that you hear corresponds to what seems to be meant in the situation") and the Principle of Transparency ("Match the sound chain that you hear with other sound chains of the language that you already know"). The Principle of Reference is the main driver, but in this case it can be reasonably assumed to receive significant reinforcement from the Principle of Transparency.

4.2 Re-analysis

The second subtype of reanalysis involves actual re-analysis of an already familiar construction used in contexts where what the hearer perceives as the most relevant interpretation may appear either to not be (fully) compatible with or not to be exhausted by the conventional meaning of the construction.

⁵ It follows that I do not consider analogy to be in competition with reanalysis as a mechanism of language change. While the scope of this paper does not accommodate a detailed argument to that effect, I believe analogy is rather to be seen as a possible motivation for change, incl. reanalysis (Traugott 2011: 25).

Schematically, re-analysis takes the form in (3) (using abbreviations as in (1) above):

- (3) SC has in its linguistic repertoire an established construction C with the analysis A.
- An individual H, who already has C in their grammar, encounters C in a Cxt_i that either does not (fully) accommodate A or suggests that something above and beyond A is intended by S.
- On that basis, H assumes an innovative analysis A' of C, which may or may not be the one that S intended.
- Subsequently, when assuming the role of S in other contexts, H may employ C with the new analysis A', giving A' the opportunity to diffuse to (yet) other parts of SC.

The rise of the French compound future-tense construction “*aller*_{PresInd} (‘go’) + INF” is an example of re-analysis in this sense. The combination of a present indicative form of the verb *aller* (‘go’) with an infinitive is attested in French from the very earliest surviving texts, as seen in (4):

- (4) *Il **vait** avant la maison **aprester***; (Vie de Saint Alexis, st. 65, c. 1040)
‘He **goes** ahead **to prepare** the house;’

As the translation suggests, the construction in (4) is not a future tense, however, but a present-tense motion verb followed by an infinitive expressing the purpose of the motion. In other words, the grammatical structure of (4) can be represented as in (5):

- (5) [*vait*_{PresInd}]_{MainV} ... [[*la maison*]_{DirObj} *aprester*_{Inf}]_{Adverbial}

The future interpretation of *vais* + INF does not arise until late Middle French, viz. towards the end of the 15th c., the example in (6) being among its earliest unambiguous attestations (Togebly 1974: §231):

- (6) « *A vostre congié dont,* » dit le roy d’Espagne, « *je vous en **vois dire** ung. Mon beau filz d’Angleterre m’a dit que [...]* »
‘“With your permission then”, said the King of Spain, “I’m **going to tell** you one. My fine son of England told me that [...].” ’

This new interpretation has the grammatical structure in (7), in which re-bracketing has taken place compared to (5):

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(7) [vois_{Aux} dire_{MainV}]_{CompoundFutIndic} [ung]_{DirObj}

Moreover, the verb *vois* in this example does not convey motion, the speaker being in the same location as the hearer at the time of speaking, and the temporal reference of *vois dire* is the (immediate) future, rather than the present. In other words, in the change from (4) to (6) the values of the two central semantic components of this verb have been flipped, as schematized in (8):

(8) *aller*_{PresInd} [+motion, –futurity] + INF > *aller*_{PresInd} [–motion, +futurity] + INF⁶

As in the case of *forfordele*, it is not difficult to identify contexts that will have favored the re-analysis. In (9) below, if – at the time of speaking – the subject is moving towards his bed with the intention of lying down in it, the idea that he will most likely be in bed in the very near future is easily inferable. Indeed, while the speaker of (9) may not consciously have intended a future interpretation, chances are that he would not have objected to it if it had been made explicit in the discourse, the two meanings being mutually compatible:

(9) ...*ton maistre ne yra meshuy dehors, car il se va coucher*
(CNN, p. 148, 1460)
'...your master won't go out now, for he's **going to bed**'
(lit. 'going to lie himself down')

Here again, [Detges & Waltereit's \(2002\)](#) Principle of Reference can be seen to be operative, prompting hearers to derive from the utterance the meaning that seems most relevant in the context. The Principle of Transparency may have played a role as well, compound forms consisting in auxiliary + main verb being already long established on the past-tense axis of the French verbal system of the late Middle Ages.

The fact that hearers who re-analyze a construction already had a previous analysis of that construction in their grammar, whereas hearers who neo-analyze did not, results in an additional difference between the two subtypes of reanalysis: while both will result in variation across the speech community, at least in the short term, only re-analysis can create ambiguity (in the form of layering) within the grammar of individual language users.

⁶ An anonymous referee queries the accuracy of this representation, pointing out that purpose adverbials are future-oriented. This is correct, and as we will see in §5.2 below, it probably helps explain the reanalysis of the construction. What is important at this point, however, is that a speaker who uses the motion verb + purpose adverbial construction remains entirely neutral as to whether or not the event denoted by the adverbial will ever, in fact, take place.

Thus, in French, the older construction denoting purposeful movement did not disappear from the grammars of re-analyzing users; on the contrary, that construction remains in common use to this day. Indeed, only combinations of either the present indicative or the imperfect past indicative forms of *aller* with a following infinitival clause were ever re-analyzed as having future(-in-the-past) meaning. Any other form of *aller* unambiguously denotes motion, cf. (10)-(12) below. This means that, depending on context, utterances such as (13) can mean either that at the moment of speech, the speaker and their companion(s) are on their way to visit some contextually uniquely salient cathedral or that, at some future point in time, which is contextually anchored to the moment of speech, but which need not be imminent, they will visit that cathedral. We may therefore take for granted that any fully competent speaker of Modern French will have both the older and the newer *aller* + INF construction available in their grammar for purposes of both production and comprehension.

- (10) *On est allé*_{CompoundPerfPast} *visiter la cathédrale.*
‘We **went** to visit the cathedral.’
- (11) *On ira*_{SimpleFut} *visiter la cathédrale.*
‘We’ll **go** (to) visit the cathedral.’
- (12) *On va aller*_{CompoundFut} *visiter la cathédrale.*
‘We’re **going to go** visit the cathedral.’
- (13) *On va visiter la cathédrale.*
‘We’re going to visit the cathedral.’

