



Review of Ulrich Detges & Richard WALTEREIT, eds. 2008. The paradox of grammatical change. Perspectives from Romance. (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 293. Amsterdam: John Benjamins)

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Citation for published version (APA):

Hansen, M-B. M. (2009). Review of Ulrich Detges & Richard WALTEREIT, eds. 2008. The paradox of grammatical change. Perspectives from Romance. (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 293. Amsterdam: John Benjamins). *Folia Linguistica*, 43(1), 251-255.

Published in:

Folia Linguistica

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43 | 2009

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Cover design by Martin Zech, Bremen.

Typeset at the Department of English of the University of Santiago de Compostela.

Printed on recycled paper by Plana Artes Gráficas, Santiago de Compostela.

BOOK REVIEWS

Ulrich Detges & Richard WALTEREIT, eds. 2008. *The paradox of grammatical change. Perspectives from Romance*. (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 293). Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Pp. 252. ISBN 9789027248084.

Reviewed by MAJ-BRITT MOSEGAARD HANSEN,
The University of Manchester

The book under review is a collection of ten articles (nine original studies, and an introduction to the volume) which address, directly or indirectly, and from various angles, but with specific reference to one or more Romance languages, what Eugenio Coseriu (1978[1957]) has called the “paradox of change”. That paradox takes the following form: “if synchronically, languages can be viewed as perfectly running systems, then there is no reason why they should change in the first place. And yet, as everyone knows, languages are changing constantly” (p. 1). As one would expect, existing linguistic theories propose different solutions to the puzzle, emphasizing to varying degrees: (i) the locus of change (system? usage? acquisition?); (ii) the relationship between various components or modules of the linguistic system (do syntactic changes originate from within the syntax itself, or are they triggered by other factors?); and (iii) the (non-)directionality of change.

Three of the papers in the collection, the third, Elisabeth Stark’s “The role of the plural system in Romance”, the fourth, Maria Goldbach’s “Morphological developments affecting syntactic change”, and the fifth, Susann Fischer’s “Grammaticalisation within the IP-domain” situate themselves within the paradigm of generative grammar. The remaining studies are relatively non-formal in nature, although only three, the contribution by Richard WALTEREIT and Ulrich Detges, “Syntactic change from within and from without syntax: a usage-based analysis”, which directly follows the “Introduction”, the second paper, Andreas Dufter’s “On

explaining the rise of *c'est*-clefts in French”, and, arguably, Esme Winter-Froemel’s closing chapter “Towards a comprehensive view of language change: three recent evolutionary approaches” can be characterized as clearly functionalist in outlook. In recognizing change as largely usage-/discourse-based, the sixth, seventh, and eighth papers by Giampaolo Salvi (“Imperfect systems and diachronic change”), Martin Becker (“From temporal to modal: divergent fates of the Latin synthetic pluperfect in Spanish and Portuguese”), and Hans-Ingo Radatz (“Non-lexical core-arguments in Basque, Romance and German”) appear sympathetic to central tenets of functionalism, but these authors nevertheless do not situate themselves unambiguously with respect to the formalist/functionalist divide.

Interestingly, among the contributors to the volume, only Salvi, in his article on the gradual rise of a separate impersonal *si*-construction in Italian out of an originally passive construction, explicitly takes the refreshing view that languages are actually NOT perfectly running systems, but may at any given synchronic stage be quite messy, due, he argues, to the non-systematic nature of small local changes in constructions which may be largely independent of one another, and which, hence, may not point in one and the same direction. In this sense, syntactic change is, on Salvi’s analysis, much like analogical change in morphology.

The remaining contributions all appear to accept the basic premise that leads to the perception of a fundamental paradox of language change. Thus, the volume editors, after having laid out Coseriu’s paradox in the introduction, go on, in their article, to endorse his proposed solution, arguing that if the system is by definition perfect at any given time, language change must arise from usage. In the context of a critical discussion of Longobardi’s (2001, 2003) INERTIA THEORY, according to which syntactic change can never originate from within the syntax itself, but can only ever be a consequence of changes elsewhere in the linguistic system, their paper presents two case studies: (i) the grammaticalization of *est-ce que* as an interrogative particle in French and (ii) the reanalysis of Spanish presentational-construction complements as subjects. Although Waltereit & Detges argue that both these changes originate in language usage, the latter is seen as triggered by the lack of structural transparency of the presentational construction, hence as fundamentally syntactically driven. I find the case studies very convincing, but while it is clearly relevant to point out that Inertia Theory “makes no empirically testable predictions about syntactic change” (p. 14), that very observation appears to weaken the force of the

discussion of that theory in the context of this paper, for if it is true, surely, the observed change in Spanish presentational constructions cannot constitute a counter-example? More interestingly, however, the authors further refine their earlier significant proposal (Detges & Waltereit 2002) that reanalysis relies on two cognitive heuristics, a Principle of Reference and a Principle of Transparency, suggesting that Reference will be principally responsible for changes in high-frequency items, whereas Transparency will tend to trigger changes in low-frequency items.

