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A constructional approach
to Spanish consecutive
discourse markers
Experimental and corpus evidence

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In this book I intend to develop an explanation about how the context of certain linguistic units can shape their evolution. I also argue for the role of certain constructions as guides that magnetically attract these forms and determine their future settings. It would be unfair, therefore, not to give also account of how these dynamics can explain the process of creation and writing of this book, influenced and enabled by a large number of people whom I would like to thank for their help and support.

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Introduction

This work tries to shed more light on the relationship between the developmental paths of discourse markers (henceforth DMs)¹ and the varying properties they show synchronically, given the *impasse* at which frameworks and methods have left the question. We will show that some original structures resulting in DMs are, in functional terms, closer to their outcomes than previously thought. By drawing on a new and robust way of inspecting procedural meaning, we will suggest that the core meaning is indeed invariable in different stages of the evolution. Such a form-function mismatch calls for a new framework that overcomes the traditional views on the evolution of discourse markers and its associated problems. In this book it is held that construction grammar and diachronic construction grammar help gain insight on this issue.

Many of the difficulties found so far have come from a closer examination of the Grammaticalization Theory, as we sum up in the following lines. Although this framework and its applications have undergone a huge development in the last decades, a wide range of theoretical and methodological problems have also arisen throughout this spread and remain without clear and unanimous response. For the sake of brevity, I would like to outline here the ones I consider more relevant to the field and to some extent more related to my overall goals and particular object of study.

In the highest level of scientific enquiries, some authors have even cast some doubts about the very existence of grammaticalization. Joseph's article «Is there such a thing as grammaticalization?» constitutes a great exemplar (and summary) of the most skeptical view,² by highlighting the lack of agreement in the definition of the ontological essence of grammaticalization:

there is disagreement on the nature of this phenomenon. Especially important here is the ambivalence evident in the literature as to whether grammaticalization is a single

1. It is used here as a hyperonym covering all the terms proposed in the literature so far: pragmatic markers, discourse markers, connectives, discursive operator, discourse particles and so on.

2. The most critical view is mainly found in Newmeyer (2001).

process or instead is several processes or instead is a result of other developments, and as to what its relationship is to other mechanisms of language change. In particular, the same authors sometimes refer to grammaticalization as a process and sometimes as several processes, but also as something that results from other mechanisms. (Joseph 2001: 164)

This discussion has mainly to do with the motivations and mechanisms of change involved in grammaticalization, their specificity compared to other kind of linguistic changes and the extent to which they can be holistically regarded as a response to an identifiable force that triggers them, i.e., grammaticalization itself (Fischer 2011). It seems, however, that this issue can be partially addressed by the question of whether there is any identifiable cognitive reflection of grammaticalization taking place, which is one of our main research questions.

Far from this epistemological debate, and even among those authors that with no doubt recognize the self-status of grammaticalization, we can find another important problem in the theory regarding the extension to which it can be applied; in other words, which phenomena of language change fall into the category of grammaticalization. In this sense, historical processes involving the rise of DMs have become an unavoidable challenge for the Grammaticalization Theory, inasmuch as they contradict some of the earliest assumptions of such framework. As the central topic of the book, we shall briefly develop the two most prominent issues underlying this controversy.

First of all, there is a longstanding discussion on what is grammar, which are its boundaries or (in a simple and empirical point of view) what qualifies an expression to be considered as grammatical (rather than lexical). Now, from the point of view of traditional grammar, it is assumed that DMs do not belong to grammar, as they do not constitute a (traditional) grammatical class. On the other hand, Lehmann's parameters (Lehmann 2002 [1982]) have been widely accepted as a tool to determine the degree of «grammaticity» in synchrony, and the direction of the changes that take place in grammaticalization processes, which are characterized as unidirectional in the theory. Taking this perspective into account, the problem lies on the fact that the evolution undergone by DMs does not meet the directions posited (loss of morphosyntactic autonomy and structural scope), unlike the standard or classical cases.

Hence, the emergence of DMs has been seen by many scholars as something different and even contrary to grammaticalization, something that does not lead to grammar, but to the discourse or pragmatic pole (Ocampo 2006). It is also thought of as denying the unidirectionality attested in grammaticalization. It seems, however, that this debate concerns the grammatical properties of DMs, the conception of grammar and, only indirectly, the nature of grammaticalization. Furthermore,

these problems seem to lose consistency when applying new approaches to grammar as those presented by construction grammar, as will be shown below, since they do not assume the sentence as the maximal level of analysis and include pragmatic and discursive aspects as part of the coded (thus grammatical) meaning of constructions.

The other issue worth mentioning is intrinsically concerned with grammaticalization as a process. Here, the question is whether the process of formation of DMs behaves in the same way as the one undergone by other «traditional» grammatical categories, regardless of the final, resulting category. Traugott (1995a) tried to set up the basis for a unitary consideration of grammaticalization, as the processes and mechanisms of change (subjectification, reanalysis, decategorialization, etc.) seem to be the same. Nevertheless, case studies undertaken have given rise to problems that call for further insights and methods. This has been revealed in the literature as a two-faced problem, depending on the author who deals with it: a methodological limitation to show the complete path followed by DMs, on the one hand, and a theoretical questioning of the real evolution of structures into DMs, on the other.

Regarding the first dimension, some authors point out the methodological difficulties that historical research on DMs faces, which are tightly tied to the available methods. For instance, tracing back the rise and development of a DM requires large historical corpora which are not always at our disposal. In addition, the characteristics of these corpora are often incompatible with the research needs: the inexistence of purely oral testimonies,³ the lack or scarceness of colloquial samples, the low reliability offered by punctuation as a clue for the syntactic features and, above all, the fact that the analysts have to draw on their own introspection as present-day speakers to interpret structures belonging to another diachronic layer of a language. For those researchers, fuzziness and inconsistencies at drawing the presupposed stages of evolution of some DMs are due to these endogen limitations of historical research with corpora (e.g., Pons Rodríguez 2010).

As to the second point, in what can be considered a current debate, the real evolutionary path followed by DMs has been put into question in theoretical terms. The fact that corpora studies do not reflect Traugott's (1995a) cline (intrapropositional adverb > sentence adverb > discourse marker) suggests the idea of a different process of formation, rather than a bias (Fischer 2007, 2011; Heine 2013), so this would be a question that deserves further empirical support (beyond traditional corpus linguistics studies) to be accepted (or rejected).

Much of the abovementioned *problématique* can be seen in a set of Spanish causal-consecutive DM or DM-alike constructions: *por tanto*, *por eso*, *por ello* and

3. For an empirical treatment of the lack of reliability offered by indirect sources of colloquial registers, see Enghels and Azofra (2018).