In the case of neo-analysis, on the other hand, neither those speakers who observe established convention nor those who innovate will be aware – at least initially – of any divergence between their respective grammars. If they do subsequently become aware, one of three things may happen: (i) Each group of speakers may carry on exclusively using their own analysis in production, with at least a subset of users being aware of potential ambiguity in comprehension. This seems to be the case with Danish *forfordele*. (ii) The innovating speakers may ultimately choose to re-analyze the construction in the direction of the older, more established usage. This would amount to abandoning their own previous neo-analysis, and the process of language change would thus be brought to a halt. (iii) The more conventional speakers may re-analyze the construction to conform to the innovative usage on at least some occasions, creating ambiguity within their individual grammars. This seems intuitively

quite unlikely to happen in cases such as *forfordele*, where the old and the new meaning are antonymical in nature, but it could conceivably affect other types of cases, particularly if context could be counted on to fairly systematically disambiguate the interpretation.

My notion of re-analysis seems to correspond to some extent to what Andersen (2001: 231f) terms “adoption”, the difference being that, for Andersen, adoption is confined to the level of usage, and does not affect the grammar of language users. Andersen’s view could be seen as supported by [Petré & van de Velde’s \(2018\)](#) findings concerning the spread of the English *going to* + INF future (which is of course parallel to, albeit diachronically later than, the French *aller* + INF future): as these authors show, the first generation of writers who adopted the innovative future periphrasis did so only to a limited extent, without actualizing the full syntactic and semantic potential of the construction. Accordingly, [Petré & van de Velde \(2018: 895\)](#) refer to this generation of writers as “pre-grammaticalizers”. However, although it is entirely plausible that re-analysis as opposed to neo-analysis may to some degree put a brake on full actualization of a construction, it does not follow that the re-analyzed construction does not become part of the re-analyzing speakers’ grammar. First of all, the idea that someone might, with at least some degree of regularity, use a construction that is not actually represented in their grammar is one that I find conceptually difficult. Secondly, by definition, a sharp distinction between grammar and usage is hardly meaningful within the Constructionalist framework adopted here, in as much as grammar, in that framework, is explicitly held to be usage-based. Rather, bearing in mind that actualization is a separate form of change (cf. §2 above and §7 below) which is necessarily subsequent to reanalysis, it is perhaps not so surprising that speakers for whom a construction has become ambiguous, through reanalysis, between an older and more strongly entrenched interpretation and a newer, less well-entrenched one, will be more hesitant to fully actualize the newer interpretation.

The idea that, instead of reanalysis being triggered by ambiguity, as is often assumed (e.g. [Blinkenberg 1950: 43](#), [Timberlake 1977: 148](#), [Haspelmath 1998: 326](#), [De Smet 2009: 1729](#), [Whitman 2012: 69](#)), a construction may become ambiguous precisely as a result of reanalysis ([Harris & Campbell 1995: 71](#), [Detges & Waltereit 2002: 170](#)) leads naturally on to the topic of the next section, which is concerned with the nature of the contexts in which reanalysis takes place.

5 THE ROLE OF CONTEXT

As already suggested, context is a crucial factor in bringing about either sub-type of reanalysis. To account for the role of context, I will make use of a modified version of Heine's (2002) model of the role of context in grammaticalization. As with grammaticalization, reanalysis relies crucially on two types of contexts: so-called bridging contexts and switch contexts.

5.1 *Reanalysis and switch contexts*

Starting with the latter, switch contexts constitute a more or less clearly delimitable stage in the process of language change. They are those initial contexts that are compatible only with an innovative interpretation of a given construction, and which exclude an older, more established analysis. For the historical linguist, switch contexts are therefore clear evidence that a change has taken place in the grammar of at least some language users within the community.

In the case of reanalysis, we can assume that switch contexts such as example (6) in §4 above reflect a reanalysis performed by the current speaker in the role of hearer in the context of a previous interaction. However, because diffusion of linguistic changes within the speech community is gradual, some hearers faced with a switch context may still be unfamiliar with the new usage and will thus need to attribute an analysis to it.

This type of scenario potentially calls into question the definition of reanalysis as hearer-driven, given that the speaker is, in fact, *intending* the innovative interpretation in such instances. I believe the proposed definition can be maintained, for the following reason: A context only qualifies as a switch context if there demonstrably exists, within the speech community at large, a previously established usage of the construction which is at odds with the way that construction is being used by an individual speaker within the switch context. In other words, in the potentially problematic scenario, there is an onus on any hearer who is antecedently familiar with the construction to resolve the tension between the conventional interpretation dictated by their grammar and the speaker's current usage. In such a situation, hearers may "avoid pragmatic overload" (Eckardt 2009) by re-analyzing the meaning of the construction in question and possibly also attributing a novel (morpho-)syntactic structure to it. In other words, although a switch-context use of a given construction has its roots in a previous reanalysis by the speaker in the role of hearer, the innovative usage will require repeated re-analysis by new hearers in order to diffuse throughout the wider speech community.

As one of the illustrations of her proposed APO ('avoid pragmatic overload') principle, Eckardt (2009) uses the German adnominal reflexive *selber/selbst*. This pronoun has two different pragmatic uses, one as an intensifier ('-self'), and the other as a scalar focus particle ('even'). In the intensifier use, which is the older one of the two, *selber/selbst* is used in contexts where the referent of its associated nominal is conceived as the center of an entourage.⁷ An example of this use is seen in (14) below, God being typically conceived as the center of an entourage consisting of His creatures, both natural and supernatural, such as angels, humans, animals etc.:

- (14) *Gott selber ruht sich manchmal aus.* (from Eckardt 2009: 33 – her (31))
'God **himself** takes a rest sometimes.'

In the more recent scalar use, on the other hand, *selbst* suggests that, from among a pragmatically determined set of entities, the referent of the nominal would intuitively have been the least likely one to yield a true proposition. In other words, the referent in question constitutes the far end of a scale of entities going from those that are most likely to those that are least likely to verify the state of affairs denoted by the clause. This is exemplified by (15), in which *selbst* conventionally implicates that the most intelligent people are the least likely to make mistakes:

- (15) *Selbst die intelligentesten Menschen machen Fehler.*
'**Even** the most intelligent people make mistakes.'

