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On degrammaticalization: Controversial points and possible explanations

Abstract: This paper discusses the problem of degrammaticalization, that is, the exceptions to the unidirectionality of grammaticalization. After analyzing the criteria that allow us to distinguish between various instances of counter-directional change, two principles underlying degrammaticalization are identified; one is related to the type of language and the other to the type of target structures in which degrammaticalization occurs. Firstly, the targets of degrammaticalization are usually closed-class parts of speech with an abstract semantic component. Secondly, the languages in which counter-directional grammatical changes occur turn out to be deprived of an elaborate fusional morphology. These findings may also have an impact on the theoretical conception of grammaticalization, some of whose definitional properties are discussed. The paper ends with a discussion of a more controversial point, namely, counter-directional changes by folk etymology rather than by etymology proper.

Keywords: grammaticalization, degrammaticalization, unidirectionality, parts of speech, fusional morphology, folk etymology

1 Introduction

The large body of studies on grammaticalization that have appeared to date have not only increased our knowledge of the mechanisms of language change but have also brought about different, sometimes discordant, interpretations of grammaticalized forms. Traditionally, the concept of "grammaticalization" makes reference to the classical definitions of Meillet (1912: 131), who considered it as "le passage d'un mot autonome au rôle d'élément grammatical", and of Kuryłowicz (1965: 52), according to whom "grammaticalization consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical

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or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status, e.g. from a derivative formant to an inflectional one". The two definitions, commonly considered as being virtually equivalent (see Lehmann 1995: 1–8; Hopper and Traugott 2003: 19), entail unidirectionality and mainly concern morphosyntactic constructions (Börjars and Vincent 2011).

At present, however, the term "grammaticalization" has been extended to phenomena beyond the morphosyntactic domain, that is, to phenomena involving larger, pragmatic units as well as those involving smaller, phonological units (Fischer et al. 2004; Frajzyngier 2008; Couper-Kuhlen 2011; Nicolle 2011; Waltereit 2011) – this without implying, of course, that grammaticalization is the only, or the most important, principle of grammatical change. At the same time, the validity of grammaticalization in its core morphosyntactic domain has become restricted by the identification of a number of exceptions to unidirectionality, called "degrammaticalization" (Lehmann 1995: 16; Janda 2001; Norde 2009), whereby doubt has been cast on even the most basic cline from content word to function word or affix. Although degrammaticalization is quite difficult to define and, as we will see below, has in fact been intended differently in the literature, we may argue that an adequate definition of it denotes a process resulting in a situation opposite to that identified by Meillet (1912) and Kuryłowicz (1965). From this point of view, degrammaticalization represents the change from a grammatical bound element to an independent content word or from a more grammatical to a less grammatical status. It is clear that such infringements of unidirectionality not only put at risk a consistent definition of grammaticalization but also weaken its very existence as an empirically and theoretically valid principle distinguished from other mechanisms of language change such as analogy or reanalysis, where unidirectionality is not implied. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to critically discuss degrammaticalization and to offer a possible explanation for some of its typical instances.

For this purpose, I will first present the main cases of degrammaticalization reported in the literature, which are often highly debated (Section 2); it will be seen that many of them do not represent a real challenge to unidirectionality (Section 3). Once a core of real exceptions has been identified, I will distinguish two underlying explanatory principles for degrammaticalization, which are not found in the literature, and which may be related to the type of language concerned and to the type of resulting structure (Section 4). Attention will also be given to those cases where unidirectionality is not contravened by the actual historical change of a linguistic expression, but rather by the speaker's perception of it, according to folk etymology (Section 5); this issue, to my knowledge, has not yet been explored.

2 Exceptions to unidirectionality

2.1 History of research on degrammaticalization

It is not commonly observed that some exceptions to unidirectional changes, which today would be classified as instances of degrammaticalization, were already pointed out in Neogrammarian times. The often-quoted example of English *teens* was identified by Brugmann (1906: 2) at the beginning of his treatise on Indo-European morphology. In the same vein, von der Gabelentz (1891: 215) illustrated "decomposition" (*Zerlegung*) with his examples *Ismen*, from *Latinismen*, *Gallicismen*, *Anglicismen*, *Germanismen*, and *Ana*, found in librarian catalogues of the type *Schilleriana*, *Lessingiana* and *Shakespeareana*.

Since the establishment of grammaticalization theory, however, degrammaticalization has been regarded as being very rare, to the point of being omitted from discussions on grammaticalization. Heine et al. (1991: 5) consider degrammaticalization as being "statistically insignificant". Hopper and Traugott (2003: 132) admit that some counter-examples to grammaticalization do exist but owing to their "relative infrequency" do not impinge upon the basic tenability of unidirectionality; the same opinion is shared by Diewald (1997: 18).

Over time, a awareness that exceptions to unidirectionality are not so rare has emerged. Ramat (1992) collected a series of such exceptions and, with the provocative title *Thoughts on degrammaticalization*, a paraphrase of Lehmann's (1995 [1982]) pioneering book on grammaticalization, was the first to publish a study explicitly devoted to counter-directional changes (see also Giacalone Ramat 1998: 115–118). The same line of reasoning is continued by van der Auwera (2002: 26), who believes that degrammaticalization "should be studied in its own right and not as a quirky, accidental exception to grammaticalization". Such reflections on degrammaticalization have reached a peak in Norde's (2009) monograph.

Still, even those who accept the existence of degrammaticalization are not always ready to recognize it as a real challenge to grammaticalization, for three fundamental reasons.

Firstly, unidirectionality has sometimes been considered as inherent in the definition of grammaticalization, so that counter-directional changes simply do not meet this definition and should therefore be assigned to the domain of lexicalization. According to Giacalone Ramat (1998: 123), for example, "the unidirectionality of changes from lexical categories to grammatical (functional) categories constitutes a significant constraint on possible language

changes. In the light of this constraint, possible counter-examples can be excluded because they do not adhere to the sequence entailed in grammaticalization" (see also Moreno Cabrera 1998: 224). As Joseph (2001) properly observes, such an approach is tautological and should be avoided.

Secondly, some scholars only consider those counter-directional changes exceptional that represent the reversal of the whole cline from independent word to clitic to affix: "the constraint of irreversibility should not apply to cases which are not point-for-point reversals of any grammaticalization process. Since constructions becoming one lexeme involve the interaction of diachronic processes pertaining to the lexicon, one possibility would be not to include them into the class of changes a theory of grammaticalization should explain" (Giacalone Ramat 1998: 122). However, this point-for-point reversal is logically impossible. As Bybee et al. (1994: 13) note, "once phonological segments are reduced or deleted from grams, the grams do not again assume their fuller form unless that fuller form has also been preserved in the language and also replaces the reduced form". Even the assumption of a cyclic directionality in language change – as in Jespersen's (1917) study of negation and, more recently, in van Gelderen's (2011) cycle of agreement, articles, tense, mood, aspects, etc. – implies that an eroded expression is reinforced by means of *other* material and is therefore well compatible with grammaticalization. Accordingly, the breach of one single step in the lexical-grammatical cline must also be considered an instance of degrammaticalization.

Thirdly, it is usually still maintained that degrammaticalization is idiosyncratic, so that it is only grammaticalization that can be captured in terms of typological generalizations. Plank (1995) imputes degrammaticalization to an occasional "*Systemstörung*" or "*gestörte Ordnung*". Similarly, for Giacalone Ramat (1998: 121), "what is striking is that all counter-examples to unidirectionality discussed in the literature, including cases like Italian *anta*, etc., refer to idiosyncratic changes. It is not possible to identify a tendency of language change, as in the case of unidirectional changes". Also according to Heine (2003: 175), "these processes do not seem to share any common denominator. Thus, it would seem that this term is not of much help for describing or understanding a grammatical change, except for referring to the epiphenomenal effect some of the processes have in specific situations". Haspelmath (2004: 23) observes that finding an explanation is not even necessary for exceptions and should be reserved instead for the common tendencies of grammaticalization: "If one is interested in generalization rather than arbitrary facts, one must put aside the exceptions, because unless they can be subsumed under some further generalization, they cannot be explained. ... Exceptions cannot be understood by

definition; they are the residue that resists explanation".[1] Similarly, according to Idiatov (2008: 167), instances of a decrease in morphological bonding "appear to be much more a matter of chance rather than of tendency". On the other hand, according to Harris and Campbell (1995: 338), "no reasonable theory can ignore data just because they are inconvenient; an adequate theory must account for infrequent phenomena, not merely for the most common patterns". I agree with the latter view, and some explanations of degrammaticalization have indeed been suggested for degrammaticalization in the literature, as we will see in Section 4.1; two novel explanations will be presented in Sections 4.2 and 4.3. Before doing so, however, we must discuss Janda (2001) and Norde (2009), the most thorough attempts to sort out counter-directional changes. Though lengthy at first sight, this discussion is crucial, in that many of Janda's and Norde's examples of degrammaticalization (especially Janda's) turn out to be spurious at closer scrutiny; this has ultimately made it impossible to identify generalizations and underlying motivations of degrammaticalization.

