

# Revisiting category-change processes: towards a new (constructionist) typology

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# Outline

- ▶ Introduction: lexical categories and category change
- ▶ A typology of the (main) processes of category change
- ▶ Category change from a constructionist perspective

# 1. Introduction

# 1.1. Category change as a creative process

(1) Ted: *She said it'd take three days. It's been five days. Should I be worried?*

Lily: *Oh, just play it cool. Don't **Ted out** about it.*

Ted: *Did you just use my name as a verb?*

*(How I Met your Mother, Season 1, Episode 7, 2005)*

*(quoted in Matiello 2013: 246)*

(2) *Once I start **shipping** a tv couple or real life partnership / friendship / relationship (...), I'll **ship** them forever! ♥*

*(<http://www.techinsider.io/what-shipping-means-to-teens-2015-8>)*

(3) *He said a fantastically **Donald Trump-ish** thing*

*(<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/.html>, Sept. 2015)*

# 1.2. Lexical categories

- ▶ The **classification of lexical items into ‘categories’** (‘word classes’, ‘parts of speech’) has been a fundamental concern in linguistic research from ancient times.
  - “Every linguist relies on these concepts but few if any are prepared to define them in an adequate, explicit, and revealing way” (Langacker 1987: 2)
- ▶ Recently, this topic has gained **renewed attention** (e.g. Baker 2003, Panagiotidis 2014, Simone & Masini 2014, Vogel & Comrie 2000).

# 1.2. Lexical categories

- ▶ Accounts based on **either formal or semantic properties** display significant shortcomings:
  - Morpho-syntactic behaviour turns out to be highly language-specific (Croft 2001, Haspelmath 2007).
  - Semantic concepts (in the sense of Langacker 2002) are universal, but do not always allow one-to-one mapping (e.g. *eruption* “action”, *whiteness* “property”).
- ▶ **Modern (functional-cognitive) view:**
  - Lexical categories can be seen as (structured) bundles of (formal, semantic and functional) features (Ramat 1999, Bauer 2005).
  - Lexical categories are not waterproof boxes and shifting from one box to another may readily occur (Ramat 1999).

# 1.3. Category change

## ▶ Major implications:

- ▶ Lexical categories are characterized by **'synchronic gradience'** (Aarts et al. 2004; Aarts 2007):
  - Certain lexical items may combine more prototypical features of a lexical category than others ('subsective gradience')
  - Lexical items may combine properties of different categories ('intersective gradience')
- ▶ Synchronic 'gradience' may reflect **'diachronic gradualness'** (Traugott & Trousdale 2010):
  - Category change is not always an instantaneous operation, but can be a gradual process too

# 1.3. Category change

- ▶ Category change is often merely seen as an accidental side-effect of major processes such as **grammaticalization** and **lexicalization** (cf. Lehmann 1995 [1982]; Brinton & Traugott 2005).
- ▶ A **comprehensive typology** of the different category-change processes and their defining features is missing to date.
  - Processes of category change **without any formal marker** (conversion, transposition) are often treated on a par:
    - “Many pairs affected by processes other than conversion have been described as conversion, no doubt because the effects of those processes are the same, that is, because they result in unmarked word-class change.” (Valera 2004: 32)

## 1.4. Aims of this talk

- ▶ To provide a (first) **classification** of the (main) processes of category change
- ▶ To demonstrate that our view on categories and category change may benefit from a **constructionist approach** to language and language change
  - cf. Norde, Van Goethem, Coussé & Vanderbauwhede (eds.), *forthc.*, *Category change from a constructional perspective*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