Eckardt (2009: 33f) identifies (16) below as an early instance that is likely to have triggered the APO principle, provoking the change in meaning from intensifier to scalar focus particle. She argues that it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of stones as the plausible center of an entourage, and that hearers will thus have been compelled to reanalyze the meaning contribution of *selbst* in this context:

- (16) *Man kan / es ist nicht ohn / ein blutbegierig Thier / Gewöhnen daß es spiel
vnd nieder knie vor dir / Man kan / waß noch viel mehr / die starcke flut
vmbkehren / Den strömen widerstehn / den tollen wellen wehren / Man
dämpfft der flammen macht / man segelt gegen wind / Man stürtz't die
felsen hin wo thäl vnd hölen sind. / Man kan die steine **selbst** mit weitzen
überziehen*

(1650 Leo Arm., II.5 – from Eckardt 2009: 33f, her (32))

⁷ The variant *selber* has only the former usage, whereas *selbst* has both, cf. Eckardt (2009: §4.4).

'One can / it's not easy / a bloodthirsty animal / train so that it will play and kneel down before you / One can / which is even more / reverse the strong flood / resist the streams / restrain the wild waves / One damps the mighty flames / one sails against the winds / One throws boulders where there are valleys and caverns / One can cover the stones **themselves** (> **even** the stones) with wheat'

What Eckardt (2009) fails to mention, however, is that the use of *selbst* in (16) is highly likely to be the result of a prior reanalysis of older uses such as that in (14). Indeed, an alternative interpretation of (14), which is compatible with the intensifier meaning of *selber*, is that God is less likely than any of His creatures to take/need a rest. In other words, the switch context illustrated in (16) can be argued to follow from the existence of prior bridging contexts such as that in (14).

5.2 *Reanalysis, bridging contexts, and the role of metonymy*

In contrast to switch contexts, bridging contexts allow for more than one interpretation of a given construction as being plausibly intended by the speaker. By default, it will thus be in this type of context that reanalysis is first triggered. My concept of bridging contexts differs from the one proposed by Heine (2002) in that I maintain that such contexts do not necessarily favor the innovative interpretation over the conventionally established one; rather, it is sufficient that both be possible in the context (see also Hansen 2008: 63, and for supporting evidence, Traugott 2012: §3.1). It follows that the inference to the innovative interpretation does not need to be invited by the speaker, the mechanism of reanalysis being fundamentally a hearer-based one.

This accounts for the possibility of reanalyses such as that seen in the case of Danish *forfordele* 'give someone less than their fair share' > 'give someone more than their fair share'. In example (2), §4.1 above, Jørgen intends to communicate the former sense, which is logically incompatible with the latter. Because the hypothesized bridging context is neutral between the two interpretations, however, the latter can be inferred by his daughter.

The relationship between the established and the innovative interpretation in reanalysis is probably frequently metonymical in nature. In such cases, the older conventionally established interpretation already contains the innovative one as a virtual presence. The two form a *Gestalt* structure, the innovative option being backgrounded with respect to the conventional one, which is foregrounded. What then happens in reanalysis is that the backgrounded virtual meaning becomes foregrounded in a particular context, whereas the standard meaning instead recedes into the background (or

disappears completely).

In the case of *forfordele*, for instance, the two senses are converse antonyms: if one person is seen as receiving less than their fair share, this implies that someone else is receiving more. Latin *focus*, which originally meant ‘fireplace’, but which came to mean ‘fire’ (the latter being the sense that is inherited in Romance, e.g. French *feu*, Italian *fuoco*, and Spanish *fuego*) is another straightforward lexical instance of such a *Gestalt*-type reanalysis (Koch 1999). The idea of a fireplace necessarily evokes that of a fire, but only as a background notion, given that there will typically be a least certain times when no fire is lit in a given fireplace. Conversely, while fire is to some extent stereotypically associated with fireplaces, the phenomenon is found in a range of other environments as well. A plausible type of bridging context for the change would be utterances such as (17), in as much as the context does not specify whether the wood is piled into the fireplace in preparation for lighting the fire or rather onto a fire that has already been lit:

- (17) ... *sacrum vetustis exstruat lignis focum...*
(Hor. Epod. 2.43, 42-30 BCE)
 ‘... [if] she builds up the sacred **hearth/fire** with seasoned wood...’

The same pattern can be found in cases involving reanalyses of syntactic constructions. Thus, in the French *aller*_{PresInd} + purpose adverbial construction, the idea of futurity is already present in the background, given that purposes are necessarily future-oriented, as noted in fn 5, §4.2. A final example is the rise of a new “double perfect” tense in the spoken Danish of the last decades of the 20th century (Jensen 2001). This construction, which implies the subsequent reversal of the past-time process it describes, is illustrated in (18). It can be contrasted with the standard perfect tense in (19):

- (18) *Jeg har haft pudset vinduerne.*
 SUBJ.1PS AUX.PRES.IND AUX.PST.PART clean-PST.PART WINDOW.PL.DEF
 ‘I **cleaned** the windows (earlier).’
 (» so there was a time in the recent past when they were clean, even though they may not be clean at the time of speech) (Lit.: ‘I have had cleaned the windows’)
- (19) *Jeg har pudset vinduerne.*
 SUBJ.1PS AUX.PRES.IND clean-PST.PART WINDOW.PL.DEF
 ‘I’ve **cleaned** the windows.’ (» so they are clean now)

To my knowledge, the diachronic origins of the double perfect have yet to be studied empirically. Jensen (2001) does, however, discuss a formally similar

construction which provides a clue, namely the perfect tense of the stative possessive ‘have’ + direct object + past participle construction exemplified in (20) below, in which the past participle expresses a secondary predication. In a great many instances, the position of the direct object will clearly distinguish between the two constructions, being placed between the possessive verb and the past participle in the stative construction, as in (20), but after the lexical verb in the (dynamic) double perfect tense, as in (18).

(20) *den ældre generation ... de har dem alle sammen hængt op på væggen sådan rigtig flot ... jamen*

jeg har også haft dem hængt
 SUBJ.1PS AUX.PRES.IND also have-PST.PART OBJ.3PP hang-PST.PART
op
up

(talesprog, BySoc – from Jensen 2001: 3, her (4))

‘the older generation ... they’ve got all of them hanging on the wall like really handsomely ... well actually I’ve also had them hanging on my wall’

Now, as Jensen (2001) observes, the two constructions become formally indistinguishable in relative clauses where the direct object is the antecedent, as in (21) below. That is also true of the direct object-fronting construction, exemplified in (22), which is very commonly used for information structural reasons. Structures like (21)-(22) can thus be hypothesized to have played the role of bridging context triggering the reanalysis of the stative construction as a new member of the Danish tense system.

