

ENG349 Selected topics in English linguistics VI: Grammaticalization, lexicalization, degrammaticalization

Spring 2018

Required reading

Laurel J. Brinton and Elizabeth Closs Traugott 2005. *Lexicalization and Language Change* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
Hopper, Paul J. and Elizabeth Closs Traugott. (2nd edition, 2003) *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

The course brings into focus three interrelated processes of language change, namely grammaticalization, lexicalization, and degrammaticalization. Grammaticalization accounts for the rise of grammatical structures, e.g. *to be going to* for the expression of the future, *let's do it* for the expression of imperatives. Each of these structures contains a lexical verb (*go, let*) and these verbs are empty of meaning, i.e. there is no idea of going anywhere in *It's going to be sunny now*. Degrammaticalization, as a process that reverses grammaticalization to some extent, has been considered quite controversial up till recently. It explains why some grammatical items lose their grammatical status and go back to being lexical items. Then there is lexicalization. According to some linguists some cases of degrammaticalization are in fact cases of lexicalization. As a starting point it is assumed that these processes take place as young language learners reinterpret ambiguous language data they are exposed to.