2. A typology of the (main) processes of category change

## 2.1. Minor processes of category change

### ► **Minor processes** (cf. Brinton & Traugott 2010, Mattiello 2013):

- Mostly category-changing:
  - Back-formation ('back-derivation' in Marchand 1969):
    - *babysitter*<sub>N</sub> > *baby-sit*<sub>V</sub>
- Mostly category-maintaining, but accidentally category-changing:
  - Clipping/ellipsis: (English) *ex*<sub>N</sub> < [*ex-partner*]<sub>N</sub>; *pub*<sub>N</sub> < [*public*<sub>A</sub> *house*<sub>N</sub>]<sub>NP</sub>
  - Reduplication: (Hausa, Nigeria) *gishiri*:<sub>N</sub> 'salt' > *gishiri-gishiri*<sub>A</sub> 'salty'  
(Inkelas & Zoll 2005)
  - Ablaut: (Dutch) *spreek*<sub>V</sub> 'to speak' vs *spraak*<sub>N</sub> 'speech'
  - Stress shift: (English) '*protest*<sub>N</sub> vs *pro'test*<sub>V</sub>; '*frequent*<sub>A</sub> vs *fre'quent*<sub>V</sub>  
(Bauer 1983: 229)
  - ...

## 2.2. Major processes of category change

### ► Major processes:

- (1) Derivational affixation
- (2) Conversion (or 'zero-derivation')
- (3) Transposition
- (4) Reanalysis

## 2.2. Major processes of category change

### ► **Criteria:**

- ✓ Lexical or grammatical process?
- ✓ Necessarily category-changing or not?
- ✓ With or without formal marker?
- ✓ Instantaneous or gradual category change?
- ✓ Context-dependent or -independent change?
- ✓ Complete change or possible defectiveness?
- ✓ Input units of change?

## 2.3. Derivational affixation

= the formation of new lexemes by means of affixation, i.e. the attachment of bound morphemes to the stem forms of lexemes (Booij & Audring 2016)

- ▶ Lexical (morphological) process
- ▶ Not necessarily category-changing
  - (Dutch) *spreek<sub>V</sub>* 'speak' > *be-spreek<sub>V</sub>* 'talk about' (category-neutral)
  - (Dutch) *spreek<sub>V</sub>* 'speak' > *spre(e)k-er<sub>N</sub>* 'speaker' (category-changing)
- ▶ Formal marker
- ▶ Instantaneous
- ▶ Context-independent
- ▶ Complete change

## 2.3. Derivational affixation

### ► Units of change:

- mostly words of major word classes
  - (English) *happy*<sub>A</sub> > *happy-ness*<sub>N</sub>, *love*<sub>N</sub> > *love-ly*<sub>A</sub>
- also words of minor word classes and even multi-word units
  - (Dutch) *uit*<sub>P/ADV</sub> 'out' > *uit-je*<sub>N</sub> 'trip, excursion'  
*[onder ons]*<sub>PP</sub> 'between us' > *onderons-je*<sub>N</sub> 'private chat'  
(Booij 2002: 89)
  - (MG) *[[ó,ti va 'vai]-tʒɨŋʒ]*<sub>N</sub> 'whatever-er'

## 2.4. Conversion

= 'a derivational process linking lexemes of the same form, but belonging to different word-classes' (Bauer & Valera 2005: 8)

- (Dutch) *fiets<sub>N</sub>* 'bicycle' > *fiets<sub>V</sub>* 'to cycle'  
*gek<sub>A</sub>* 'crazy' > *gek<sub>N</sub>* 'fool'

- ▶ Lexical (morphological) process
- ▶ By definition category-changing
- ▶ No formal marker
  - No formal change, except of the necessary change of inflection (Sweet 1960 [1891]: 38)
- ▶ Instantaneous
- ▶ Context-independent
- ▶ Complete change

## 2.4. Conversion

### ► Units of change:

- mostly words of major word classes (formally simple words)
  - (English) *to run*<sub>V</sub> > *run*<sub>N</sub>
- (exceptionnally) also complex words (compounds), minor word classes and morphemes
  - (MG) *glossológos*<sub>N</sub> 'linguist' > *glossologó*<sub>V</sub> 'to perform the activity of a linguist'
  - (Dutch) *maar*<sub>CONJ</sub> 'but' > *maar*<sub>V</sub> 'to raise objections'
  - (English) *-ship* (< relationship) > *to ship*<sub>V</sub> 'to endorse a romantic relationship'
- possibly involved in some cases of univerbation of (lexicalized) multi-word units
  - (English) [*to run away*]<sub>[V + Part]</sub> > [*runaway*]<sub>N</sub> (Brinton & Traugott 2010: 37)
  - (English) [*forget me not*]<sub>VP</sub> > [*forget-me-not*]<sub>N</sub> ('flower name') (Bauer 1983: 207)