(21) *Jeg synes bedst om dem (som) jeg*
 SUBJ.1PS like-PRES.IND best VBL.PARTICLE OBJ.3PP (REL) SUBJ.1PS
har haft hængt op i køkkenet.
 AUX.PRES.IND have.PST.PART hang.PST.PART up in kitchen-SG.DEF

(adapted from Jensen 2001: 4)

‘I prefer those (that) I’ve had hanging on the kitchen wall.’ / ‘I prefer those (that) I hung on the kitchen wall earlier.’ (» but which are not hanging there now)

(22) *Dem har jeg haft hængt op på*
 OBJ.3PP AUX.PRES.IND SUBJ.1PS have-PST.PART hang-PST.PART up on
væggen.
 wall-SG.DEF

‘I’ve had those hanging on my wall. / ‘I hung those on my wall (earlier).’ (» but they’re not hanging there now)

Importantly, the idea that some contextually determined items have in the past been in a state of hanging on the speaker's wall, which is foregrounded on the stative interpretation of (21)-(22), implies that at some point in the further past someone must have actively hung them there. When used in the present perfect, the stative construction further entails that the items in question are not still hanging on the speaker's wall at the moment of speech. While these elements of meaning are backgrounded in the stative construction, they become foregrounded in the double perfect interpretation.

Notice that there was no straightforward, previously existing syntactic analog to this double perfect tense in Danish grammar, i.e. no construction with two inflected tense auxiliaries. As De Smet (2009: 1729) points out, other changes that have often been described as the result of reanalysis, such as the rise of definite articles out of demonstratives in languages that previously had no articles (De Mulder & Carlier 2011) or the rise of the *for X to INF* construction in English (De Smet 2009: §3) similarly imply the creation of a completely new grammatical category or structure. As De Smet observes, reanalyses of this kind cannot logically be attributed to an existing structural ambiguity. The model suggested here circumvents this difficulty in two ways: Firstly, it does so by focusing in the first instance on the *meaning* that hearers assume speakers to be trying to convey by using a particular construction, rather than on the (morpho-)syntactic structure that they attribute to a construction. Any changes to the latter are simply a consequence of a novel attribution of meaning. Secondly, my approach assumes that there is precisely no perceived ambiguity in the triggering contexts.

Prior to, and as triggers for, reanalysis, bridging contexts do not render the target construction ambiguous, nor is it perceived as such by hearers. Rather, it is the context that is perceived as pointing to a univocal interpretation which either happens to be an unintended one (as in the case of Danish *forfordele* in (2) above), or which allows for additional inferences that are compatible with, but more contextually salient than, the conventional meaning of the construction.

Because bridging contexts will continue to exist for at least as long as the older construction does not become obsolete, however, a reanalyzed construction used in such a context does become ambiguous *following* reanalysis. Thus, out of context and when used in underspecifying contexts, *forfordele* and the *have had* + past participle construction in contemporary Danish, as well as the *vais/allais*+INF construction in Modern French are all ambiguous, cf. (22) above and (23)-(24) below:

- (23) *Hvorfor skulle Sara forfordeles?*
'Why would Sara be given less/more than her fair share?'

- (24) *Il allait voir sa mère.*
 ‘He was going/ (habitually) went to visit his mother.’

The fact that constructions that have been reanalyzed can continue to be used in contexts that are underspecified for either their older or their newer meaning, leads to a second point of divergence between the model assumed here and that of Heine (2002): unlike switch contexts, bridging contexts are not necessarily a clearly delimited stage of evolution. On the contrary, they can continue to be found centuries after the crucial switch contexts have been attested (cf. also Traugott 2012: 244). In addition, Traugott (2011: 23) observes that seeing bridging contexts as a stage implies that there is a period of time prior to reanalysis where speakers use the target construction ambiguously in such contexts. Such an assumption is incompatible with the account given here.

Importantly, as Heine (2002) notes, the existence of bridging contexts does not necessarily result in reanalysis. Thus, for instance, Danish and Norwegian, two very closely related languages, both have the adjective *flink* in their lexicon. However, in contemporary usage, that adjective means quite different things in the two languages. (25) below was posted by the President of a Norwegian university accompanied by a link to a job advert. As (26) and its translation show, the exact same question (except for minor orthographical variation) would have been likely to have come across as at least somewhat odd, had it been posted by a Dane in the same type of context:

- (25) *Kjenner du en flink prosjektleder?*
 (Curt Rice on LinkedIn, Oct. 29, 2019)
 ‘Do you know a **good/skilled/efficient** project manager?’
- (26) *Kender du en flink projektleder?*
 ‘Do you know a **nice/friendly/helpful** project manager?’

The adjective is etymologically the same item in both languages (*Ordbog over det danske sprog*: <https://ordnet.dk/ods/ordbog?query=flink&tab=for>), but the sense in which it is used in Norwegian (and Swedish, as well, as it happens) is an older one, whereas the contemporary Danish sense is more recent and most likely a result of reanalysis. As with *forfordele*, it is not at all difficult to think of types of bridging contexts in which that reanalysis may have taken place; (27)-(28) constitute a couple of possible examples:

- (27) *Spørg Marie. Hun er flink til at få tingene gjort.*
 ‘Ask Marie. She’s {**quick/efficient/skilled** > **helpful**} when it comes to getting things done.’

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- (28) *Kunne du være flink at hjælpe Per med aftensmaden?*
'Could you be {quick/efficient > nice} and help Per make the dinner?'

Now, it seems close to inconceivable that contexts like (27)-(28) would not be found in Norwegian (or Swedish) usage, or that their frequency of occurrence would be markedly different in that language compared with Danish. Yet, at some point in time, Danish hearers availed themselves of the possible contextual inference from "skilled/competent/efficient..." to "nice/friendly/helpful..." to change the conventional meaning of the adjective, whereas Norwegian and Swedish language users have not. Thus, unlike switch-contexts, the attestation of bridging contexts cannot be taken by the linguist as evidence that change is taking place within a speech community.⁸

6 THE ROLE OF FREQUENCY

The example of the meaning of the adjective *flink* in Scandinavian languages raises the question of what role, if any, frequency might play in reanalysis. There are two facets to this question: on the one hand, to what extent does the frequency of the triggering contexts determine whether or not reanalysis takes place at all? On the other, to what extent does the frequency with which the reanalyzed construction is subsequently used affect the degree to which a given reanalysis becomes entrenched within the speech community?