2.2 Janda (2001) on counterability of grammaticalization

Janda has collected more than eighty studies on degrammaticalization, in order to demonstrate that this phenomenon is not so rare. It must be pointed out, however, that Janda does not refer to different *case* studies, that is, to different instances of counter-directional change, but rather to different *studies* of counter-directional phenomena, whereby the same phenomenon may be analyzed in more than one study and – more rarely – the same study discusses more than one phenomenon. The number of actual degrammaticalization phenomena is about forty. I shall list and categorize them as follows.

2.2.1 Change from inflectional or derivational morpheme to clitic

– Cliticization of the *s*-genitive in Germanic languages (Janda 1980, Janda 1981; Carstairs 1987; Joseph and Janda 1988: 199–200; Harris and Campbell 1995: 337; Plank 1995: 215ff; Norde 1997, Norde 2001; Newmeyer 2001: 206)
– Cliticization of the *gi*-affix in Estonian (Nevis 1984, Nevis 1988)

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1 The assumed rarity of degrammaticalization, however, may raise the issue of quantification (see, for instance, Joseph 2014, asking "How rare is rare?"). Various measures of degrammaticalization have been proposed: Newmeyer (1998: 275–76) hypothesizes a ratio of 10:1 for grammaticalization/degrammaticalization, while Haspelmath (1999: 1046) offers his own estimate, placing the ratio at 100:1.

2.2.2 Change from clitic to independent lexeme

–   Detachment of clitic question particles *es* and *ep* in Estonian (Nevis 1986b; Campbell 1991: 290ff; Harris and Campbell 1995: 337)
–   Detachment of various clitics in Saami and in Finnish (Nevis 1985a, Nevis 1985b)
–   Formation of PIE stressed interrogative/indefinite/relative pronouns from the enclitic particles k^we/ye (sic, Jeffers and Zwicky 1980; Newmeyer 2001: 210)
–   Development of the clitic future marker *to* into a free word in Ilocano (Rubino 1994; Newmeyer 2001: 210)
–   Development of the Hungarian enclitic particle *is* 'also' into an independent adverb 'indeed' (Rubino 1994; Newmeyer 2001: 211)
–   Decliticization of subject pronouns in Middle English (Kroch et al. 1982; Newmeyer 2001: 209–210).

2.2.3 Change from inflectional or derivational morpheme to independent lexeme

–   Development of the abessive morpheme *taga* into an independent word via cliticization in the Enontekiö dialect of Lappish (Nevis 1986a; Joseph and Janda 1988: 200)
–   Detachment of the first-person plural ending *-muid* into an independent pronoun "we" in Irish (Bybee et al. 1994: 13–14; Giacalone Ramat 1998: 115; Newmeyer 2001: 208)
–   Upgrading of the first-person plural ending *-mos* into an independent pronoun *nos* 'we' in some regional varieties of Spanish (Janda 1995)
–   Development of the Proto-Semitic accusative marker *-Vt* into a preposition *ʔet* in Modern Hebrew (Rubino 1994; Newmeyer 2001: 208)
–   Development of the Japanese adversative suffix *-ga* into a free adversative conjunction (Matsumoto 1988; Newmeyer 2001: 213)
–   Free use of inflectional or derivational morphemes such as English *ism, ade, teens, bus, pro, anti, ex, hood*, Dutch *tig*, Italian *anta*, Basque *kume, talde toki, tasun*, discussed below in Section 4.3 (Ramat 1987, Ramat 1992; Trask 1997; Giacalone Ramat 1998: 115; Newmeyer 2001: 209)

Moreover, Janda (2001) reports a number of phenomena which, rather than representing the reversed change from one category to another in the lexeme-to-affix cline, show a development within the very same category that in some ways seems to be inconsistent with grammaticalization; the features of this inconsistency will be more precisely illustrated in Section 4.

2.2.4 Anomalous behavior of clitics

– Change of the order of clitic pronouns from "auxiliary – pronoun" to "pronoun – auxiliary" in some dialects of Serbo-Croat (Abel 1975)
– Formation of clitic subjects in Hittite (Garrett 1990, Garrett 1996) and in Modern Greek (Joseph 1994, Joseph 1996)
– Change from morphological to phonological conditions in the distribution of the clitic quotative particle –wa/war- in Hittite (Joseph and Janda 1988)
– Use of the article in Nilo-Saharian (Greenberg 1991)

2.2.5 Anomalous behavior of affixes or endings

– Demorphologization in Tuvan and Tofalar (Anderson 1992)
– Formation of the Somali adjective kale 'another' out of different affixes (Heine and Reh 1984: 75)
– Change from morphological to phonological conditions of the augment prefix from Ancient Greek to Modern Greek (Joseph and Janda 1988)
– Loss of the free use of a grammatical category, which may be inflectional (comparative, participle, dual) or derivational (inchoative and causative suffixes) (Ramat 1987, Ramat 1992; Giacalone Ramat 1998: 110–111; Newmeyer 2001: 205)
– Development of bound pronouns in various North-American languages (Mithun 1991)
– Spread of the instrumental at the expenses of the nominative in Old Russian (Nichols and Timberlake 1991)
– Reanalysis of the derivational affix –ir into an inflectional marker of the plural in Indo-European (Harris and Campbell 1995: 338)
– Change from inflectional to derivational use of the participle in Romance (Luraghi 1998; Newmeyer 2001: 206), Hungarian and Basque (Moreno Cabrera 1998)
– Increase of inflectional possibilities in the finite verb of some German dialects (Giacalone Ramat 1998: 117) and in the Portuguese infinitive (ib).

2.2.6 Anomalous behavior of independent words

– Change from spatial expressions to body part nouns, as in Swahili mbeleni 'in front' > 'genital organs' (Heine 1997: 153)
– Germanic upgrading from prepositions or conjunctions to nouns (ups and downs, ifs and buts, out, bye) or adjectives (iffy, on, German zue) (Newmeyer 2001: 211)

- Development of verbs out of adverbs in some varieties of Spanish, as *dentro* > *dentrar*, *sobre* > *sobrar* (Harris and Campbell 1995: 432; Newmeyer 2001: 211)
- Change of prepositions such as *for, to, on* to complementizers and thereafter again to prepositions in the history of English (Van Gelderen 1996, Van Gelderen 1997; Newmeyer 2001: 211)
- Change of *man* from noun to indefinite pronoun and then again to noun in the history of English (Van Gelderen 1997; Newmeyer 2001: 211)
- Development of auxiliaries in Romance (Roberts 1993; Miller 1997; Van Kemenade and Vincent 1997: 22)
- Formation of delocutive verbs out of personal pronouns, as in German *du* > *duzen* (Newmeyer 2001: 211)
- Development of rhetorical questions in Tamil (Herring 1991)
- Development of concessive conditional in German (Leuschner 1998)
- Use of particles in Melanesian Pidgin (Keesing 1991)
- Use of serial verbs in West African Pidgin English (Turchetta 1998)
- Lexicalization cycle of motion verbs in Tibeto-Burman (DeLancey 1985)
- Lexicalization of particles in Tibeto-Burman (Matisoff 1991)

2.2.7 Anomalous behavior of complex constructions

- Complex sentences that deviate from the usual change from parataxis to hypotaxis in Kartvelian (Harris and Campbell 1995: 282)

2.3 Norde's (2009) types of degrammaticalization

While Janda (2001) only contests the unidirectionality claim implied in grammaticalization, Norde's (2009) case studies, only partially overlapping with those of Janda (2001), also take into account further aspects of degrammaticalization such as weight, cohesion and variability. Moreover, Norde (2009) presents the first typology of degrammaticalization, in which three basic situations are identified: degrammation, deinflexionalization and debonding (see also Norde 2011, 2012b).

"Degrammation is a composite change whereby a function word in a specific context is reanalysed as a member of a major word class, acquiring the morphosyntactic properties which are typical of that word class, and gaining in semantic substance" (Norde 2009: 135). Typical examples of degrammation are identified by Norde in the use of the modal *wotte* 'would' as a lexical verb 'wish' in Pennsylvania German (Burridge 1995), in the use of the modal *dei* 'should' as

a lexical verb 'need' in Chinese (Ziegeler 2004), in the use of the indefinite pronoun *nešto* 'something' as a noun with the concrete meaning 'thing' in Bulgarian, in the use of the possessive pronoun *eiddo* 'his' as a noun with the meaning 'property' in Welsh and in the use of the Welsh preposition *yn ol* 'after' as a verb *nôl* 'fetch' (Willis 2007).

"Deinflexionalization is a composite change whereby an inflectional affix in a specific linguistic context gains a new function, while shifting to a less bound morpheme type" (Norde 2009: 152). According to Norde, typical examples of deinflexionalization are the cliticization of the *s*-genitive in English, Danish and Mainland Scandinavian, the use of the Swedish masculine nominative singular ending *-er* to an affix with the meaning 'person who is X', the use of the Swedish plural suffix *-on* into a derivational suffix found in berry-names and the use of the Kwaza inflectional exhortative quotative marker into a derivational causative.

