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# Grammaticalization reconciled: functionalist and minimalist insights into the development of purpose subordinators in English



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## ABSTRACT

Two approaches to grammaticalization have emerged over the years, namely functionalist and generativist, and usually a given grammaticalization study usually reflects only one of these points of view. In this paper the development of two English prepositional subordinators of purpose is looked into using both perspectives, first functionalist then minimalist, resulting in a more variegated interpretation of the data. A subsequent juxtaposition of the two concepts of grammaticalization reveals that they complement each other to a large extent, the primary area of overlap being the notions of cyclicity and reanalysis. While the two concepts differ in, for example, the answer to the crucial question why grammaticalization takes place, a proposal is made that each model has potential for accommodating the insights from the other.

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## 1. Introduction

The term *grammaticalization* has been present in linguistics for over a century going back to Meillet (1912) who coined the term and used it to refer to the development of grammatical structures out of lexical material. Up till the 1970's grammaticalization was mostly applied to synchronic typological studies set within functional linguistics. Beginning with the 1980's diachronic grammaticalization research gained momentum and has materialized into robust literature on the subject (see Hopper and Traugott, 2003; Łęcki, 2010; Traugott and Trousdale, 2010 for an overview). In what follows I share Hopper and Traugott's (2003: 18) understanding of grammaticalization as, on the one hand, 'a research framework for studying the relationship between lexical, constructional and grammatical material in language, diachronically and synchronically,' and on the other hand, 'a term referring to the change whereby lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions.' Hopper and Traugott (2003: 232) add that it is semantic and pragmatic change that sets in motion morphosyntactic shifts in grammaticalization.

This long functionalist tradition contrasts with a relatively recent interest in grammaticalization within the generative approach to language. For decades hardly any mention of grammaticalization could be found in the research on formal syntax,<sup>1</sup> which has to do with what van Gelderen (2013: 2) calls 'an inherent tension between generative syntax and historical linguistics.' As for the reasons for the tension, van Gelderen (2013: 2) mentions generativists' focus on the speaker's

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<sup>1</sup> Newmeyer (1998: chap. 5, 2001), a generativist, does devote much space to grammaticalization where he attempts to undermine grammaticalization theory arguing that no principle contained therein is inherent to grammaticalization only. His conclusion is that grammaticalization as a process does not exist. Change described as grammaticalization by functionalists is to him a result of the working of independent mechanisms.

grammaticality judgments, which in the case of historical data are inaccessible, and Chomsky's lack of interest in language change. Another reason is the autonomous role of syntax in the generative framework, which conflicts with semantic and pragmatic factors highlighted by functionalist. Generativist research on grammaticalization emerges in earnest within the most recent trend, i.e. minimalism, with contributions by Roberts and Roussou (2003) and van Gelderen (2004). Minimalism, due to the construal of lexical items as consisting of features, including semantic ones, makes it possible to involve semantics in structural change. A minimalist approach to grammaticalization made use of in this study is that of van Gelderen (2004, 2008a, 2011),<sup>2</sup> who sees grammaticalization as an actual process of language change, unlike Roberts and Roussou (2003: 201), for whom grammaticalization is 'an instance of parameter change' rather than a separate process. Consequently they seek to integrate grammaticalization with other types of structural change.

Interestingly, the two schools of grammaticalization hardly ever notice each other. The functional researchers sometimes briefly mention the contributions by Roberts and Roussou (2003) and van Gelderen (2011) pointing to the biological foundations of grammaticalization argued for in those contributions (see for example the papers in Davidse et al., 2012). The generative side usually only acknowledges the functionalist tradition when it is time to introduce the previous research on grammaticalization. A remarkable exception is Fischer (2007) who combines and confronts generative and functionalist views on morphosyntactic change, her perspective being however much broader than mine as it takes into account a variety of factors in morphosyntactic change on top of grammaticalization itself.

The present study seeks to find whether the functionalist and minimalist model of grammaticalization are equally capable of accounting for the history of two prepositional purpose subordinators, namely *to þam þæt* and *on purpose that*. If so, the two models turn out to describe the same process and thereby merit a comparison. Ultimately I argue that the two construals of grammaticalization are much more compatible with each other than it might be expected given that they come from two different research traditions. The previous research by Nykiel and Łęcki (2013) and Łęcki and Nykiel (2012, forthcoming, in press), carried out within the functionalist perspective, has dealt with the grammaticalization of purpose subordinators (an abridged account of the history of *to þam þæt* appears in Łęcki and Nykiel, 2012) and the present study departs from that research by embracing the minimalist perspective.

This paper is organized as follows. I begin with the two case studies in Section 2, that is the histories of two purpose subordinators, which cover the span of time ranging from the beginnings of English to the twentieth century. In Section 3 I cast the functionalist framework of grammaticalization over the changes discussed in Section 2. Likewise, Section 4 offers a minimalist interpretation of the grammaticalization of the subordinators. In this way Sections 3 and 4 show how the two models of grammaticalization cope with the developments sketched in Section 2. Finally in Section 5 I look into the relationship between the functionalist and minimalist models, aiming to see to what extent they are reconcilable.

## 2. The diachronic development of the purpose subordinators

Throughout its history English has had a few purpose subordinators subscribing to the pattern PP+*that*. The formula goes back to Old English where one of its earliest incarnations is *to þam þæt*. In the OE subordinators the PP consists of a preposition, which itself varies, followed by the neuter demonstrative pronoun *þes* in its instrumental (*þon/þam* or *þy/þi*) or dative form (*þæm/þam*). This property sets the OE subordinators apart from the ME forms, namely *to the effect that*, *to the end that*, *to the intent that*, and *on purpose that*, in that the latter have the preposition followed by a nominal. The same holds true in the case of the diachronically later prepositional subordinator of purpose, i.e. *in order that*, as well as in the case of similar present-day English subordinators e.g. *in the hope that*, the latter discussed by Brems and Davidse (2010: 113ff.).

The choice of the noun in a ME subordinator is crucial to the formation of the subordinator as the meaning of the noun revolves around the notion of purpose, intention, desired order. The individual histories of the subordinators within this group have been handled in a number of studies by Nykiel and Łęcki (2013) and Łęcki and Nykiel (forthcoming, in press). Two channels through which the subordinators take shape have been proposed, namely grammaticalization (*to the intent that*, *to the end that* and *in order that*) and analogy with a grammaticalizing pattern (*to the effect that*). As for the former case, it has been argued that a PP is reanalyzed as a subordinator after a period of time when a relevant noun is used only lexically and as part of a PP adverbial. Reanalysis can set in when the prepositional adverbial comes at the end of a main clause ensued by an infinitival clause, in which case it ceases to be clear whether the PP is still an adverbial or already a subordinator of the infinitival clause. As either interpretation of the PP is plausible, Łęcki and Nykiel (forthcoming) regard such occurrences of *in order* as apokoinou structure, as in (1). The reanalysis materializes in *in order* coming to introduce infinitival clauses of purpose first and then also finite clauses in the eighteenth century.

- (1) *Whis day the Ld Aston mr Howard &c were brought to Westminster In order to be tryed bu t the Attorney Genll moved that it might be put off till ffriday next . . .*

London 22th June 1680 (ICAME, Newdig10)  
(taken from Łęcki and Nykiel, forthcoming)

<sup>2</sup> In the remaining part of this article I use the term *minimalist* to refer to van Gelderen's (2004, 2008a, 2011 and others) model of grammaticalization only.

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