6.1 Frequency of the triggering contexts

Starting with the former, one might intuitively think that – all things being equal – frequent bridging contexts ought to facilitate rather than hinder reanalysis. The study of generalized conversational implicatures (GCIs) suggests, however, that this assumption may be less obviously correct than it seems. Thus, Horn (1989: 252ff) has pointed out that, crosslinguistically, the

⁸ An anonymous reviewer asks how the divergent evolutions across Scandinavian languages can then be explained. This is, in essence, equivalent to the classic "actuation problem" first formulated by Weinreich, Labov & Herzog (1968):

"Why do changes in a structural feature take place in a particular language at a particular time, but not in other languages with the same feature at other times?"

To my knowledge, no-one (incl. Weinreich et al.) has formulated a satisfactory answer to this question yet, and historical linguists are divided on the issue of whether a predictive theory of language change is even possible (see further Walkden 2017). Proposing one is outside the scope of this paper.

so-called “O” corner of the logical square of oppositions (cf. Figure 1 and Table 1 below) strongly tends not to be independently lexicalized, but can be expressed only compositionally. As argued by Levinson (2000), the theory of generalized conversational implicature (GCIs) offers an explanation of this fact, viz. that the “I” corner of the square carries a scalar so-called Q-implicature to the effect that “O” also holds:

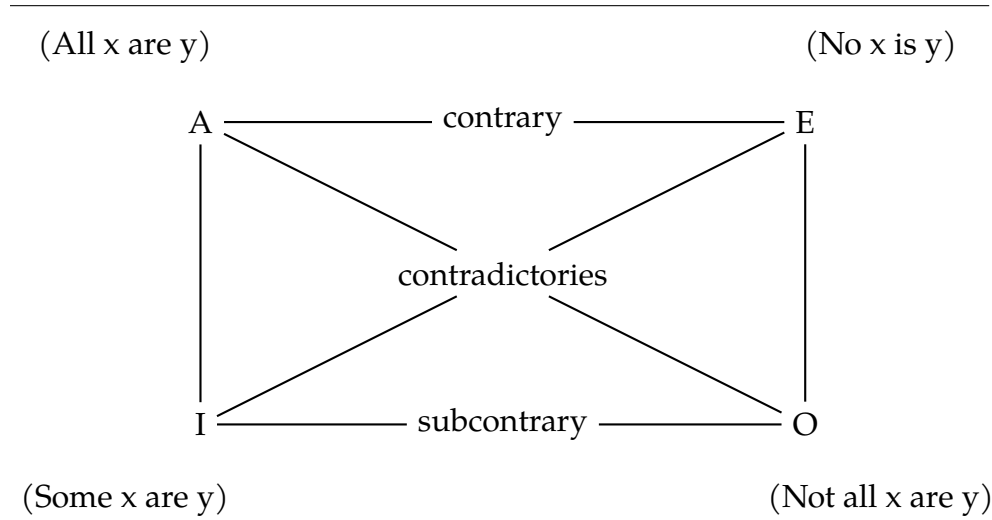


Figure 1 The square of oppositions

Domain	Affirmo	nEgo	affIrmo	negO
Quantifiers	<i>All</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>Not all / *Nall</i>
Logical modals	<i>Necessary</i>	<i>Impossible</i>	<i>Possible</i>	<i>Possible not / *In-necessary^a</i>
Deontic modals	<i>Must</i>	<i>Must not / Mustn't</i>	<i>May (= permitted to)</i>	<i>May not (= permitted to not) / *Mayn't</i>
Logical connectives	<i>And</i>	<i>Neither-nor</i>	<i>Or</i>	<i>Not both / *Nand</i>

^a The word *unnecessary* is crucially not used in the purely logical sense required here, and thus does not constitute an alternative to *possible not*.

Table 1 Lexicalization patterns related to the square of oppositions

In other words, utterances of (29)-(32) below will by default trigger the suggested GCIs:

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- (29) *Some* of my colleagues believe reanalysis is an important factor in language change. » *Not all* of my colleagues believe reanalysis is an important factor in language change.
- (30) It's *possible* that reanalysis is pragmatically driven. » It's *possible* that reanalysis is *not* pragmatically driven.
- (31) [Head of department to postdoc:] You *may* attend departmental boards if you wish. » You *may not* [= are allowed not to] attend departmental boards if you wish.
- (32) Reanalysis *or* analogy is a primary driver of morphosyntactic change. » Reanalysis and analogy are *not both* primary drivers of morphosyntactic change.

Now, GCI contexts bear some similarity to bridging contexts in as much as they routinely convey more information than what is strictly speaking being said. According to [Hansen & Waltereit \(2006: 241\)](#), the fact that GCI contexts have this property arguably acts as a brake on semantic change, such that, in addition to the lack of independent lexicalization of the “O” corner, we also would not expect “I” corner expressions to undergo semantic change resulting in explicit coding of the GCI. To take a concrete example, the argument is that we would not expect English *some*, with the coded meaning “at least some”, to be reanalyzed as meaning “some, but not all”, because such a reanalysis would be communicatively redundant, given that this is the interpretation that the use of *some* will tend to give rise to in a majority of contexts, anyway.

This argument appears to hold not just for scalar Q-implicatures, such as those in (29)-(32) above, but also for many of the GCIs that [Levinson \(2000\)](#) classifies as I- or M-implicatures. Thus, the high contextual frequency of certain I-implicatures – for instance, conjunction buttressing (i.e. the strengthening of *and* to ‘and then’ / ‘and because of that’ / etc.), conditional perfection (i.e. the strengthening of *if* to ‘if and only if’), and inferences to the stereotype such as *nurse* > ‘female nurse’ – arguably has not (yet) resulted in changes to the coded meanings of the relevant items. Similarly, the absence of self-contradiction in (33) below shows that the English *cause X to* + INF construction merely M-implicates an unusual manner of doing something, but has not (yet) changed its coded meaning to entail this:

- (33) Max **caused** the car to stop by stepping on the brake.