"Debonding is a composite change whereby a bound morpheme in a specific linguistic context becomes a free morpheme" (Norde 2009: 186). Debonding may be seen in the use of the clitic infinitive marker *to* as a free form in English and in Scandinavian languages, e.g. *to go boldly* > *to boldly go*, in the use of Japanese connective particles such as *-ga* as free conjunctions (Matsumoto 1988), in the change from first-person plural ending to first-person plural pronoun in Irish (Doyle 2002), in the change from the abessive ending *-haga* to a postposition meaning 'without' in Northern Saami (Nevis 1986a), in the cliticization of infixes in Hup (Epps 2008), in the use of the Dutch, Frisian and German suffixes *-tig/tich/zig* as quantifiers meaning 'dozens' (see also Lehmann 2004: 171–174), in the use of the prefix *bö-* as a lexical verb 'need' in Northern Swedish, in the free use of the suffix *-ish* in English and in the use of the Tura bound valence-decreasing derivational marker *-là* as an autonomous word in constructions expressing predicate focus (Idiatov 2008; Norde 2009: 213–220). In this, Norde (2009) definition of degrammaticalization is more principled than the previous studies of this phenomenon mentioned in Section 1.

3 Discussion of spurious and authentic cases of degrammaticalization

While some of the case studies reported above may commonly be considered to be instances of degrammaticalization, others have been contested in the literature on a variety of grounds, so that the identification of possible principles underlying degrammaticalization necessarily entails a discussion of the criteria

used to distinguish between spurious and authentic instances. In Janda's (2001) examples of counter-directionality, three types of changes can be distinguished where degrammaticalization does not hold. Firstly, a change that has traditionally been imputed to grammaticalization may turn out to be due to different mechanisms (Section 3.1). Secondly, grammaticalization may be too simple a characterization of a given phenomenon and may therefore be supplemented by additional principles of change (Section 3.2). Thirdly, the explanation of a phenomenon is compatible only with one property of grammaticalization, while being at odds with another (Section 3.3). In my opinion, in none of these types of changes, unidirectionality is contravened.[2] Crucially, the phenomena described and discussed in Sections 2.2 are presented by Janda as exceptions to the unidirectionality of grammaticalization, introduced by the following words: "It is striking that current research on grammaticalization contains little discussion of proposed counterexamples to unidirectionality/irreversibility, since the latter are actually quite numerous" (2001: 291). Many of his examples are also adopted in the subsequent literature on degrammaticalization. Thus, it may be worthwhile to examine more closely whether these examples actually hold up as instances of degrammaticalization.

3.1 First case of spurious degrammaticalization: when language change is due to mechanisms other than grammaticalization

A first case of apparent degrammaticalization does not attack the tenability of unidirectionality, but rather questions the tenability of grammaticalization as an independent principle; it should therefore not be seen as a case of degrammaticalization. This concerns the formation of clitic subject pronouns in Modern Greek (Joseph 1994, Joseph 1996) and in Anatolian languages such as Hittite (Garrett 1990, Garrett 1996). Hittite possesses third-person clitic subjects such as -*aš* for the common gender singular and -*at* for the neuter gender singular (in the plural, Old Hittite uses -*e* and New Hittite uses -*at* both in the common gender and in the neuter gender). This is an innovation of Anatolian, where the distribution of clitic subjects is usually in complementary distribution with that of null subjects, depending on the syntactic context: clitic subjects are selected by unaccusative verbs and null subjects by unergative

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2 Actually, this was also the opinion of a reader of this paper, who criticized this section as presenting "many cases that have nothing to do with degrammaticalization". But this is exactly my point.

verbs (cf. also Luraghi 1990). According to Garrett, such an innovation is due to a four-part analogy between the pronominal and the nominal paradigm. Since a form such as *-an* may be both the nominal accusative ending and the pronominal accusative clitic, the nominative ending of nouns in *-aš* gives rise to an analogous pronominal nominative clitic form. The noun *atta-* 'father', for example, shows the following proportion: ACC.SG *att-an* : NOM.SG *att-aš* = *an* : x, where × is *aš*. Crucially, however, we do not have here a nominative ending that is detached from a stem, and Garrett (1990, 1996) himself does not present Hittite clitic subjects as a violation of unidirectionality. His intent, rather, is to explain their opposition to null subjects in this language.

The same may hold true for the origin of weak subjects such as *tos* in Modern Greek, which according to Joseph (1994, 1996) derive through both analogy and reanalysis of structures containing the corresponding stressed pronoun *aftón* 'him'. Beginning with contexts containing the deictic particle *ná* '(t)here is/are', we would have a four-part analogy such as *ná aftón* : *ná aftós* = *ná ton* : *ná* x, where × is *tos*. As Joseph observes, "at least some grammatical morphemes have developed through the workings of well-known – and independently motivated and documented – processes of change, in particular analogy. ... No form of 'grammaticalization' as a process in and of itself is needed to lead to the form itself or to its place in the grammar" (2001: 178). Clearly, this claim attacks the tenability of grammaticalization as an independent principle, and not its unidirectionality, as meant by Janda (2001) instead.[3]

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3 While the clitic subjects of Hittite and Modern Greek are related to mechanisms of change traditionally acknowledged by historical linguistics, Heath (1997, 1998) prefers to refer to different principles, for which he coins the term "lost wax" and "hermit crab". Lost wax, tested on a number of Australian languages, describes a process whereby an eroded morpheme is replaced abruptly by another morpheme that spreads rapidly through the system. Similarly, the hermit crab principle conjures up the image of a crustacean that occupies empty cells left by dead molluscs and refers to the abrupt formal renewal of a grammatical affix that has been phonetically eroded and is therefore replaced by another, more conspicuous form, usually sharing some phonetic segments with it. Heath (1998) considers the hermit crab principle to be more powerful in capturing the details of the transformation from independent verbs to affixes in some Uto-Aztecan languages. In general, the hypothesis of an abrupt change does not agree with grammaticalization theory, which postulates a gradual implementation of the lexical-grammatical cline. Unidirectionality, however, is not at issue here, and, in fact, Heath aims to attack grammaticalization in its fundamental assumptions rather than by collecting counter-examples of its directionality: "A more broadly based critique of grammaticalization theory should go beyond the tabulation of scattered counterexamples, and challenge the assumption that even the unassailable cases of compression work in the linear fashion alleged by the theory" (1998: 751–752). The inclusion of these cases in a discussion of counter-directional change, as in Janda (2001), is therefore unjustified.

3.2 Second case of spurious degrammaticalization: when grammaticalization is too simple an account

The second case of apparent degrammaticalization concerns those phenomena for which grammaticalization turns out to be far too simple an account, and whereby unidirectionality is not violated. An example is Mithun's (1991) study of the development of bound pronominal paradigms in a number of North American languages, where she argues that such markers were not bound all at once. Firstly, person markers grammaticalized earlier than number markers. Secondly, within person markers, first and second person grammaticalized earlier than third person, as can be seen from the fact that markers of first and second person are more homogeneous in a language family, and therefore can be more easily reconstructed and assigned to the Proto-language; moreover, they are also more fused morphologically. Thirdly, within the domain of the third person, non-specific pronouns are affixed earlier than definite pronouns, because non-specific referents are not identified by full NPs. Thus, Mithun's analysis shows that the form of pronominal paradigms cannot be adequately described in term of an instantaneous change across the board, in that some grammatical information is represented by affixes earlier or more frequently than others. In all these cases, however, if a pronominal affix is grammaticalized, it follows the path from free to bound marker and not the other way round, so that unidirectionality is not at stake, contrary to what Janda (2001) assumes.

Similarly, Nichols and Timberlake's (1991) study of the increasing use of the instrumental instead of the nominative with predicative nouns in Old Russian nominal clauses shows that this development is gradual and complex, and as such it cannot be simply described as a monotonic grammaticalization cline. In particular, the instrumental was initially only used with nouns denoting functions, roles and occupations and was eventually generalized to other descriptive and identificatory nouns. Nonetheless, the case form of the instrumental generally remained stable over the centuries, and only its functional range extended. Nichols and Timberlake (1991) say on grammaticalization: "The term is apparently, by a wide margin of preference, understood to refer to changes in morphemes – a lexical word becomes a grammatical morpheme, or a partially grammatical morpheme becomes more grammatical. *While we would not wish to dispute the fact that this occurs*, the character of this scenario, both synchronically and diachronically, may be less straightforward and obvious than is usually assumed" (1991: 129, emphasis added). Thus, Nichols and Timberlake (1991) challenge the idea of a simple continuous change, in showing how the distribution of the instrumental

may be fluid and dynamic, but they do not contest unidirectionality per se. Only unidirectionality, however, is at issue in degrammaticalization.[4]

3.3 Third case of spurious degrammaticalization: when language change is compatible with one property of grammaticalization only

Other studies reported by Janda (2001) as examples of counter-directional changes are only incompatible with one property of grammaticalization only, while being perfectly consistent with another property. For example, Herring (1991) shows that rhetorical questions in Tamil were originally pragmatic devices with an expressive and interactive function, and only later were morphologized and became markers of textual cohesion. This is at odds with Traugott's (1982) claim of the increasing subjectification-cum-grammaticalization of a form, which develops from an objective, referential meaning to a more subjective, speaker-based point of view (see also Traugott and Dasher 2002). If this grammaticalization scenario applied to the case at hand, argues Herring (1991), such subjective meanings would have been left originally unexpressed, which seems to be