Dufter likewise takes the locus of change to be the usage of adult speakers, and describes the rise of *c'est*-clefts in French as primarily due, not to phonological and syntactic change, viz. the loss of movable focus accent and increasingly fixed word order, but rather to an innovative and pragmatically-driven “over-use” of clefts to introduce new information in the relative clause. Based on a substantial and carefully quantified data base, he shows that the former, traditional, explanations tally neither with the time of the initial appearance of clefts in French, nor with a continuing increase in the use of clefts that goes considerably beyond the stage at which prosody and constituent order became fixed in French.

The paper by Winter-Froemel, which closes the volume, differs from the other chapters in several ways: it does not present an in-depth case study of a particular change, it is not specifically concerned with change in Romance, nor even with grammatical, as opposed to phonological or semantic change. Rather, it is a critical review of recent evolutionary approaches to language change, largely formulated by functionalist scholars. As a state-of-the-art paper comparing and contrasting competing theories, it is both thoughtfully executed and highly useful.

Moving to the generativist “camp”, Stark analyzes indefinite nominal determiners in French and Italian, responsible for expressing number and countability, as a classification system. She sees the rise of this system as a response to the loss of the Latin nominal declensions and gives a detailed formal account of it using Minimalism’s notion of agreement. Parallel to Waltereit & Detges’ discussion of Inertia Theory, Stark explicitly engages with potential functionalist accounts of some aspects of the system and its diachronic origins. With one exception, however, these functionalist accounts are hypothetical, in the sense that no specific references are made to existing studies. Thus, not unlike the discussion of Inertia Theory, Stark’s observations come across perhaps more as token gestures of acknowledge-

ment of conflicting views than as adding significantly to the substance of the argument.

Following Longobardi's Inertia Theory (criticized by Waltereit & Detges, as mentioned above), Goldbach argues that morphological changes in the infinitival paradigm in Latin and in the (Old) French pronominal paradigm were ultimately responsible for changes in the syntax of infinitival constructions in those languages. She proposes that the decreasing use of the ACCUSATIVUS-CUM-INFINITIVO construction in Late Latin originates in a weakening of the functional Infl-category, as voice and modality distinctions are lost. In French, subsequently, the infinitive construction evolves in the opposite direction, such that the Old French weak Infl is strengthened in Middle French, where infinitives begin to accept object clitics, seen here as verbal inflections, and hence as an indication of increased propositionality. This development allows the infinitive construction to once again broaden its distribution. Somewhat disappointingly, the author, by her own admission, has no explanation to offer for why the morphological changes in question occurred in the first place.

In the last of the generativist chapters, Fischer studies two word order changes from Old to Modern Romance, namely the disappearance of stylistic fronting and of postverbal clitics. She relates these changes to the deactivation, i.e. the loss of phonological realization, of a functional category ΣP , placed between CP and IP, and responsible for expressing degrees of affirmation or negation, a loss which she interprets as due to a preference for less marked structures in first language acquisition.

In a study that combines cognitive linguistics with light-touch formal semantics, Becker accounts for the differential fate of the Latin synthetic pluperfect in Spanish, where it has turned into a past subjunctive, and Portuguese, where its meaning is exclusively temporal. Here, change is again presented as usage-based, and as triggered by aspects of the contextual meaning of constructions. Like Salvi, Becker sees change as the cumulative effect of a number of small local adjustments, but unlike the former author, he also sees those local adjustments as conceptually related, and hence directed.

The typological approach is represented by Radatz' paper on the evolution of object-clitics in Spanish, which the author describes as on the way to becoming a clausal head-marking language, like Basque, with all argument relations of the clause morphologically marked on the finite verb. Radatz argues that, quite unlike object agreement markers, the verbal affixes

of clausal head-marking languages constitute core arguments in and of themselves, with any co-referential lexical NPs standing in an appositional relation to the core clause. The typological drift observed in Spanish is argued to be the result of discourse strategies developed in response to preceding syntactic and morphological changes.

Although none of the authors are native speakers of English, the articles are in general well written and highly readable. That said, two papers in particular would probably have benefited from a greater degree of editorial intervention, as the English of the authors in question is frequently awkward. A minor gripe of this sort should not, however, detract from the fact that the contributions are of uniformly excellent quality. Not least, the editors are to be commended for having put together a volume that is very successful both in presenting a fairly comprehensive view of language change by confronting theoretically different approaches, and in achieving a high degree of coherence across the individual contributions.