It is important to emphasize that the above is not meant to suggest identity between bridging contexts and GCI contexts. For the purposes of the present paper, the point is that – in contrast to what is suggested by [Waltereit & Detges \(2008: 22\)](#) – highly frequent bridging contexts might also conceivably (albeit, on the face of it, paradoxically) preserve a given construction from reanalysis if hearers are aware that the construction is often used in such a way as to trigger additional inferences (see also [Rosemeyer & Grossman 2017: 521](#)). Conversely, if a construction is only infrequently found in bridging contexts, its occurrence in such contexts may be precisely what pushes hearers to reanalyze it. Insofar as reanalysis is a hearer-driven process, what is crucial in terms of effecting lasting change at the level of the speech community, as opposed to the level of individual language users' grammar, is the degree of influence that reanalyzing hearers are able to wield in their role as speakers when using the reanalyzed construction in subsequent communication.

6.2 *Frequency of the reanalyzed construction*

In terms of the fate of a construction once it has been reanalyzed, there is probably little doubt that not just entrenchment (understood here as increased acceptance of the new construction across the relevant speech community), but also actualization, will be facilitated and, no doubt, accelerated by frequent use of the construction. As [Petré & van de Velde \(2018: 868\)](#) put it, “a community shift in the use of a construction logically implies a sufficient amount of recurrent changes across individuals”. What is not immediately obvious, however, is exactly what constitutes a “sufficient amount” in this context.

There is evidence that a reanalysis can, in at least some cases, become conventionalized without the new construction ever being particularly frequently used at all. Thus, over the course of time, the French adverb *déjà* (‘already’) has acquired a wide range of uses, some of which are considerably more frequently attested than others (see [Hansen 2008](#) for a comprehensive analysis). Among the former is the basic phasal sense illustrated in (34) below. The “non-temporal scalar” sense illustrated in (35) and, in particular, the “categorizing” sense in (36), on the other hand, are quite infrequent:

(34) *C'est déjà arrivé hier.*
‘It **already** happened/arrived yesterday.’

(35) *On n'est pas devenus de grands amis, mais on continue de se voir une fois par an, à peu près. C'est déjà pas mal.*
‘We didn't become best friends, but we still see each other about once a year. That's not **too** bad, **really**.’

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- (36) *Un pingouin, c'est déjà un oiseau.*
'A penguin is a **(non-prototypical) kind of** a bird.'

At the morphosyntactic level, all these three uses of *déjà* behave in a largely identical manner. Semantically, however, they are clearly distinct. There is reason to believe that the non-temporal scalar sense in (34) grew out of uses of phasal *déjà*, which presupposes a temporal scale, in the 17th c. and itself gave rise to the categorizing sense by further semantic extension in the mid-18th c. Furthermore, bridging contexts are attested which render it plausible that the two latter senses are the result of reanalysis (Hansen 2008: §2.1.1, §2.2). Both of the more recent meanings appear to be well entrenched, in as much as native speakers unhesitatingly accept sample sentences containing instances of them. Yet corpus attestations remain few and far between, even several hundred years after these senses first arose.

The above examples suggest that the role of frequent usage of certain constructions, both in triggering reanalysis and in achieving entrenchment once reanalysis has taken place, may not be straightforward. As potential triggers, frequent bridging contexts might in fact actively work against reanalysis, for the pragmatic reasons detailed above. As for entrenchment, the frequency of use across individuals that is sufficient for a reanalyzed construction to become conventionalized and maintained across a substantial time span seems in at least some cases to be very modest, although the reasons for this are unclear.

7 REANALYSIS VS OTHER TYPES OF CHANGE

We come, finally, to the place of reanalysis within a broader typology of mechanisms of language change. In order for the notion of reanalysis to be a descriptively and theoretically useful one, we want to be able to distinguish it from other possible forms of change. The present section will outline the fundamental principles on which such distinctions can be drawn, assuming the definition of reanalysis proposed in §2 above.

It was noted in §1 that this definition of reanalysis excludes any changes that do not involve the meaning side of the relevant construction. Thus, cases of pure sound change, for instance, are not reanalysis on this definition, although as will be discussed below, there are intriguing parallels between reanalysis and some types of sound change.

The definition moreover excludes any change that is unambiguously speaker-driven. In connection with reanalysis, this prominently includes any subsequent process of actualization, in which language users in their role as speakers gradually implement grammatical consequences of a preceding re-

analysis. If my hypothesis about the origin of the Danish double perfect tense in bridging contexts such as (21)-(22), formulated in §5 above, is correct, then the change in the position of the direct object, from preceding to following the second past participle (cf. (20) *vs* (18)), will have been the result of an actualization process in which speakers sought to align the syntactic properties of the new tense with those of the canonical perfect and pluperfect tenses. Similarly, the extension of the new double perfect tense to verbs that are incompatible with the older stative possessive construction, such as *ringe til* ('to phone') in (37), can be attributed to actualization:

- (37) *Jeg har haft ringet til dig.*
 SUBJ.1PS AUX.PRES.IND AUX.PST.PART phone-PST.PART PREP
 IND.OBJ.2PS
 'I called you (earlier).' (» but I failed to reach you)

As shown by the examples of Danish *forfordele* (cf. §4.1), Danish *flink* (cf. §5.2), and French *déjà* (cf. §6), however, reanalysis does not necessarily lead to any subsequent changes in the morphosyntactic behavior of the construction, so although there will be a frequent association between reanalysis and actualization, the two types of change are conceptually and empirically independent. Of course, actualization, by definition, can only take place if preceded by some other type of change, but that preceding change does not have to be reanalysis, but can in principle be one of the alternative forms of change discussed below.

Coinages, loan words, and calques are obvious examples of speaker-driven changes that are not to be equated with reanalysis. Evidently, in order to take hold, such innovations have to be noticed by hearers and adopted by them in their role as speakers (with the possibility that they may then undergo gradual actualization). These types of changes nevertheless differ significantly from reanalysis in that, while adoption will result in an addition to the grammar of the adopting speech community, it cannot lead to alteration in that community's usage of the construction itself, in as much as no previously established usage exists.⁹ The speaker-driven nature of changes of these kinds is

⁹ As shown by Winter-Froemel (2019), loans may sometimes be subject to meaning change in the transfer from one language to the other. This type of change lies outside the purview of my definition of reanalysis, which is confined to change taking place within one single language. When a loan has different meanings in the lending language L and the borrowing language B, the change occurs in the transfer from L to B, but not *within* either of them. Thus, there is strictly speaking no need for any speaker of either language to ever become aware of the meaning used by speakers of the other. This includes any presumed Speaker Zero who first

further underscored by the fact that they will often instantiate Keller's (1994: 101) maxim "Talk in such a way that you are noticed".