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4 In the same vein, DeLancey (1985) and Matisoff (1991) identify more complex principles than the typical grammaticalization change in various processes of word formation of the Tibeto-Burman languages. In these languages, DeLancey finds three main devices for the expression of motion verbs. The first is lexicalized deixis, as in the case of Newari: here the deictically specified verbs 'come' and 'go' provide further deictic orientation for other verbs in participial chains, similar to Eng. *come running*. The second is syntacticized deixis, as in Lahu: the combination between a motion verb and another verb is established, and the motion verb adds a deictic specification to the other verb, e.g. 'carry + ascend' → 'carry up'. Thirdly, we have morphologized deixis, as in Jinghpaw, which possesses deictically neutral motion verbs that receive deictic orientation only by means of particles; once the particles become opaque, this leads back to the Newari stage. DeLancey argues that the change from synthetic to analytic forms here is not simply caused by phonological erosion, as is usual in grammaticalization, because the same language may have both lexicalized and morphologized forms of motion verbs. This, however, does not impinge upon directionality. In Matisoff's (1991) discussion of the formation of particles from independent lexemes in Lahu, we also observe the change from NP to noun-particle and from verb to verb particle or complementizer, in line with the typical directionality of grammaticalization. The point is rather that sometimes the change from lexical to functional is not so simple, as in the phenomenon of Cheshirization (1991: 443), whereby a morpheme has been phonetically reduced to the point of having lost all its segments and being left only with a perturbation in the tone of the adjacent syllable. This, however, is far from being an instance of degrammaticalization.

illogical. On the other hand, the development of Tamil rhetorical questions is perfectly consistent with Givón's (1979: 223) directionality from the pragmatic mode of the complex discourse to the syntactic mode and ultimately to morpho-logical coding, which has also been suggested for grammaticalization. Actually, the contrast between these interpretations of directionality from discourse to syntax, as in Givón (1979), or from syntax to discourse, as in Traugott (1982), has been also noticed by Leuschner (1998), who applies Herring's analysis to German concessive conditionals.

A possible solution of this contrast could be to exclude the issue of direction-ality from pragmatics, since in the analysis of a complex discourse one has to take into account a number of factors that may be associated with the extra-linguistic context, which makes language change also less predictable in this domain. This is consistent with the findings by Norde (2012a), according to whom neither grammaticalization nor degrammaticalization always show increasing subjectifi-cation over time ("subjectification is a very strong tendency in semantic change, both in grammaticalization and in degrammaticalization, but it is not universal nor can it be used as a diagnostic to identify subtypes of grammaticalization and degrammaticalization", 2012a: 59).

3.4 Internal and external factors underlying degrammaticalization

Some further internal and external conditions have to be taken into account, which may bring about more or less controversial counter-directional changes. Firstly, a change may concern two lexical categories, proceeding for example from noun to verb (*to shoulder*) or from noun to adjective (*the poor*). Joseph (2005) showed that such "lateral changes" are quite numer-ous in languages, and considered them a challenge to the unidirectionality of grammaticalization.[5] I believe, on the contrary, that lateral changes do not impinge upon directionality, because the source and the target of the change are both open classes.

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5 In particular, Joseph (2005) distinguishes between a strong and a weak interpretation of unidirectionality. On the former interpretation, it is assumed that all grammatical changes must move from less grammatical to more grammatical, so that every change that does not move along this cline, as in the case of lateral change, would be a counter-example. In the weak interpretation, which Joseph rather prefers, it is assumed that no change can move back on the grammaticalization cline; in this view, lateral shifts can also be accommodated.

Secondly, two variants of a form may coexist in the same language system, while at a later stage only the lexical variant is retained. One could argue that this is not a bona fide example of degrammaticalization, since a form must gain – and not regain – a more lexical function. As Börjars and Vincent (2011) point out, discontinuity between the earlier functional meaning and the later lexical meaning is crucial for an analysis in terms of degrammaticalization: "Changes in frequency between two forms which have existed side by side, leading to decrease and disappearance of a functional form and the maintaining of a lexical form, should not be considered degrammaticalization unless it can be shown that there was a time when only the functional form existed and there is evidence that the lexical one developed from it" (2011: 166). Accordingly, the decliticization of the subject pronouns *-tow/-tou* from forms such as *hastow* or *wiltow*, assumed by Kroch et al. (1982) for Middle English, has been questioned, because the independent form of the personal pronouns has always coexisted with its reduced form (see Brinton and Traugott 2005: 59–60). Similarly, the fact that *man* was primarily an indefinite pronoun in Old English, as it still is in German, while being used only as a lexical noun in subsequent stages of the English language (Van Gelderen 1997; Newmeyer 2001: 211), may be considered as being rather an instance of "retraction" in Haspelmath's (2004: 33–34) terms, since the lexical meaning has never been lost (see also Norde 2009: 9). The same holds true for the alleged change of Swedish *må* from modal verb 'may' to lexical verb 'feel' (van der Auwera and Plungian 1998). As shown by Andersson (2008), Swedish *må* originally had the meaning 'be strong, have power', which "existed side by side with its modal use in early Swedish" (2008: 23), and which independently gave rise to the lexical meaning 'feel'. While the change from 'be strong, have power' to 'may' is an instance of ordinary grammaticalization, the change from 'be strong, have power' to 'feel' is interpreted by Andersson as a specialization, mediated by collocations with manner modifiers ('be strong' > 'have good, bad strength' > 'feel well/ill'). Accordingly, "the development of Swedish *må* (*magha*) shows no signs of degrammaticalization" (2008: 30).

Further, some cases of degrammaticalization may be due to language contact. For example, in Solomon Pidgin the temporal meaning developed earlier than the spatial meaning in the form *fastaem* 'before' (Keesing 1991); this development is at variance with what occurs in most languages of the world, where a metaphor from space to time is rather the norm (Haspelmath 1997). The time > space development is due to the fact that the borrowed form (Engl. *first time*) had a temporal meaning in the lexifier language. In general, the issue of directionality is quite controversial in studies on language contact. Some scholars state that elements from any component of grammar may be

borrowed in situations of intense language contact, according to an "anything goes" perspective (Thomason 2001), so that no regular directionality can be identified. Other scholars posit constraints on language contact, whereby different types of changes also have different degrees of probability (see Matras 2009). Even from the latter perspective, however, it seems appropriate to admit a certain looseness in the directionality of externally induced language change. This is because language contact implies the interaction of purely systemic considerations with various extra-linguistic factors of social and cultural nature, which are also more difficult to predict. According to several scholars, from Thomason and Kaufmann (1988) to Trudgill (2011), social factors are even more relevant than linguistic factors in determining the effect of language change,[6] and the same may hold true for externally influenced degrammaticalization. This does not mean that cases such as Solomon Pidgin *fastaem* should be discarded as irrelevant to the debate on degrammaticalization. It rather means that such cases must be better explained by taking into account the specific contact situation between model language and replica language rather than by considering generalizations on the directionality of internal language change.

3.5 Authentic cases of degrammaticalization

Cases where directionality is more unambiguously contravened turn out to represent a change between two hierarchically distinct categories, that is, a change from affix to independent lexeme, as in English *the isms*, German *die Ismen*, Italian *gli ismi*, or a change from affix to clitic, as in the English Saxon genitive – which in fact constitute the opposite situation from Meillet's (1912) and Kuryłowicz' (1965) original definitions of grammaticalization.

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6 Instead, Heine and Kuteva (2005) argue that purely linguistic factors, and particularly grammaticalization, may play a more important role than social factors even in situations of language contact, "perhaps the main reason being that grammatical replication is a fairly ubiquitous process that can be observed across all kinds of sociolinguistic settings" (2005: 13). Accordingly, internal and external changes would proceed along the same lines, and grammaticalization clines could be also identified in language contact. This would occur, for example, when a replica language acquires a new construction A on the model of another language on the basis of some structure B already existing in it as a minor pattern; structure B would therefore become a major pattern, more similar to A, following the typical grammaticalization change involving desemanticization, decategorialization, erosion, development from concrete to abstract, etc.

