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A diachronic study of the homophony between polar question particles and coordinators

Several authors have pointed out that in many unrelated languages the polar question particles are homophonous with connectives, such as disjunction and conjunction markers (Bailey 2013; Jayaseelan 2008; Jaggar 2001; Carlson 1994). In some cases the homophony can still be observed while in others the question particle can be etymologically traced to a historical connective.

This research postulates that on the contrary to a widely held view that this is a syntactic phenomenon, this homophony is diachronic by nature. There seem to exist pressures which lead languages to have their polar question particles grammaticalised from this one specific category of function words.

The research will map the connectives and polar question markers in Estonian, Lithuanian, Polish and Hungarian. It will then show that on a closer look the question particles and connectives of several languages, such as the Estonian *kas* or the Polish *czy* are not entirely grammaticalised, being either in the process of losing certain properties or yet to gain them. The contexts in which these particles are allowed or restricted are not random, but form a system that supports the pathway hypothesis.

It will also define the possible links in the new grammaticalisation pathway by conducting a case study in Estonian, showing the grammaticalisation pathway of the contemporary initial polar particle *kas*. The written records going back four centuries will show that the decline of the conjunctive marker *kaas* and the emergence of the question particle *kas* fall in the same time period, in accordance with the S-shaped model of historical syntax.

Finally, the research will show that this grammaticalisation pathway is not an isolated case, but the continuation of a pattern of already identified pathways between certain case inflections and connectives. It will explain

the semantic connections between the stages of the process and attempt to give reasons for the force behind the change.

Bibliography

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