Any kind of change that does not result from naturalistic interaction, but which is more or less explicitly imposed by some members of the speech community on other members, is also not reanalysis. This type of change may often be remedial in nature, a current example – which is subject to significant contention among individual language users – being the use of so-called non-binary singular pronouns to designate referentially specific individuals who do not wish to identify as either male or female. The most common type is probably the singular use of *they/them/their* in (38)¹⁰, but more whimsical creations like *zee* or *hir* are favored by some.

(38) I ran into my sibling Sam_i and **their**_i partner in the city center this afternoon.

A more naturalistic type of remedial change, viz. euphemism, is speaker-driven and does not initially involve reanalysis, insofar as euphemism only properly works as such if the target meaning is subject to at least some degree of inferencing (Allan & Burridge 2006: 33). Over time, euphemism may, however, result in reanalysis, in which case a new euphemistic term will often be recruited to replace the older one. For instance, in many languages, adjectives and nouns used to describe individuals with lower than average cognitive abilities have tended, at least since the 20th century, to be replaced on a fairly regular basis, as each new item is gradually contaminated by the taboo condition it denotes and ends up being perceived as more dysphemistic than euphemistic (Allan & Burridge 2006: 43).

Cases of rebracketing may or may not constitute reanalysis on the above definition, depending on whether they can be shown to imply some degree of meaning change. A change such as 17th c. Swedish *menen I* '(do) you mean > *menen ni* (Wessén 1951: 151), whereby the syllable-final /n/ of the plural verb form *menen* was transferred to the formal address pronoun, which introduced the construction in B, and whose grasp of how it was used in L may well have been imperfect.

10 An anonymous referee suggests that this phenomenon has a long history in English. That is undoubtedly true of the referentially non-specific singular use of *they* illustrated in (i)-(ii) below. Although the referentially specific use in (38) presumably grows out of the non-specific one, the former is culturally recent and remains in an important sense self-conscious, at least for the time being.

- (i) Everyone_i can bring **their**_i partner to the Christmas party, if **they**_i wish.
- (ii) If a person_i has a donkey, **they**_i beat it.

thus changed from *I* to *ni*, is not reanalysis, given that the meanings of both elements, as well as the syntactic relation between them, remained the same. This type of rebracketing is likely to be purely mechanistic, i.e. involving no intentionality on the part of either speaker or hearer, but being conditioned simply by the crosslinguistic acoustic and articulatory preference for a CV syllable structure (R. Bermudez-Otero, p.c.). In other words, no inferencing will have been necessary on the part of the language users responsible for it.

In contrast, the rebracketing of the present indicative of French *aller* with a following infinitive (cf. §4.2 above), does additionally involve reinterpretation of the meaning relation obtaining between the two, and hence of the overall meaning and syntactic structure of the utterance. Similarly, the merger of the verb and direct object in the expression *to break fast* (Jespersen 1922: 174), i.e. *he breaks fast* > *he breakfasts*, is a case of both rebracketing and reanalysis insofar as it involves a loss of the direct object slot (and consequently of its referent) within the construction, as well as specialization of constructional meaning. Thus, one can “break fast” at any time of the day or night, independently of how long one has been awake, but one can normally only “breakfast” in the morning and/or shortly after waking up from a protracted period of sleep. Moreover, one typically “breakfasts” on a restricted and culture-specific range of foods, whereas one can “break fast” with any kind of edible. In other words, while rebracketing and reanalysis are mutually compatible and one may frequently imply the other, I consider them to be independent types of change.

Like the Swedish rebracketing case above, the types of sound change studied by Ohala (1989, 2007) bear some similarity to reanalysis, as suggested by Grossman (2019).¹¹ Like reanalysis, the sound changes that are of interest to Ohala specifically constitute an initial stage of change and they are driven by hearers who make use of contextual cues when interpreting utterances. As Ohala (2007) points out, variation in the realization of any given phoneme as a function of the surrounding phonetic context is pervasive; as a result, hearers are constantly engaged in a process of normalization, which is reminiscent of the search for an underlying “normal form” that forms part of the documentary method of interpretation (cf. §3 above). In some cases, however, normalization fails, either because the hearer does not filter out certain contextual effects, or, conversely, because s/he does filter out an aspect of conventional pronunciation which s/he erroneously identifies as a context-induced effect. In the former case, illustrated in (39) below, Ohala (2007: 28) speaks of hypo-correction. The latter, illustrated in (40), he calls hyper-correction, which he suggests may account for dissimilation processes:

¹¹ See also Grossman & Polis (2014: 29).

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- (39) Speaker target: /ut/ > produced as [y(t)] due to distortion in the vocal tract > perceived by the hearer as [y] > interpreted as /y/ > subsequently reproduced by the hearer in their role as speaker as [y]
- (40) Speaker target: /yt/ > produced as [yt] > reconstructed by the hearer as /ut/ > subsequently reproduced by the hearer turned speaker as [ut]

While the parallels between Ohala's failed normalization processes and the model of reanalysis proposed in this paper are clear, there are nevertheless also some differences. For one thing, the context that is appealed to in Ohala's model is limited to the immediate phonetic surroundings of the target phoneme. This understanding is quite considerably narrower than what is needed to account for reanalyses such as the ones exemplified above, where not just linguistic and co-textual knowledge, but also extralinguistic situational and/or encyclopedic knowledge may be brought to bear. Secondly, it is not obvious whether and how neo-analyses such as that sketched for Danish *forfordele* might be explained as either hypo- or hypercorrection in Ohala's sense. Thirdly, Ohala (1989: 191) is insistent that hypo- and hyper-correction are both purely mechanistic processes, which do not involve intentionality. Pragmatic interpretation, by definition, is never mechanistic; rather, it normally involves hearers attributing communicative intentions to speakers, and it invariably involves the intentionality of hearers themselves in seeking to obtain the most plausible, relevant, and/or informative interpretation of what they hear. For these reasons, it is in my view preferable to keep Ohalan sound changes conceptually separate from reanalysis.