An affix promoted to the status of an independent word such as *the isms*, also called "upgradings", have been given adequate attention by Ramat (1992: 550), who seeks an explanation for the coexistence of grammaticalization and degrammaticalization. According to Ramat, this coexistence is due to the competition between economy and iconicity: economy underlies the use of reduced forms such as *bus* (from *omnibus*, the dative plural of Latin *omnis*, meaning 'for all') instead of *autobus* or *public transportation vehicle*, which are instead motivated by the tendency towards transparent structures.[7] Quite differently, upgradings are considered by Norde (2009) to be instances not of degrammaticalization proper, but rather of lexicalization, because they are "taken out of their context" (2009: 9–10, 114) and do not show the gradual change in ambiguous contexts typical of (de)grammaticalization clines (see also Haspelmath 1999: 1048), in the same way as in proper grammaticalization nouns do not usually turn into affixes in a single leap. This, however, does not impinge upon the fact that the way lexemes such as *isms* and *bus* are formed runs against the cross-linguistically more frequent change from free form to bound form. Directionality and gradualness are two different properties of (de)grammaticalization, which do not necessarily coincide; my view of degrammaticalization, based on Meillet's (1912) and Kuryłowicz (1965) (see Section 1), only considers directionality, and not the possibility of having one or more leaps in the (de)grammaticalization cline. As far as *bus* and *isms* violate directionality, I agree with Ramat in considering *isms* and similar cases as authentic instances of degrammaticalization.[8]

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7 "Symbolism and iconism are the contrasting strategies always at work and always in tension in language and thus in linguistic evolution. Lexemes like *bus* and *isms* or *ade*, derived from diagrammatically iconic forms that belonged to the realm of grammar, are reduced labels, unanalyzable symbols stored in the memory of the speaker. They are economically motivated ... All this tension and flux between grammar and lexicon is amenable to the constantly shifting balance along a spiral path (the *Spirallauf der Sprachgeschichte* already alluded to by von der Gabelentz 1901: 255) between the least-effort principle, leading to phonetically reduced and opaque labels, and the transparency principle, which strives toward an optimal one-to-one relation between form and meaning." (Ramat 1992: 557)

8 Unlike Ramat (1992), however, I do not consider there to be degrammaticalization in the case of a morpheme that has lost its grammatical status and lexicalizes, as in Italian *signore* 'sir', which goes back to the Latin comparative *senior(em)*, or in German *die Verwandten* 'relatives', whose basic verb *verwenden* has acquired a different sense ('to use'). Moreover, Ramat (1992: 551) claimed that "we are faced with a second instance of degrammaticalization when an entire morphological category disappears or a class-formation system ceases to be productive", as in the case of the Greek dual or of the Proto-Indo-European inchoative suffix *-sk̑-* underlying forms such as German *forschen* 'to search, investigate', which are no longer analyzed synchronically as inchoative formations. I do not believe this to be an example of degrammaticalization. Here we do not have a morpheme that is originally inflectional and that later, once lexicalized

The affix-to-clitic cline, however, seems to be less frequent and also more controversial than the affix-to-word cline. Firstly, the only clear cases of the change from affix to clitic are those presenting a phrase clitic; this holds for the English *s*-genitive, which may attach to a dependent rather than to the head of a phrase, e.g. *the girl-we-met-yesterday's book* (see Norde 2009: 160). Instead, when we only have a word clitic, the distinction between clitic and affix may be ambiguous in languages deprived of an established writing tradition. Secondly, even in the familiar domain of the Indo-European languages, considering a clitic as an instance of grammaticalization or of degrammaticalization may be doubtful. The case of the *s*-genitive was also interpreted, at least in English, as a form derived from (Vezzosi 2000) or homonymous to (Janda 1980) the possessive pronoun *his* rather than as the decliticization of an original genitive ending, e.g. *John his hat > John's hat*; in this sense, phonological erosion would illustrate grammaticalization (although, according to Norde (2009: 160), this explanation would be impossible for the corresponding form of the Scandinavian languages). Alternatively, it has been suggested by Kiparsky (2012) that the *s*-genitive is neither an instance of grammaticalization nor of degrammaticalization, but rather of analogy. Kiparsky observes an interesting correlation on the one hand between the clitic use of the Saxon genitive in English and in Scandinavian and the loss of nominal inflection in these languages, and on the other hand between the retention of nominal morphology in German and in Icelandic and their still inflectional, not clitic, use of the Saxon genitive ("the group genitive occurs only in those languages which have lost their nominal inflection", 2012: 45). While the presence of other grammatical cases has preserved the affixal nature of the *s*-form in German, paradigmatic isolation would have directed the English *s*-form to a more free distributional use ("the rise of the group genitive, then, is an *analogical* change – the elimination of a singularity in the language", 2012: 45). All this does not imply, of course, that we should prefer an interpretation of the Saxon genitive that is more in line with the unidirectionality of grammaticalization. It just means that we should not consider the Saxon genitive as a parade example of degrammaticalization, since different interpretations of it have been suggested in the literature.

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as part of the root, assumes derivational status: the *-sḱ-morpheme has always been a derivational suffix, as far as we can reconstruct its Proto-Indo-European form, and rendering a suffix opaque is consistent with the classical trend of grammaticalization.

4 Explanations of degrammaticalization

4.1 Explanations of degramaticalization suggested in the literature

Disagreement on the possible explanations of degrammaticalization may be seen from the fact that sometimes even the very same principle has been assumed to underlie both grammaticalization and degrammaticalization. Economy, for example, is placed by Ramat (1992: 557) at the basis of shortening in certain degrammaticalized forms such as *ism* or *ade*. According to Newmeyer (1998: 276), however, economy determines grammaticalization, since "functional categories require less coding material – and hence less production effort – than lexical categories. As a result, the change from the latter to the former is far more common than from the former to the latter". Subjectification, which Traugott and Dasher (2002: 87) consider to underlie grammaticalization, can in their opinion also explain some cases of degrammaticalization. An example of subjective degrammaticalization may be Willis' (2007) change from the preposition *yn ôl* 'after' to the verb *nôl* 'to fetch' in Welsh; the latter denotes an action from the speaker's point of view. The change from clitic to free interrogative particle in Old Estonian *es*, usually considered an instance of degrammaticalization (see Nevis 1986b; Campbell 1991), has been more recently considered a common grammaticalization change from a sentence-initial marker of polar questions to a scope marker of narrowly focused polar questions and eventually to a scope marker of content questions (Metslang et al. 2011).

In general, three basic motivations are suggested for specific cases of degrammaticalization in the literature. The first one is hypercorrection, according to which an older, less grammaticalized form that is perceived as more prestigious (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 137) replaces a new form, especially in writing. An example is the Lithuanian reduced forms of first and second person pronouns -*m* and -*t*, which in the history of the language have been superseded by their morphologically more complex clitic correspondents -*mi* and -*ti*; according to Hermann (1926: 68), the underlying principle of this change would be "*das Streben nach Klarheit, der Trieb zu etwas pathetischerer Ausdrucksweise*". A second motivation for degrammaticalization may be linguistic taboo. Heine (1997: 153) observes that the use of locative expressions such as "in front" or "at the bottom" may, for euphemistic reasons, be conventionalized as nouns denoting private body parts. A third motivation is morphological obsolescence and exaptation, as recently

shown by Willis (2012), whereby a grammatical form has lost most of its semantic content and is recycled for new uses.

In the following sections, we will put forward additional principles which in our opinion may explain some instances of degrammaticalization reported above, notably the change from affix to word and from affix to clitic. These may concern on the one hand the type of construction (Section 4.2) and on the other the type of language (Section 4.3).

4.2 Degrammaticalization and construction type

When we consider Janda's (2001) and Norde's (2009) instances of counter-directionality reported in Section 2 (though not all of them, as we said in Section 3, may equally be real exceptions to grammaticalization), it is striking that most of their target words have a rather abstract function. Now, since grammaticalization is traditionally considered a change from content words to function words, or from less grammatical to more grammatical items, and since degrammaticalization proceeds by definition in the opposite direction, we would expect content words or open categories as targets of degrammaticalization. This, however, turns out to be not the case.

In 27 out of 41 examples of degrammaticalization quoted in Janda (2001), a closed category appears as the target of degrammaticalization, that is, in 66% of these cases.[9] Even though this is not a really high percentage, it remains a significant number, at least until more general tendencies in degrammaticalization can be proposed (as has been seen in Section 2.1, counter-directional changes have been usually accounted in an atomistic manner as completely idiosyncratic phenomena).

Besides pronouns, which will be discussed below, the most frequently occurring word class in Janda's examples of degrammaticalization is that of particles. One subset comprises question particles such as *es* and *ep* in Estonian, which originally were clitics, and which after their reanalysis as independent words were also shifted towards the beginning of the clause (see Nevis 1986b; see also Campbell 1991: 290; Harris and Campbell 1995: 337; Hopper and Traugott 2003: 137). Another subset is that of quotative particles such as Hittite -*wa/war*-, which according to Joseph and Janda (1988) show a counter-directional change in that they were first morphologically and later phonologically determined in the Hittite clause-initial clitic chain, which is contrary to the usual grammaticalization change from phonological to morphological conditioning.

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9 Of course, I refer here to the examples of Janda that I consider authentic, and not spurious, cases of degrammaticalization, as illustrated in Section 3.5.

