

## **Cognitive Mechanisms driving (contact-induced) language change**

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The workshop focuses on contact-induced change on the level of syntax or at the interface of syntax with other levels (e.g. argument structure, aspect, word formation, information structure etc). This orientation comes from the research project "Borrowing of argument structure in contact situations" (BASICS, <http://tinyurl.com/dfgbasics>) where we have been investigating the extent to which Old French had an influence on the grammar of Middle English. In this workshop we would like to extend our focus to the cognitive factors relevant for language change and acquisition, such as, for example, frequency, structural priming, level of awareness, salience, analogy, ambiguity, chunking (see the contributions in Hundt et al. 2017). These factors originate from mental "capacities as memory, pattern recognition, abstraction, generalization, and routinization of repeated tasks" (Mithun 2003, 552).

Recent research has only started investigating how these mechanisms relate to historical language change. Frequency and especially the frequency of contextualized variants might allow inferences about language change in the past (Hilpert 2017, 67). Chunking entails changes in the analysability and compositionality of the given expression, and might therefore be intimately related to language change, especially in terms of grammaticalization (Bybee 2010; Bybee & Moder 2017). A low degree of salience of certain linguistic elements has been observed to favour morpho-syntactic change, whereas high salience has been judged implausible as a trigger (Traugott 2017, 102; 108). Also, it is not entirely clear whether (and how) the concept can be applied / adapted to historical periods (Traugott 2017, 96). Priming has been demonstrated to provoke ungrammatical utterances even in monolingual adults (Fernández et al. 2017). It seems highly plausible that repeated priming may have long term effects, especially via alignment and routinisation effects (Pickering & Garrod 2017, 175; 189). Analogy-induced phenomena (overgeneralizations), from an emergentist perspective, resemble the outcome of historical change (Behrens 2017, 235). In the same vein, structural ambiguity resulting from current variation can be taken as synchronic projection of language change, as the old and new interpretation of a given morpho-syntactic unit may coexist for some time in 'critical contexts' (Diewald 2002).

Although historical linguists have taken language acquisition to be the locus of change for some time, starting as early as 1880 with Hermann Paul, and have proposed models that make use of psycholinguistic explanations (e.g. Lightfoot 1979, Lightfoot 1999), a clear picture of the agent(s) of change and the cognitive mechanisms that may trigger or accelerate change is missing. Concerning the first issue, a number of scholars have assumed that the child is the innovator of change (Lightfoot 1979; Roberts & Roussou 2003; van Gelderen 2011), i.e.

innovative analyses of the input on part of the child may become changes reflected in historical records (if they are retained and spread in the speech community). Others have claimed that it is adult speakers (e.g. Bybee & Slobin 1982; Kroch 2001; Traugott & Dasher 2002; Diessel 2012). In some cases, (successive) bilinguals are seen as the agents of change (Meisel 2011; Meisel, Rinke, & Elsig 2013; Fernández et al. 2016), thus shifting the focus to the consequences change may have for acquisition. Concerning the role cognitive mechanisms may play in language change, quite a number of factors have been explored in the pertinent literature for some time, amongst others frequency, salience, analogy, and ambiguity, but only in very few cases has the role they play in psycholinguistic processes been recognised (cf. the contributions in the volume by Hundt et al. 2017).

Psycholinguists have only started to address the potential of cognitive mechanisms like, for example, priming, as a relevant factor in (contact-induced) change. The article by Jäger & Rosenbach (2008) seems to be the first work that explicitly discusses priming experiments and what their outcome may tell us about the unidirectionality of grammaticalization. More recently, a number of psycholinguists have started to address the importance of priming and syntactic adaptation for studies of (contact-induced) language change (e.g. Pickering & Garrod 2017; Kaan & Chun 2018; Kootstra & Muysken 2019) and some authors have tackled this issue in tandem from their different perspectives (e.g. Gries & Kootstra 2017), or even have the topic of acquisition and language change on their research agenda (Cournane 2014; 2017).

With this workshop we seek to encourage interaction between the two disciplines to gain new insights into the nature of (contact-induced) language change. Since we are aware that language change is not a primary question in psycholinguistics (yet) we also welcome conceptual papers addressing e.g. long-term and historically potentially relevant measurable effects, and in more general terms, the compatibility and complementarity of data in both fields (e.g. Holler & Weskott 2018; Bader & Koukouloti 2018).

Concerning theoretical approaches, it is not clear which are best suited for establishing parallels with experimental findings. For instance, the view that speakers' grammars are set after a critical period during childhood is common from a Universal Grammar perspective (Lieven 2017, 321) and stands in contrast to the usage-based view that "grammar is learned through a continuous process of abstraction" (ibid., p. 322), meaning that "even adult grammars are not fixed and static but have the potential to change as experience changes" (Beckner et al. 2009, 7). The extent to which adult grammars have the potential to change has consequences for models of (historical) language change, as it may broaden the scope of who can be considered as agents of change, i.e. adult speakers who may undergo language change within their lifetime in addition to change from one generation of speakers to the next. Regardless of the exact locus of change, cognitive processes need to have effects on a population of speakers rather than on single individuals for language change to happen (Pickering & Garrod 2017, p. 173). Probing the prospect of cognitive processes affecting language use and language development via experimental means can pave the way to better explain the triggers for change in models that consider language change on a broader time scale, such as computational models or those that view language as a "punctuated

equilibrium" (e.g. Dixon 1997, 76–85). In such models, cognitive processes commonly occurring in newly bilingual populations could therefore be one cause of such "punctuations", i.e. bouts of comparatively rapid change.

We invite papers addressing these and related questions (in addition to the linguistic focus on syntactic phenomena):

1. Which cognitive mechanisms play a significant role in contact-induced structural change?
2. How can cognitive mechanisms be evidenced in historical data?
3. At what level can historical and psycholinguistic evidence be mapped, or at least be related to each other?
4. Who is the agent of change (monolinguals, (late) bilinguals, imperfect learners etc.)?
5. Which experimental methods are used to identify cross-linguistic effects and how can they be implemented in studies of contact-induced change?
6. How can contact-induced change be theoretically modelled in terms of cognitive mechanisms?

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