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## Dynamic resonance and social reciprocity in language change: the case of *Good morrow*

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### ABSTRACT

Entrenchment (i.e. Langacker, 1987) does not necessarily lead to predictable behaviour. This study aims at complementing the usage-based model of language change by operationalising the role of dialogic creativity as a mechanism that can be in competition with conventionalization and grammaticalization. We provide a distinctive collexeme analysis (i.e. Hilpert, 2006) focussing on the constructionalization of the dialogic pair [A: *good morrow* B – B: (*good*) *morrow* (A)] from the 15th up to the 18th century. After reaching the highest degree of entrenchment and automatization, the dialogic pair will show an increasing tendency to be creatively re-modelled with ad-hoc meanings during online exchanges by means of dynamic resonance (Du Bois, 2014) and non-reciprocal behaviour. We define this creative process of large-scale alteration as entrenchment inhibition. From our data it will emerge that entrenchment inhibition is triggered by spontaneous attempts of producing a creative ‘surplus’ over the expected social reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) of conventionalized exchanges. This tendency will be shown to be driven by marked attempts of polite and impolite behaviour.

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### 1. Introduction

Most usage-based accounts focussing on language change in the form of constructional (inter-)subjectification (i.e. [De Smet and Verstraete, 2006](#); [Traugott, 2010](#); [Narrog, 2012](#); [Nuyts, 2012](#); [Traugott and Trousdale, 2013](#); [Tantucci, 2017](#)) are primarily concerned with tendencies towards the repetition and the predictability of verbal experience. Phenomena such as entrenchment (cf. [Langacker, 1987](#): 59; [Croft, 2000](#): 38; [Zima and Brone, 2015](#): 488), increase of schematicity (i.e. [Bybee, 2010](#); [Traugott and Trousdale, 2013](#): 22), chunking (i.e. [Bybee, 2010](#)) and conventionalization (cf. [Terkourafi, 2015](#)) are just a few examples of the emphasis that is given to the diachronic relationship between rituality and abstraction of constructions and linguistic exchanges.

The present study similarly endorses the view of language as an adaptive system (cf. [Beckner et al. 2009](#)) that moves towards the uniformity, rituality and predicability (cf. [Bybee, 2010](#)) of its items. Yet, we crucially aim at complementing the so-called usage-based model by also taking into account individuals’ creative inhibition of entrenched constructions during speech events. Diachronic corpus-based/driven evidence and experimental research from the literature convincingly beat the

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drum for models of the linguistic system moving toward the automatic processing of repeatedly codified chunks from verbal exchanges (i.e. Bybee, 2010; Blythe and Croft, 2012; Kuperman and Bresnan, 2012). Yet, in the present study we suggest that the diachronic formation of such patterns does not necessarily trigger a blind reiteration of the same forms. Rather, typically (rather than occasionally) individuals seem to engage with prototypical patterns by altering their internal constituency or by intervening with their usage with less predictable pragmatic strategies. We define this phenomenon as **entrenchment inhibition**, viz. the creative manipulation of a schematic/entrenched chunk of experience: i.e. greetings such as *see you next time* (BNC J8J 483) or *see you a bit later* (BNC KCP 3993) in the place of the more idiomatic *see you later*.

From a diachronic perspective, this approach represents a new angle from which to address usage-based constructionalization, as its goal is not specifically centred on language innovation and large-scale formation of new patterns (cf. Traugott and Trousdale, 2013; Croft, 2010). Rather, we are interested in the creative modification of a ritualised chunk of experience [x] as a cognitively/socially typical phenomenon as such. That is, we investigate the frequent online alteration of [x] independently from the subsequent propagation of a new conventionalised chunk [y]. With this premise, our focus is placed on two phenomena contributing to typical creative attempts of entrenchment inhibition: **dynamic resonance** (cf. Du Bois, 2014) and **social reciprocity**. The latter in social interaction perhaps evolves from Gouldner (1960), a social psychologist. What interests us here is the potential this notion may have for explaining why interactants gravitate towards dynamic resonance. We will consider social reciprocity in the context of politeness theory. Reciprocity has been somewhat underplayed in studies of politeness, but its importance is acknowledged (e.g. Culpeper, 2011; Leech, 2014). Put simply, a speaker who produces an utterance in a particular context with a certain level of politeness puts the addressee under pressure to reciprocate in kind. The same also applies to impoliteness. However, as we will argue, reciprocity in (im)politeness has its limitations. Complete reciprocity makes for increasingly routinized, formulaic social routines that are in harmony with “systemic” (Du Bois, 2014: 353) and automatised forms of resonance. This means that the power to express politeness or impoliteness is diminished. Consequently, interactants adopt creative strategies to disrupt reciprocation and inhibit ritual and entrenched patterns of interaction with the aim of implicating stronger politeness or impoliteness messages.