Among the targets of degrammaticalization we also find conjunctions, which often cannot be easily distinguished from particles, either synchronically or diachronically. For example, the interrogative function encoded in Estonian by *es* and *ep* is expressed by the Tamil markers of rhetorical questions *ā*, *eNNa* and *illai*, which with time develop into independent subordinating conjunctions (Herring 1991). A clear instance of a conjunction that has undergone degrammaticalization is the Japanese form *ga* 'but', originally a suffix with an adversative meaning (Matsumoto 1988; Newmeyer 2001: 213). Degrammaticalization may also produce adpositions, such as Modern Hebrew *ʔet*, which derives from a Proto-Semitic accusative marker (Rubino 1994), as well as articles, which in some Nilo-Saharian languages have diachronically reduced their grammatical function (Greenberg 1991). Similarly, degrammaticalization may appear in tense markers, as in the Greek augment, which originally was a morphological strategy to signal past tense, while in Modern Greek it is a phonological strategy placing antepenultimate stress on verbal forms; in this case as well, the development is contrary to the common change from phonological to morphological constraints (Joseph and Janda 1988).

Although these changes may run counter to the expected trend of grammaticalization in a number of ways, we must bear in mind that a word belonging to a closed category such as a particle or a conjunction is not as semantically independent as a genuine content word. As such, counter-directionality in these cases does not really imply a change from grammatical to content function, but rather involves a change to a formally independent linguistic unit that maintains its grammatical function. A grammatical function is exhibited by some cases of degrammaticalized open categories (and actually the boundary between closed and open categories is not always clear-cut; see Schachter and Shopen 2007). For instance, the Hungarian independent adverb which derives from the enclitic particle *is* 'also' (Rubino 1994; Newmeyer 2001: 211) does not show a genuine adverbial lexical content of space, time or manner, but rather has an emphatic function that in many languages is expressed by particles. A similar situation holds true for Dutch *dan* (see Rutten 2012), which is etymologically related to English *then*, *than* and to German *dann*, *denn*. Originally, Dutch *dan* was a temporal adverb meaning 'then'. Later, it grammaticalized into an adversative coordinator 'but', and still later it became a conjunctive adverb again.[10] Although Rutten interprets the latter change as a case of degrammaticalization,

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[10] The change starts, as usual, from semantically ambiguous contexts, e.g. *Mijn Moeder was zeer verlegen **dan** ik repliceerde* 'My mother was very shy *then/but* I replied' (Rutten 2012: 313). In this Dutch passage, attested in the late eighteenth century, we may observe a change from temporal adverb to adversative conjunction.

he also admits that "it is an atypical example": "Whereas degrammaticalization implies semantic enrichment (Norde 2009), adversative *dan* semantically bleaches into a discourse marker that at best introduces statements that vaguely express a contrast with the foregoing and that also permits a sequential or resumptive interpretation. Semantic bleaching typically accompanies grammaticalization, not degrammaticalization" (2012: 318). In this case as well, then, the target adverb scarcely has a concrete function.

Moreover, among the open categories that are reported as targets of degrammaticalization, verbs are relatively more frequent than nouns. In Janda (2001), there are seven instances of degrammaticalized verbs compared to four instances of degrammaticalized nouns – even in this case we have to allow for low numbers, since degrammaticalization is a rare phenomenon to begin with, and since several alleged cases of degrammaticalization reported in the literature turn out to be spurious (see Section 3). An example of a degrammaticalized verb is the inflected infinitive of Portuguese, where the inflectional markers are reanalyzed as clitic elements (see Giacalone Ramat 1998: 117). The higher number of verbal targets than of nominal targets in degrammaticalization may be explained if we keep in mind that verbs are inherently less referential than nouns. As Croft (1990: 48) observes, "most objects come already individuated. The external world spatially isolates objects, and objects move or can be manipulated in space as autonomous entities. ... Verbs, on the other hand, are a much more difficult problem from the point of view of categorization. Verbs represent a categorization of events. Events do not come clearly individuated in space or time, in the way that objects can."

Further, it can be seen that verbs reported as targets of degrammaticalization do not denote concrete states or activities, but rather can be characterized by abstract semantic components or grammatical functions. Two main types of degrammaticalized predicates may be identified: those with an auxiliary or modal function and those containing a deictic component. As seen in Section 3, Norde (2009: 138) reports the case of Pennsylvania German *wotte* 'would', which acquires the meaning 'wish', the case of Chinese *dei* 'should', which subsequently means 'need', and the case of the Northern Swedish *bö*, originally a prefix, which turns into a verb with the meaning 'need'. We may observe that although the initial meaning of these items is more grammatical than their final meaning (and as such these cases are properly considered by Norde 2009 to be genuine instances of degrammaticalization), the final meaning is also quite abstract. Actually, functions such as 'wish' or 'need' are expressed in many languages by means of grammatical strategies such as moods (see Bybee et al. 1994). This is also the case for Proto-Indo-European, where these functions were presumably coded by non-indicative moods, and particularly by the optative

and the subjunctive. Note that while the source of an auxiliary in grammaticalization may also have a concrete meaning such as 'take', 'grasp' or 'lack' (Kuteva 2001), these meanings do not usually appear as targets of degrammaticalized verbs, which suggests that grammaticalization and degrammaticalization are *not* each other's mirror image. This is, however, not implicit in the definition of degrammaticalization (see Section 1), which may occasionally bring about concrete predicates, as in Willis' (2007) case study of the Welsh verb *nôl* 'fetch', derived from the composite preposition *yn ol* 'after'. There is therefore nothing structurally wrong in lexicalizations with a concrete target, and the prevalence of abstract targets here observed must be significant.

The second type of degrammaticalized verb contains a semantic component of deixis. This may be seen in formations such as Spanish *sobrar* 'to be left over' from *sobre* 'above' (Harris and Campbell 1995: 432; Newmeyer 2001: 211), as well as in some serial verbs of West African Pidgin English studied by Turchetta (1998), where verbs of motion develop not only into grammatical markers of tense, aspect, modality or valency (as expected in grammaticalization) but also into new verbs with a different concrete semantic content employed in serialization. For example, West African Pidgin English *kam* (from English *come*, which also implies deixis) may also be used as a verb meaning 'bring' in serialization chains: *Drom go kam big fud* 'The drum brings you a lot of food'. Accordingly, "the pattern of a grammaticalization chain is not always relevant for the explanation of expansion in a pidgin grammar. It might be more appropriate to think in terms of nets of grammatical expansion, starting from a single item either from the lexicon or from the already existing grammatical morphemes. ... They do not show a single and uniform developmental pattern, as would be found in a grammaticalization chain. It is more often the case that they turn to new functions not necessarily linked among themselves" (Turchetta 1998: 283). From a functional point of view, serial verbs are grammatical strategies, rather than *bona fide* content predicates, since they may have an equivalent use similar to that of prepositions in other languages. A deictic component also appears in delocutive verbs such as German *duzen* from *du* or French *tutoyer* from *tu* (Newmeyer 2001: 211; Hopper and Traugott 2003: 134). The same phenomenon occurs in Semitic, where we have, for example, structures such as Arabic *sallama* 'to say *as-salāmu ͨalaykum*' (i.e. 'peace be upon you') and Biblical Hebrew *wattahînû* 'and you have said yes (*hēn*)' (see Hillers 1967).[11]

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11 Considering delocutive verbs as instances of degrammaticalization, as in this paper, is not at odds with the fact that delocutives may also demonstrate derivation, as long as this derivational process, contrary to the directionality implied in grammaticalization, proceeds from a closed category (in this case, personal pronouns or rigidified greeting expressions) to an open category, such as verbs.

This leads us to the pronominal target of degrammaticalization, as in the debonding of the Irish personal pronoun *muid* 'we' from the first person plural ending (see Bybee et al. 1994: 13–14; Doyle 2002; Norde 2009), one of the few cases of degrammaticalization that is uncontested in the literature. A degrammaticalized pronoun may be also the interrogative/indefinite/relative pronouns of the early Indo-European languages, which according to Jeffers and Zwicky (1980; see also Newmeyer 2001: 210) are formed by degrammaticalization of the enclitic particles $k^w e/ye$. Crucially, in most languages, pronouns form a closed category with a grammatical function.

In the same vein, most degrammaticalized nouns turn out to be usually abstract nouns or mass nouns, such as English *isms*, *ade*, Italian *anta* and Basque *tasun* – the latter was originally a suffix of abstract nouns similar to English nouns ending in *-ness*, which later became a noun denoting quality (see Newmeyer 2001: 209). These cases are in agreement with Lazzeroni's (1998: 279) remark that a lexicalized affix is often a hyperonym, to be interpreted as a superordinate taxon with respect to the nouns from which the affix has been detached: an *ism* denotes a generic ideology with respect to the semantically more specific nouns *communism, fascism, positivism*, etc.; *ade* is a generic denotation for a fruit drink, derived from *lemonade, orangeade*, etc. Lazzeroni claims that the degrammaticalized form is usually not detached from a single lexeme, but rather from a class of nouns, with the isolated affix as the invariable part. However, this hyperonymic status is, in my opinion, just a by-product of the abstract or grammatical function of the degrammaticalized form, for two reasons.