## 2.5. Transposition

- = the process by which a lexical item is inserted in a position intended for items belonging to another lexical category
- ▶ Categorical mismatch ('distortion catégorielle' in terms of Kerleroux 1996; Lauwers 2014)
  - *Vous n'êtes pas **très chocolat** ? Découvrez les Oreo à la fraise*  
'lit. you are not very chocolate? (...)'  
'You are not very fond of chocolate? Discover Oreo with strawberry taste'
- ▶ Grammatical process
- ▶ Only 'ad hoc' category change
- ▶ No formal marker
- ▶ Context-dependent
- ▶ No complete change (defectiveness)

# 2.5. Transposition

## ▶ Units of change

- mostly words of major word classes (e.g. N in attributive or predicative position, cf. De Smet 2012)
    - a **key** point
    - *that's **fun***
  - minor word classes and phrases?
    - (...) all **the ifs, maybes, and wherefores** of Survivor scramble-time politics. (<https://www.yahoo.com/>, April 2016)
    - A flyer posted on the college's official Facebook page sparked outrage after it listed "**do's and don't's**" for students auditioning for their cheerleader and dance teams. (<http://www.syracuse.com/>, April 2016)
- "(...) words are taken out of their construction and employed metalinguistically" (Haspelmath 1999: 1064, n.1)



## 2.6. Reanalysis

- ▶ Grammatical process
- ▶ Often category-changing, but not necessarily
- ▶ No formal marker
- ▶ Context-dependent (ambiguous ‘bridging context’)
- ▶ Gradual
  - possibly subsequent to transposition
  - stepwise context-expansion (Himmelman 2004; De Smet 2009, 2012)
- ▶ Does not always result in full category change (defectiveness)
  - *Ein **r/Riesen** Dankeschön vs Ein **r/Rieses** Dankeschön* (Norde & Van Goethem 2014)

## 2.6. Reanalysis

### ► Units of change:

- Lexemes
  - *That's **fun** > That's really **fun** > a rather **fun** game*
  - *a **key** point > a really **key** point > Customer satisfaction is very **key** to us*  
(De Smet 2012)
- Morphemes
  - *Ein **r/Riesen** Dankeschön* ('debonding', cf. Norde & Van Goethem 2014)
- Multi-word units (De Smet 2012, Van Goethem et al. *forthc.*)
  - *The bus station in Patras is not **far from** the harbor* (spatial complex preposition)
  - *Patras is **far from** ugly* (adverbial degree modifier)

## 2.7. Summary

	<b>Derivational affixation</b>	<b>Conversion</b>	<b>Transposition</b>	<b>Reanalysis</b>
<b>Lexical or grammatical process</b>	lexical	lexical	grammatical	grammatical
<b>Units of change</b>	words multi-word units	words morphemes multi-word units	words morphemes multi-word units	words morphemes multi-word units
<b>Formal marking</b>	formal marker	no formal marker	no formal marker	no formal marker
<b>Context-dependency</b>	context-independent	context-independent	context-dependent	context-dependent
<b>Gradualness</b>	instantaneous	instantaneous	ad hoc	gradual
<b>Degree of accomplishment</b>	complete change	complete change	defective	defective/ complete change

### 3. Category change from a constructionist perspective

# 3.1. Construction Grammar (CG)

[cf. Croft 2001; Goldberg 1995, 2006; Hoffman & Trousdale 2013 among others]

- ▶ A recent **usage-based** approach to language, language acquisition, and language change
- ▶ Language is a hierarchical network of **constructions** (i.e. conventional form-meaning pairings)
- ▶ Lexicon-grammar **continuum**
- ▶ Constructions may undergo '**constructionalization**', i.e. the creation of new constructions (cf. Traugott & Trousdale 2013)