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Olga Fischer. 2007. *Morphosyntactic change: functional and formal perspectives.* (Oxford Surveys in Syntax and Morphology 2). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. xviii + 378. ISBN 9780199267040 (hb); 9780199267057 (pb).

Reviewed by GRAEME TROUSDALE, University of Edinburgh

What principles are relevant for any account of morphosyntactic change? How are the functions of language use implicated in the development of particular linguistic forms? What kind of data is available for researchers of diachronic syntax to test their theories? Questions such as these are fundamental to studies of the evolution of morphosyntactic structure, and Olga Fischer's book seeks to address such questions directly, by considering how form and function interact in a series of changes (predominantly in the history of English). This monograph deals with an impressive number of topics relating to research on morphosyntactic change, from the nature of the evidence available to contemporary theories of language evolution. The main aim of the book, however, is an examination of two main approaches to grammatical change, namely grammaticalization theory (hereafter GT) and recent versions of generative grammar (focussing particularly on the Principles-and-Parameters, or P&P, model, though with substantial reference to more recent work within the Minimalist Program). In this review, I will provide a summary of each of the chapters, followed by an evaluation of some of the arguments proposed.

The book is divided into two parts, the first of which is concerned primarily with methodological and theoretical issues, and the second of which is concerned primarily with the application of theory to three case studies. A short final chapter provides a synthesis of the main findings. Part I, "General issues in morphosyntactic change", comprises three chapters. The first, "What is 'good practice' in historical linguistics: aims and methods", is a useful guide on aspects of method and evidence in diachronic linguistics, pointing out, among many other things, the value of a traditional philological approach, problems associated with using translated texts as evidence, and the advantages and disadvantages of using corpora to study morphosyntactic change. None of these issues is dealt with in detail (since this is not the focus of the book); but it serves as a very useful reminder, at the start of the monograph, that meticulous attention to detail in the treatment of the evidence can shed light on both benefits and drawbacks to

the GT and P&P accounts of change. This chapter also explores the complex issue of what should be considered an internal factor in change, and what should be considered an external factor. For instance, should frequency be considered an internal or external factor? For some, frequency and related phenomena (like ease of effort) may directly influence mental representation of forms, and so should be considered internal; for others, any change originating outwith the syntactic module should be seen as an external factor (p. 31). The answer to this question depends very much on the theoretical framework in which the analysis is couched, and is not a debate exclusive to GT and P&P. A further issue which is brought to bear on this topic is the distinction between innovation (in the idiolect of a particular user) and change (whereby innovations spread in a social network or speech community). Fischer draws some further interesting parallels between lexical diffusion in sound change and similar patterns in morphosyntactic change in which items change construction by construction, with reference to the development of (semi-)modals and other raising verbs (p. 35). There is little on the sociolinguistics of morphosyntactic change, but there is an important section (§1.2.2) on the problems associated with using data from an emergent written standard. Issues in the marginalization of non-standard varieties in the formulation of linguistic theories are magnified when one considers not only synchronic variation but also diachronic change.

Chapter 2, “Conflict and reconciliation: two theories compared”, offers a comparative analysis of GT and P&P, including their claims to the status of a linguistic “theory”, in an attempt to show what they have in common, and what distinguishes them. Fischer’s main thesis is outlined here: formal grammarians pay too little attention to the importance of language use, while practitioners of GT pay too little attention to issues of linguistic structure. This is developed in a series of topics (for example, whether language or grammar is the proper focus of investigation, what in language is innate, and the relationship between synchrony and diachrony). The chapter ends with a discussion of how a rapprochement between the two camps might come about, and introduces another topic which features heavily in the later chapters of the book – the importance of analogy, which is considered both a mechanism of change and a motivation for change (Skousen 1989). Despite the fact that there is a genuine attempt at an objective comparison of “functional” GT and “formal” P&P, Fischer is more critical of the former than of the latter. In other words, there is a sense in which Fischer feels that GT is let down more by its lack of attention to form than P&P is by its lack of

attention to function. The strongest criticism (e.g. in terms of modularity and innateness) of P&P-like models occurs in this chapter, while criticisms of GT extend throughout the book, particularly criticisms of the more discourse-pragmatic approaches to grammaticalization. Partly this is a result of the case studies in Chapters 5 and 6 (see below), which by Fischer's own acknowledgement are not central topics in P&P-type accounts of change (p. 210). Nonetheless, Fischer is robust in her criticism of what she considers to be problems within the generative enterprise (particularly with regard to the poverty of the stimulus principle).