Firstly, some degrammaticalized nouns with an abstract denotation cannot be considered hyperonyms; this is the case of *ups and downs* and *ifs and buts*, which have been upgraded from prepositions and conjunctions, respectively. A similar situation holds for the development of Bulgarian *nešto*, from an indefinite pronoun 'something' to a noun meaning 'thing', and for the substantivization of the Welsh originally possessive pronoun *eiddo* 'his' with the meaning 'property' (Willis 2007; Norde 2009: 143–148). In these cases, we are dealing with a generic target that has been upgraded from an independent word and therefore can in no way be considered as the hyperonym of a series of semantically similar lexemes. Secondly, if one sees hyperonymy as the fundamental underlying principle of degrammaticalization, as Lazzeroni (1998) does, one misses the generalization that many targets of counter-directionality represent instances of closed classes with a still-evident grammatical meaning, as in the case of pronouns, deictic verbs and verbs with auxiliary functions (as we have seen above, auxiliary verbs, which also represent typical instances of grammaticalization, may be targets of degrammaticalization when their meaning is less grammatical than in their verbal source). Now while hyperonymy cannot be invoked as a general characterization of degrammaticalized particles or conjunctions, abstractness or grammaticality may be.

Thus, we claim that degrammaticalized forms usually maintain the semantic component of abstractness or grammaticality that is already implied in their source. This, however, is not an exceptionless statement, as developments to form with lexical content may also occur: in the change from spatial expressions to body part nouns such as French *derrière* or Italian *didietro* (Section 4.1), the target has a concrete meaning. This shows that the overwhelming prevalence of abstract lexicalizations is an empirical fact, and may be explained by the observation that grammatical morphemes, owing to their abstract nature, are also apt to be recruited as sources of further abstract lexemes.

4.3 Degrammaticalization and language type

An additional generalization that may underlie the cases of degrammaticalization reported in the literature concerns, in my opinion, the types of language in which these phenomena are attested. Interestingly, Janda's (2001) and Norde's (2009) instances of degrammaticalization are very rarely drawn from languages characterized by an articulated fusional morphology.[12]

With the proviso that morphological types pertain to constructions, rather than to languages as a whole, it may be observed that most cases of the above-mentioned counter-directional changes are drawn from agglutinative languages or language families, such as Finno-Ugric or, more generally, from Uralic. Often quoted examples of degrammaticalization are the cliticization of suffix *-gi* in Estonian (Nevis 1984, Nevis 1988) and the formal independence of the abessive case in Saami (Nevis 1986a; Joseph and Janda 1988: 200). Further examples include the free use of substantives such as Basque *tasun* 'quality', *kume* 'offspring', *talde* 'group' and *toki* 'place', which were originally suffixes (Trask 1997: 192; Newmeyer 2001: 209), as well as the free use of *to*, which was originally a clitic future marker, in the agglutinative language Ilocano (Rubino 1994; Newmeyer 2001: 210). Heine and Kuteva's (2007: 184) analysis of various language changes shows only one example of degrammaticalization, namely, the use of the preposition *katikati* 'between' as a noun meaning 'centre' in Swahili, also an agglutinative language. Similarly,

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12 The use of the term 'fusional', instead of 'inflectional', is here preferred in agreement with Comrie (1981), among others ("both agglutinating and fusional languages, as opposed to isolating languages, have inflections, and it is therefore misleading to use a term based on (in)flection to refer to one only of these two types. The availability of the alternative term fusional neatly solves the terminological dilemma", 1981: 42).

agglutinative morphology characterizes Hungarian, Japanese, Tuvan, Georgian, Somali and various Tibeto-Burman languages, for which Janda (2001) reports various phenomena of degrammaticalization illustrated in Section 2.

I would argue that in an agglutinative language morphemes are more easily identifiable and therefore also more prone to being separated from their lexical base.[13]

The frequency of degrammaticalization phenomena in agglutinative languages may be compatible with the interpretation of data drawn from other types of languages which make extensive use of periphrastic structures. According to Doyle (2002), the separation of the personal ending *-muid* into a first personal pronoun in Irish should be seen against the background of a change in Irish from its inherited synthetic morphology to the use of new analytic constructions through a resetting of syntactic parameters. Although Irish is a fusional language, the principles that underlie agglutinative morphology can also be said to underlie the choice of periphrasis: both show a higher transparency than fusional morphology.[14]

Typical cases of degrammaticalization are also quite often recorded in the literature for isolating languages; an example is the change of the Chinese modal *dei*, originally meaning 'should' and subsequently 'need' (Ziegeler 2004; Norde 2009: 142–143). This case may be related to those instances of degrammaticalization in English and in the Scandinavian languages, where the

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13 This identifiability may also be seen in the fact that agglutinating languages often permit alternative morphological sequences in a word. In Mari (Uralic), for example, we may have both *čodra-m-lan* [wood-1SG-DAT] and *čodra-lan-em* [wood-DAT-1SG] 'to the wood' (Comrie 1980: 94). Exchanging morpheme order implies a certain transparency and independence of inflectional elements in the same way as the separability and free use of a bound form.

14 Askedal (2008) also recognizes a relationship between degrammaticalization (in his case, the eight examples reported by Haspelmath 2004) and morphological typology, according to which some degrammaticalized forms instantiate analytic constructions. However, he uses this argument to claim that such examples are not really counter-directional changes, since one cannot confound degrammaticalization with a typological difference. Accordingly, "if a linguistic element changes its syntagmatic status from bound morpheme to clitic, or from clitic to function word as the result of typological restructuring of a construction or of the overall make-up of the language, this does not by itself entail a change from higher to lesser grammatical status, i.e., constitute a case of degrammaticalization" (2008: 72). This casts doubt, in Askedal's perspective, on the very same tenability of degrammaticalization. Instead, in our opinion not only does degrammaticalization have an empirical and theoretical meaning, as demonstrated by a number of studies from Ramat (1992) to Norde (2009) etc., but also analytic constructions owing to their morphological iconicity are less grammaticalized than synthetic structures, for which lexical and grammatical morphemes are not easy to disentangle.

inherited morphology has been dramatically reduced. Actually, the typological similarity between English and Chinese had been already noticed at the beginning of the twentieth century ("*une langue qui est très voisine du chinois à cet égard, c'est l'anglais. En anglais, la plupart des substantifs peuvent être employés également comme verbes ; la langue tend à admettre l'emploi verbal de n'importe quel nom. Un mot comme* fire *« feu » peut être indifféremment nom ou verbe ; il peut même, comme nom, indifféremment jouer le rôle d'adjectif ou de substantif ; et, comme verbe, il laisse indistincte la nuance active ou passive*", Vendryes 1921: 142),[15] and has also been argued for more recently (see Song 2001: 350). A similar situation may be observed in Swedish, where the inherited Germanic morphology has substantially collapsed, in contrast with the rich inflectional morphology of Icelandic. Sigurðsson (2006: 15–16) distinguishes between "case-rich" Germanic languages, such as Icelandic, Faroese, German and Yiddish and "case-poor" Germanic languages, such as Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, North Frisian, English, West Frisian, Dutch and Afrikaans. Degrammaticalization in Swedish may be seen in the change of the plural suffix *-on* into a derivational suffix found in berry-names, described by Norde (2009: 181–183) as a case of deinflexionalization. It may be argued, then, that isolating languages, where both content words and function words can be used independently, as well as languages with a limited morphology, where content words scarcely have an internal structure, may tolerate counter-directional changes better than fusional languages, in which the morphological difference between content words and function words is more noticeable.

Our observation that degrammaticalization is less typical of languages endowed with a *pronounced* fusional morphology (and not with fusional morphology *tout court*) than of other language types may be relevant in that fusional languages such as Indo-European largely prevail in linguistic descriptions – to the point that many different exotic languages have been described for centuries according to the model of Latin grammar. Thus, the relative infrequency of Indo-European languages (apart from English, which is characterized by a poor morphology) in the literature about degrammaticalization cannot be due to the shortage of data, but rather may be related to genuine linguistic features.

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15 "English is a language that is very close to Chinese in this regard. In English, most substantives can also be used as verbs. This language tends to allow any noun to be used as a verb. A word such as *fire* can be both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it can play the role of an adjective or of a substantive. As a verb, it is open to an active as well as a passive interpretation." (My translation)

The inversely proportionate relation between articulation of fusional morphology and occurrence of degrammaticalization may also be seen in the history of Indo-European languages themselves. The independent use of affixes or endings such as English *ism(s)* or *teen(s)*, which appear in various modern Indo-European languages, is extremely *un*typical of the early Indo-European languages. Of course, one should always be careful with *argumenta e silentio* when dealing with dead languages, since a missing or rare attestation in a closed corpus, however large, does not guarantee a missing or rare attestation in the language itself. And, indeed, some cases of degrammaticalization also emerge in the ancient Indo-European languages. In Ancient Greek, for example, the emphatic particle *tê* gives rise to the demonstrative pronoun *tênos* 'that' as well as to the verb form *tête* 'take!', only used in the imperative (see Viti 2015: Section 2.6). In general, it can be observed, though, that changes from particles and especially from affixes or endings to lexical categories are extremely uncommon in Latin, Ancient Greek or Old Indian.