# 3.1. Construction Grammar (CG)

- ▶ Constructions **vary in size, complexity, and level of abstraction** (Goldberg 1995, 2006):

Grammar



Lexicon

## (1) Abstract grammatical patterns (schematic):

- ditransitive [S V Obj<sub>1</sub> Obj<sub>2</sub>] construction ↔ ‘transfer’
- e.g. *He baked her a delicious moussaka.*

## (2) Constructional idioms (semi-schematic):

- [*the Xer the Yer*] ↔ covariational conditional
- e.g. *The more you think about not eating, the hungrier you get.*

## (3) Fully idiomatic expressions (substantive):

- [*tickle the ivories*] ↔ ‘play the piano’

## 3.2. Lexical categories in CG

- ▶ **Words** are constructions (form-meaning pairings at word-level) (Rhodes 1992, Booij 2010)
  - Cf. Rhodes (1992: 414)

syn	[	cat	n	]
		proper	-	
		max	-	
		lex	+	
sem	[	bounded		+
		cnfg	count	
		num	sg	
lex		shoe		

## 3.2. Lexical categories in CG

- ▶ **Lexical categories** can be seen as schematic instances of **constructions**
  - Cf. Croft (2001: 17): *The syntax-lexicon continuum*

Construction type	Traditional name	Examples
Complex and (mostly) schematic	<b>syntax</b>	[SB]be-TNS VERB-en by OBL]
Complex and (mostly) specific	<b>idiom</b>	[pull-TNS NP-'s leg]
Complex but bound	<b>morphology</b>	[NOUN-s], [VERB-TNS]
Atomic and schematic	<b>syntactic category</b>	[DEM], [ADJ]
Atomic and specific	<b>word/lexicon</b>	[this], [green]

- ▶ **Category change** is closely related to the process of '**constructionalization**'
  - “One would thus naturally expect there to be distributional differences in the case of semantic shift, and these differences require an analysis that recognizes the differences in meaning.” (Croft 2001: 73)

## 3.3. Category change in CG

- ▶ The constructionist view on category change provides a **unified account** of the different category-change processes, because it:
  1. can account for the **variety the input units with respect to size**
    - ✓ words, multi-word units and morphemes
  2. can account for the **variety of input units with respect to function**
    - ✓ major and minor word classes
  3. does not presuppose **unidirectionality** of the change
  4. highlights the importance of **context-sensitivity** in language change (cf. Bergs & Diewald 2008)

## 3.3. Category change in CG

- ▶ Most category-change processes (affixal derivation, conversion, reanalysis) can be considered as instances of **constructionalization**.
- ▶ Constructionalization is however not involved in **transposition** because it does not create a permanent category change (defectiveness).
- ▶ Constructionalization is mostly a **gradual process**, but can be **instantaneous** too ('lexical constructionalization', cf. Traugott & Trousdale 2013).

# 3.4. Towards a constructionist typology...

Constructionalization?	Lexical or grammatical process?	Gradualness	Context-sensitivity	Category change process
yes	lexical	instantaneous	context-independent	<b>Derivational affixation</b> <b>Conversion</b>
	grammatical	gradual	context-dependent	<b>Reanalysis</b>
no	grammatical	ad hoc	context-dependent	<b>Transposition</b>

## 4. Conclusions

# 4. Conclusions

- ▶ Category change is inherent to many different types of change, yet the different **category-change processes** are usually not clearly distinguished from each other.
- ▶ This presentation is a first attempt to identify the **defining features** of the different category-change processes.
- ▶ The classification of category-change processes may benefit from a **constructionist approach** to language change and innovation because CG accounts for:
  - the **variety of input categories** (ranging from morphemes to multi-word units);
  - **particular features** of certain category-change processes, such as context-dependency, gradualness and counter- or non-directionality.
- ▶ From a constructionist point of view, most category-change processes can be seen as instances of **constructionalization**.

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