

The particulization of German complement-taking mental predicates

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Abstract

This paper deals with the phenomenon of German complement-taking mental predicates (CTMPs) evolving into particles. The goal is twofold: on the one hand, to get a better view of the situation in present-day German on the basis of a systematic corpus analysis, and on the other hand to discuss the status of the resulting forms. In both cases, the starting point is the analysis of Imo (2006a, 2009a), who briefly deals with this phenomenon in analyzing the uses of the CTMP *glauben*. The present paper focuses on *glauben* as well, but other CTMPs, like *denken* and *finden*, are also taken into account.

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1. Introduction

One of the recurrent topics in recent English linguistics is the use of CTMPs (complement-taking mental predicates) such as *I think* or *I believe*. It has been put forward that these CTMPs have become pragmatic markers (e.g. Aijmer, 1997; Kärkkäinen, 2003; Van Bogaert, 2006). German shows a similar development, which I will refer to as the particulization of CTMPs (section 2). This development has, however, received less attention in the literature: apart from the description in Imo (2006a, 2009a), it is to my knowledge only briefly mentioned in Schwyzer (1939), Burger et al. (1982), Stoltenburg (2003), Auer and Günthner (2003) and Imo (2007).¹ On the basis of a limited set of occurrences, Imo (2006a) discusses some features of particulized *glaub* (from *glauben* 'believe'), and tries to answer the question how this form should be analyzed (as a modal particle, a modal adverb, or a (reduced) matrix construction). In the following, I will take up this discussion: I will try to sketch a more detailed image of the particulization of the German CTMPs, and check whether this allows for a more precise and deliberate characterization of the resulting forms than the one Imo offers.

The paper is structured as follows. After a brief presentation of the phenomenon and a discussion of some terminological issues in section 2, some methodological aspects will be taken up in section 3, before dealing with the case study itself in sections 4–6. The analysis consists of three components. In a first step, a more detailed analysis of the particulization of *glauben* will be presented (section 4). The next section will contain a similar, though less extensive, description of other particulizing CTMPs, and in the last section (section 6) I will take up the discussion of the status of the particulized forms.

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¹ Stein (1995), Nuyts (2000, 2001a,b), and Hohenstein (2004) describe uses of *glauben* which could be considered pragmatic markers, in line with the corresponding uses of *I think*, but do not go into their particulization.

2. Background and terminological issues

As was stated above, several English CTMP forms have evolved into pragmatic markers, thereby acquiring new uses with specific meanings (e.g. Aijmer, 1997). This phenomenon is not just found in English: Nuyts (2000, 2001a,b) has shown that it occurs in Dutch and German as well. German, however, seems to have gone a step further than English already. Traugott (1995:38) suggests for English that the pronoun *I* “may eventually become eroded”, and indeed, following Givón (1993:38), Kärkkäinen (2003) and Van Bogaert (2010, 2011) note a reduced pronunciation or even total omission of the pronoun in some cases. In German, this has already evolved into a frequent feature: parenthetical *glaube* *ich* has in some contexts eroded to *glaub*, as is shown in (1):

- (1a) Da hab ich *glaub* sogar bedient.²
I glaub even served there.
- (1b) Die hat sich letzt *glaub* ganz intensiv nach dir erkundigt.
She has glaub recently enquired very intensively after you.

It is precisely this evolution, from parenthetical to particle, that forms the topic of the present paper. It should be noted that the word *particle* is used in its broadest sense here, as a cover term for all forms which cannot be inflected (e.g. Hartmann, 1998:657; Möllering, 2001:130f.).³ The reason for using this general term is that it is not entirely clear at this point what kind of particle *glaub* is, as it shows features of different subtypes of the broad category ‘particle’ as it is defined here (adverbs and modal particles, among others). This issue will be taken up in section 6; for the time being, I will continue using the broad term *particle*, as *glaub* certainly is a form lacking inflection, hence a particle in the broad sense.

As mentioned above, the form *glaub* finds its origin in a parenthetical use of the CTMP *glauben*. This development is referred to in the present paper as *particulization*, i.e. the process of language change whereby a form evolves towards particle status. In the remainder of this section, this concept will be further elaborated and situated within the area of language change processes. First of all (section 2.1), it will be shown how *particulization* relates to other terms indicating linguistic evolutions (with focus on grammaticalization), and after that (section 2.2), a more elaborate introductory description of the process under investigation (*particulization* of CTMPs) will be presented.

2.1. Particulization as a type of grammaticalization

A typical issue in language change studies is the question which term is the most appropriate one to label the phenomenon under investigation. This is true for *particulization* processes as well. In the literature concerning the *particulization* of English *I think*, several terms have been proposed, including grammaticalization, pragmaticalization, and lexicalization. However, there is disagreement on which of them is the most appropriate label for referring to this process (Fischer, 2007; Van Bogaert, 2011). An important factor in this discussion is the way these terms and their relations are conceived of, an issue that so far has not led to unanimity among scholars (see e.g. Auer and Günthner, 2003). The scope of the present paper does not allow for an elaborate discussion of all positions that have been taken; suffice it therefore to describe the position held in the following.

According to Barth-Weingarten and Couper-Kuhlen (2002:357), grammaticalization is a prototypically structured concept. Under this view, (proto)typical instances of grammaticalization are the ones that show all features which have traditionally been related to it (e.g. the parameters proposed by Lehmann, 2002), but resembling processes which do not give evidence of all these features may be referred to by means of the term *grammaticalization* as well. In this sense, it is possible to use different terms to refer to subsets of grammaticalization processes, standing closer to or further away from the prototype of grammaticalization. These terms can be of two kinds, referring either to the domain of language within which the form resulting from the process functions, or to the grammatical status of the resulting forms.

The first group contains terms like pragmaticalization and morphologization, the result of which is a pragmatic and a morphological element, respectively.⁴ At first sight, the term ‘lexicalization’ seems to be of the same kind, yet there is an important difference: this term refers to the process by which an element acquires lexical status, and the lexicon is not

² Examples taken from transcripts in Imo (2006a:270–271).

³ This description of the category ‘particle’ holds for German, but not necessarily for other languages.

⁴ These terms are not mutually exclusive: if the resulting form is a morphological element with a pragmatic function, the process falls under the categories of morphologization and pragmaticalization at the same time. Note as well that, if ‘grammar’ is taken in a strict sense (i.e. morphosyntax but not e.g. pragmatics), it would be possible to include ‘grammaticalization in the strict sense’ at this level as well, ‘grammaticalization’ thus being an autohyponym. It seems that some of the discussions about how to conceive of grammaticalization are actually about seeing it in the broad sense (as I do in this paper) or in the strict sense.

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