An independent piece of evidence for our claim comes from the different use of back formation in different stages of Indo-European. In modern Indo-European languages, words are quite often derived by subtracting an affix or ending from a morphologically longer form, as in English *enthuse* from *enthusiasm* or French *appel* 'call' from *appeler* 'to call' (see Bauer 2003: 38–40). Although this process has also appeared in the early Indo-European languages, for example in the development of the Ancient Greek noun *hêtta* 'defeat' from the infinitive verb *hēttâsthai* 'to defeat', such a word formation strategy is acknowledged as being very unusual of ancient Indo-European:

> Der psychologische Vorgang der Analogiebildung ist derselbe, ob das neugebildete Wort lautlich größeren Umfang hat als dasjenige, zu dem es ergänzend hinzugeschaffen worden ist, oder ob es kürzer ist. Im tatsächlichen indogermanischen Sprachleben ist jedoch der letztere Vorgang, die retrograde Ableitung, ungleich seltener und durchaus als Abnormität zu betrachten. (Debrunner 1917: 13)[16]

Although backformation is a different phenomenon from degrammaticalization, both types of word formation seem to me to proceed in the same direction, since an affix or ending is omitted in back formation and is detached in degrammaticalization.

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16 "The psychological process of analogical formation is the same independently of whether the newly formed word is longer or shorter than the original word from which it has been created. As a matter of fact, however, the latter strategy of retrograde derivation is incomparably rarer and definitely to consider as an aberration." (My translation)

5 Degrammaticalization, language change and speakers' perspective

Sometimes, a counter-directional change does not concern the real etymology of a word, but rather its folk etymology, whereby a speaker interprets a certain lexical structure as derived from another grammatical structure on the basis of their synchronic similarity, while from a historical point of view the two forms are not related. An example is Ancient Greek *ónar* 'dream', an old Indo-European noun etymologically related to Armenian *anurǰ* and to the forms *âdërrë* and *ëndërrë* of the two Albanian dialects Geg and Tosk, respectively. In Ancient Greek, *ónar* is associated by folk etymology to the Aeolic preposition *on* 'on, above', correspondent of Attic *aná* (see Chantraine 1968: II, 802, 1157; Frisk 1970: II, 393, 966; Beekes 2010: II, 1082, 1532). Accordingly, a dream was conceived as something which stays above the head of a sleeping person, as can be seen in Ilias 10.496: "a terrible dream stayed on (*ep-estē*) his head". Interestingly, this concept determined a further folk etymology for the word *húpar*, another Indo-European word meaning 'sleep' originally related to Lat. *sopor* 'deep sleep' and to Hit. *šuppariya-* 'to sleep', which in Ancient Greek was para-etymologically connected with the preposition *hupó* 'below', the antonym of *aná*. Since *ónar* was usually negatively meant as 'fallacious vision', *húpar* was intended as 'veracious vision', as in Odyssey 19.547: *ouk ónar, all' húpar esthlón* 'It wasn't a fallacious dream, but rather a veracious one'.

Cases like this are usually not looked at in grammaticalization theory, which commonly considers the diachronic development of linguistic structure as revealed by its real etymology, and not by its folk etymology.[17] This may be due to the fact that folk etymology has been traditionally neglected since the time of Neogrammarians, when only etymology based on principled sound laws was established as a scientific discipline (see Belardi 2002). In our case, one could wonder whether to consider Ancient Greek *ónar* 'dream' as an

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17 In his discussion of grammaticalization, Lehmann (2002) takes folk etymology into account, but with a very different argumentation from that of this paper. Lehmann's intent is rather to elucidate the relationship between grammaticalization and lexicalization, two "processes that have much in common and are, to a certain extent, parallel. The mirror image of grammaticalization is degrammaticalization, and the mirror image of lexicalization is folk etymology" (2002: 1). While lexicalization implies an increase in opacity of a lexeme, lexical transparency is restored in folk etymology. (On the complex relationship between grammaticalization and lexicalization, see also Moreno Cabrera 1998; Himmelmann 2004; Brinton and Traugott 2005; Lightfoot 2011). In this paper, instead, we are referring to folk etymology in the domain of degrammaticalization, as a way of interpreting one word as derived from another word that is less contentful or more grammatical, even though this analysis is historically incorrect.

instance of degrammaticalization, in that it was traced back to a preposition, or rather to dismiss such situations in that they do not show authentic language change. The first option, whereby Ancient Greek *ónar* is actually a degrammaticalization, is in my opinion to prefer. We must bear in mind that language change is not a process occurring independently of space and time, but is rather bound to the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors of a speech community. In the literature, it is often remarked that grammaticalization may be a creative act of the speaker, and that speakers are often aware of the effects of using one form instead of another in the grammaticalization cline (see, e.g., Hagège 1993; Lehmann 2004: 184–186; Heine and Kuteva 2005) – whereby awareness does not necessarily imply volition (Keller 1994). The same should be assumed for degrammaticalization.

All this is consistent with the recent revaluation of folk etymology in etymological studies; as Durkin (2009: 204) observes, "there is nothing intrinsically 'folksy' about the results of folk etymology". On the contrary, since it shows an association between forms that are perceived as similar by the speaker, folk etymology represents an instance of analogical thinking. This does not impinge upon the traditional judgment of folk etymology as an inaccurate etymological connection. It aims, however, at considering such connection as the product of a natural cognitive operation rather than just a bizarre mistake. As ordinary folk etymologies, para-etymological degrammaticalization may be explained by the fact that sound similarity has been assigned priority by the speaker over meaning in determining a lexical connection.

Cases like Ancient Greek *ónar* "dream" may present a further point of interest for (de)grammaticalization theory. It is traditionally assumed that (de)grammaticalization applies to constructions rather than to single lexemes and has therefore to be analyzed at the syntagmatic level (see Traugott 2003). However, the fact that a connection established between *ónar* and *on* 'above' affected the meaning of another label for the notion 'dream', *húpar*, associated with the proposition *hupó* 'below', shows how degrammaticalization (as well as grammaticalization) is a dynamic process occurring at a paradigmatic level as well, whereby relations of synonymy and antonymy may lead to directional or counter-directional changes.

6 Conclusions

In this paper, we have discussed various instances of counter-directional changes which may be a challenge to the theory of grammaticalization. Although

degrammaticalization does not occur as frequently as grammaticalization, it still needs to be explained: simply saying that degrammaticalization is idiosyncratic is tantamount to giving up on the goal of finding an explanation. We have seen that some examples of degrammaticalization reported in the literature do not really contradict unidirectionality, but rather instantiate mechanisms of language change other than grammaticalization. Authentic cases of degrammaticalization may be explained by two principles, related to the language and to the construction in which they appear.

Firstly, we have shown that a relatively high number of exceptions to grammaticalization emerges in languages deprived of an articulated fusional morphology. This may be due, in our view, to the fact (i) that in agglutinative languages morphemes can be identified more easily and are therefore more easily detached than in fusional languages, and that (ii) in isolating languages the common coincidence between morphemic and lexical units also makes morphemes more independent. Secondly, we have seen that degrammaticalized forms often belong to closed categories and have an abstract or grammatical meaning, even though this meaning may be less grammatical than in their lexical source. This may hint at a certain weakness in the usual interpretation of grammaticalization as a change from (a more) lexical to (a more) grammatical status for all words independently of their meaning. Instead, it is conceivable that words provided with a semantic component of grammaticality or abstractness also recruit other lexical sources than typical lexical words with a concrete referent.

I am not implying that these are the only explanations underlying the exceptions of grammaticalization. Other possible explanations offered in the literature, such as hypercorrection, linguistic taboo or exaptation, have also been mentioned (Section 4.1). Further, the relationship suggested here between degrammaticalization and closed categories on the one hand and non-fusional languages on the other only captures *some* phenomena of degrammaticalization. As different types of grammaticalization are commonly acknowledged, it is also to be reasonably expected that different types of degrammaticalization may exist. Such a variation does not, however, entail the absence of any shared principle.

The principles presented here also seem to be interesting from a theoretical point of view, in that they may have consequences for the interpretation of traditional cases of grammaticalization. Although form and meaning in grammaticalization usually evolve in the same direction, this is not always the case, since there is grammaticalization with formal erosion without semantic bleaching, as in the English contraction *I'm* from *I am*, as well as grammaticalization with semantic bleaching without formal erosion, as in the change of German *haben* from possession verb to auxiliary verb. Accordingly, scholars have

debated whether formal erosion or semantic bleaching has to be seen as the most typical feature of grammaticalization: while Trudgill (2011), for example, advocates the former position, Heine and Kuteva (2005) prefer the latter. The fact that most instances of degrammaticalization here analyzed involve formally independent words with a rather abstract and grammatical meaning suggests that formal features of grammaticalization are more frequently contravened than its semantic features, and that semantic bleaching must therefore be considered more important than formal erosion in grammaticalization, in agreement with Heine and Kuteva (2005).

All this suggests that the two traditional definitions of grammaticalization given by Meillet (1912) and by Kuryłowicz (1965), programmatically reported at the *incipit* of this paper, are – contrary to common knowledge – rather to be seen as descriptions of two different phenomena, because the change from content word to grammatical word described by Meillet turns out to be less frequently contravened than the change from a less grammatical word to a more grammatical word described by Kuryłowicz. Only in Meillet's terms does grammaticalization seem to be (almost) unassailable.

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