Last, but not least, the relationship between reanalysis and grammaticalization has been subject to debate in the literature. The traditional view, which can be traced back to Meillet's (1921 [1912]: 132) definition of grammaticalization as "the progressive attribution of a grammatical role to autonomous words or to ways of grouping words"¹² (my translation), is that the two phenomena are in close association (Heine et al. 1991: 215, Hopper & Traugott 1993: 48, Peyraube 2002), some authors suggesting that reanalysis invariably accompanies grammaticalization (Itkonen 2001: 413, Roberts 2007: 49) and may even be a prerequisite for the latter process, which is essentially epiphenomenal, to be identifiable (Harris & Campbell 1995: 92, Roberts & Roussou 2003: 2, Béguelin, Corminboeuf & Johnsen 2014: 13). Beckner & Bybee (2009), on the other hand, may be described as taking the view that reanalysis (understood specifically as morphosyntactic rebracketing) is a –

¹² Gabelentz (1972 [1901]: 256) says much the same thing, without however using the term "grammaticalization".

largely epiphenomenal – product of grammaticalization. Some researchers have even gone so far as to suggest that the two terms designate the same class of phenomena (see [Heine et al. 1991](#): 215).

In opposition to the above proposals, reanalysis and grammaticalization are sometimes conceptualized as entirely separate phenomena. Thus, for [Haspelmath \(1998: 315\)](#), most cases of grammaticalization do not involve reanalysis at all. Indeed, according to this author, the two phenomena have clearly distinct properties, grammaticalization being unidirectional, gradual, and non-reliant on structural ambiguity as a trigger, whereas reanalysis is bidirectional, abrupt, and does rely on ambiguity ([Haspelmath 1998: §2-3](#)). In addition, [Haspelmath \(1998: §4\)](#) observes that grammaticalization may involve changes in category labels without rebracketing. The argument presented is less than compelling, however¹³: first, as argued in §5 above, reanalysis does not rely on ambiguity, but rather on contextual vagueness or underspecification. Secondly, on the “classic” Langackerian definition, reanalysis does not necessarily involve rebracketing, but may well be confined to category change ([Langacker 1977: 64](#)). Thirdly, [Traugott \(2011: 20–21\)](#) has pointed out that the abruptness of reanalysis does not necessarily imply a large jump, but that reanalysis may proceed by micro-steps. If that is so, then the abruptness of each of a series of minor reanalyses may be very difficult – if not impossible – to distinguish from the presumed gradualness of grammaticalization in any given instance. Fourthly, with respect to directionality, there is by now a solid body of evidence to the effect that the purported unidirectionality of grammaticalization is not law-like, but merely a strong statistical tendency (e.g. [Campbell 2001](#), [Norde 2009](#)), which can be plausibly explained by processing-related factors ([Boye & Harder 2012](#)).

[Detges & Waltereit \(2002\)](#) likewise conceive of reanalysis and grammaticalization as distinct forms of change. On the one hand, like [Haspelmath \(1998\)](#), they focus on differences in directionality and on abruptness *vs* gradualness. On the other hand, like the present account, they take the view that reanalysis is hearer-driven, whereas for them grammaticalization is speaker-driven ([Detges & Waltereit 2002: 152](#)). As such, the latter is the by-product of strategies like [Keller’s \(1994: 101\)](#) above-mentioned maxim of speaking so as to be noticed.

In line with [Harris & Campbell \(1995: 20\)](#), [Newmeyer \(1998: ch. 5\)](#), and [Campbell \(2001\)](#), I take the view that, unlike reanalysis, grammaticalization is not usefully conceived as a mechanism or *process* of language change *sui generis*. Instead, it is preferable to see the term “grammaticalization” as a very useful descriptive label for the possible *product* of what is typically a conver-

¹³ See also [Campbell \(2001: 145–148\)](#).

gence of other, independent, types of change. In other words, while grammaticalization is a highly significant phenomenon in language evolution, and as such eminently deserving of study and explanation, it is ultimately epiphenomenal. While this view is at odds with that of [Detges & Waltereit \(2002\)](#), it can at least be reconciled with these authors' assumption that grammaticalization is speaker-driven. Thus, I suggest that what they call grammaticalization largely equates to actualization, i.e. to the more or less gradual morphosyntactic spellout of the consequences of one or more preceding reanalyses. As argued above, actualization is necessarily speaker-driven, and while hearer-based reanalysis will in many cases result in interpretations that are at odds with what speakers intended, it is possible for it to be prompted in some cases by the desire to avoid pragmatic overload ([Eckardt 2009](#), cf. §5.1 above), hence by speakers' intentional attempts at expressiveness.

8 CONCLUSION

This paper has defended the notion of reanalysis, defined here within the framework of Construction Grammar, as a conceptually and empirically important one, against the criticisms to which it has been subjected from various quarters. I have presented independent support from the field of micro-sociology in favor of viewing reanalysis as a pragmatically driven, listener-based phenomenon. Adducing examples from different languages, of both lexical and (morpho)syntactic construction types, I have argued that reanalysis is a phenomenon that is not confined to language acquisition contexts, but which comes in two subtypes, termed neo-analysis and re-analysis, respectively. Despite what is traditionally assumed, reanalysis does not result from perceived ambiguity of the relevant construction, but is typically triggered by contexts that fail to constrain the hearer's interpretation of the meaning of that construction sufficiently to ensure conformity with established convention. Such bridging contexts allow hearers to make inferences that are not necessarily intended by the speaker, and to attribute the result of this process of inferencing to the linguistic code itself, rather than to the context. Given that my chosen Constructionalist framework is a usage-based one, a question naturally arises concerning the role of frequency in reanalysis. With respect to this issue, I have suggested, on the basis of empirical evidence, that although high frequency of a reanalyzed construction will undoubtedly facilitate acceptance/entrenchment of the reanalysis within the wider speech community, it is not necessarily required. As far as the occurrence of triggering contexts is concerned, I have presented theoretical reasons for believing that, here too, high frequency is not necessary and may conceivably even serve to impede reanalysis. Finally, I have discussed the place of reanalysis within a

broader typology of language change, the main point being to demonstrate that the definition of reanalysis proposed in this paper is restricted enough to be of empirical, as well as conceptual, interest.

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