

2. From discourse to syntax

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I. The form-meaning mismatch

- The syntacticization of discourse-functional processes is an example of how 1:0 form-meaning mismatches evolve in language change.
- For e.g., Old Germanic had an OV clause structure and employed V-fronting for reasons related either to illocutionary force or to information structure (see Hinterhölzl & Petrova 2009, 2011; Coniglio 2012).
- In Germanic languages, V-placement eventually became rigid (e.g., V2 in German declaratives). Hence, the discourse-related properties of V-placement were impoverished through reanalysis.

Question: How do discourse-functional processes get syntacticized in language change?

II. Motivation

- Several Southern Caucasian languages display an OV~VO alternation that is at least superficially similar to the flexible linearization of VPs in Old Germanic.
- For instance, the finite V is final in Georgian canonical word order, but is attracted by narrow focused constituents:

- (1) [p'it'er-ma]_F gada-č'r-a es
Peter-ERG PR-(IO.3)solve-AOR.S.3.SG this
p'roblema čkara.
problem(NOM) quickly
'PETER solved this problem quickly.'
(Skopeteas & Fanselow 2010: 1378)

Motivation: Can we learn more about the syntax of languages only attested in corpora (Old Germanic) by comparison to spoken languages, that offer richer data (especially including prosodic facts)?

III. Research questions

- MOTIVATION OF CHANGE: What are the grammatical conditions behind the reanalysis from a discourse-related alternation to a syntactic rule?
- CONSEQUENCES OF CHANGE: Are particular functions of word order (e.g., creating an optimal linearization of discourse-related domains) compensated by other properties of expressions (such as prosodic means, scrambling, etc.) in a later stage? Does syntacticization imply complete loss of discourse properties or is there a residual of discourse functions remaining after reanalysis (cf. Gärtner 2002)?

IV. Hypotheses and method

Hypothesis: General properties of mapping prosodic domains to syntax and exploiting prosodic/syntactic configurations for the optimal realization of information structural domains are shared by languages with similar structure.

Illustrative sub-questions:

- Can the prosodic facts that have been reported for Georgian (prosodic integration of the focus and the V or prosodic separation of the V from the postverbal material; see Skopeteas et al. 2018) also hold for Old Germanic, maybe manifested through phonological processes at phrase boundaries?
- Do the effects of V-fronting in anchoring (or not anchoring) the assertion to the speaker, or in marking the illocutionary force of a sentence apply to Georgian?

Method:

- The PhD student will use corpora of Old Germanic (for example, *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch* (ReA) for Old High German, Donhauser et al. 2018) and the spoken Georgian corpus of the General Linguistics Department (Asatiani et al. 2019) and will examine qualitative hypotheses through linguistic fieldwork.

Corpus resource

Corpus of Georgian narratives (120)/dialogues (96) created by the Group *General Linguistics at the University of Göttingen* (XTYP lab) online available at the TLA Archive

<https://hdl.handle.net/1839/00-0000-0000-0021-4DA3-5>

V. Connections to other research projects

- Type of form-meaning mismatch: **1,3** (1:0 form-meaning mismatch)
- Empirical domain: **5,8,11** (Language change)
- Content: **7,9**
- Methods: **10** (fieldwork), **virtually all** (corpus study)

VI. Possible follow-up studies

1. Syntacticization of left/right dislocations
2. From topic markers to case assigners
3. Clause typing: movement vs. grammaticalization of sentence type markers