This paper is structured as follows: section 2 introduces traditional claims and aims of diachronic usage-based research. Section 3 focuses on dialogic syntax and exploits the relationship between dialogic constructionalization and dynamic resonance. Section 4 is concerned with resonance and creativity intersecting with social reciprocity. Section 5 is the case study of this project, it provides a distinctive collexeme analysis (cf. Hilpert, 2006) of the history of the dialogic construction [A: *good morrow* B – B: (*good*) *morrow* (A)] and its relationship with dynamic resonance and reciprocity. It will emerge that the increase of entrenchment inhibition of the chunk (by means of dynamic resonance and social non-reciprocity) will coincide with the falling into disuse of the same dialogic pattern.

## 2. The usage-based framework: the primacy of frequency and automatization

Recent years in cognitive science have testified that function-specific chunks of verbalisation inherently affect how language is acquired, used and crucially the way the linguistic system as a whole changes through time. Repetition of formulaic utterances leads to subsequent conventionalization (Bybee, 1998; Heine and Kuteva, 2007; Terkourafi, 2015) of increasingly fixed patterns in individuals' memory. The latter then undergo further formal changes at the phonetic, semantic, grammatical and especially pragmatic level. The combination of this model with an evolutionary approach to language change has led to a commonly endorsed paradigm that views language as a usage-based, complex adaptive system (CAS) (cf. Beckner et al. 2009). In CAS, “speakers' behaviour is based on their past interactions, and current and past interactions together feed forward into future behaviour” and “the structures of language emerge from interrelated patterns of experience, social interaction, and cognitive processes” (Beckner et al. 2009: 2). Among the common assumptions of CAS, there is the **probabilistic nature of linguistic behavior** and the emergence of grammatical regularities from the interaction of agents in language use.

Token frequencies of linguistic constructions correlate with degree of **entrenchment** (Schmid, 2007; Croft, 2000; Gries et al., 2010) viz. the degree of cognitive routinisation of linguistics structures and their likelihood to be stored in memory (cf. Langacker, 1987, 2009). In corpus linguistics, this tendency is similarly captured with the so-called idiom principle, according to which “a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments” (Sinclair, 1991: 110). Cognitive linguists view the same phenomenon as the identification of a conventional symbolic unit (Langacker, 1987; Croft & Cruse 2004), viz. “a structure that a speaker has mastered quite thoroughly, to the extent that he can employ it in largely automatic fashion, without having to focus his attention specifically on its individual parts for their arrangement [...] he has no need to reflect on how to put it together” (Langacker, 1987: 57).

In the same trend, usage-based cognitive studies have become interested in grammaticalization and semantic change occurring as a process of **chunking** (cf. Newell, 1990; Bybee, 2010), defined as “the underlying cognitive basis for morpho-syntax and its hierarchical organization [...] of sequential experiences” which occurs mainly with repetition (Newell, 1990; Haiman, 1994; Bybee, 2003, 2010: 34). This is the process behind the formation and use of formulaic or prefabricated sequences of words such as *take a break*, *break a habit*, *pick and choose* (Bybee, 2002, 2010), and automatised processing progressively allowing co-articulation and reduction, as in the constructs *I don't know/I'm going to* grammaticalizing into more entrenched constructions *I dunno/I'm gonna*. Chunking applies to morphemes, words, and larger formulaic patterns and is centred on semantic-pragmatic reanalyses due to newly acquired meaning in context. Chunking intersects with entrenchment and leads to progressive diminishing of the internal constituency of frequently used phrases. Newly formed chunks are

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