Chapter 3, "Principles, mechanisms, and causes of change", compares the various factors involved in a morphosyntactic change within both GT and P&P. The discussion is concerned with issues such as abruptness vs. gradualness in change, and the relative importance of reanalysis and analogy. Revisiting the issue of "good practice" in historical linguistics outlined in the first chapter of the book, Fischer subjects Lightfoot's catastrophic approach to grammar change (Lightfoot 1991) to close scrutiny by drawing on the corpus-driven, philologically-grounded work of Allen (1995) on the loss of dative case and the development of indirect passives in English. This leads to a more general discussion of reanalysis (including more recent work in the minimalist framework by, for example, Roberts & Roussou 2003), and then to the issue of analogy, and more specifically, the relationship between reanalysis and analogy in GT. Here Fischer lays out her main claims – that "analogy is primary or at least stands on an equal footing with reanalysis" and that "a reanalysis of a structure will not as a rule result in a totally new structure, but in one that is already in use elsewhere" (p. 123). The model for analogy (as both mechanism and motivation) is presented in §3.5. The model proposes a synthesis between iconic and indexical relations, between types and tokens (and type-, token- and feature-sets), and between paradigmatic and syntagmatic processes in grammaticalization. This is a particularly interesting chapter in that it relates work in GT and P&P to aspects of neurolinguistics and evolutionary linguistics. Indeed, this chapter illustrates one of the impressive things about Fischer's book: the clear intention to show how our understanding of morphosyntactic change can be ameliorated by reference to work in other aspects of linguistic enquiry. The chapter concludes with some discussion of the interface between language acquisition and language change.

Part II of the book, entitled "Case Studies", presents a series of changes in English morphosyntax (with some evidence from other languages, most

frequently Dutch, where relevant) used to establish the benefits and shortcomings of the P&P and GT approaches. The first case study, in Chapter 4, “A paradigm case: the story of the modals (and other auxiliaries)” is a sensible choice, given the importance of the change affecting the English modals in both generativist and grammaticalization accounts. In addition to outlining various formal and functional accounts of the emergence of the modal category in English, Fischer uses the work of Anthony Warner (e.g. Warner 1993) to show how in many respects, the story of the English modals is rather a messy one, one which is not especially amenable to a radical account of morphosyntactic change. Again, linking back to issues of good practice outlined in Chapter 1, Fischer suggests that greater attention to the detailed history of individual modal forms, as well as the modals as a set, favours a gradual interpretation of the change, and one which is extendable to the rise of other auxiliaries in English (Hudson 1997). Chapter 5, “From discourse to (morpho)syntax and vice versa: the case of clause fusion”, is concerned with clause combining, and includes a discussion of the relationship between grammaticalization and lexicalization. In addition to a discussion of Old English *ðæt*-clauses and the development of *while*, there is an interesting link back to Chapters 3 and 4 in the discussion of the mono- or bi-clausal status of the English modals, and the role played by analogy. The final case study, presented in Chapter 6, “Subjectification, scope, and word order”, is another well-known one in GT, that is the development of sentence adverbials and pragmatic markers; and here again there are connections to the modals with respect to a discussion of scope increase and decrease in changes associated with grammaticalization. Changes discussed here include more on the modals (particularly, the development of epistemic forms), sentence adverbs like *instead*, and verbal adjuncts like *indeed* and *admittedly*. Again, the relationship between grammaticalization and lexicalization is explored, particularly in relation to the development of parentheticals like *I think* and *I guess* (§6.2.3). The seventh and final chapter, “Toward a usage-based theory of morphosyntactic change: summary and conclusions”, is a reflection on the book as a whole, and is an advocacy of a model of morphosyntactic change in which analogy is seen as a prime motivating factor. Some specific discussion of frequency and entrenchment is provided here also.

This is a thought-provoking and very valuable book which clarifies many important issues on morphosyntactic change. Fischer sets herself a difficult task in identifying areas of consensus between P&P and GT approaches to

change; this alone would make a worthy monograph. But Fischer goes further, providing some intriguing links between morphosyntactic change on the one hand and linguistic evolution and neurolinguistics on the other. More crucially, she readdresses the role of analogy in grammaticalization, and in so doing, clarifies the importance of an equal attention to both form and function in any account of morphosyntactic change. The book is enriched yet further by the more general discussion of method and practice in historical linguistics which appears in the first chapter. These observations are not simply “added on” to the discussion of formal and functional accounts of change; they are integrated very neatly into the rest of the text.

There can be no doubt that this book raises a number of challenges for proponents of grammaticalization and generative grammar alike. In the remainder of this review, I concentrate primarily on the challenges that the book raises for GT, and on what to my mind are some of the more problematic claims that Fischer makes. Before this, however, I wish to make one small observation about the characterisation of the two theories proposed in Chapter 2. While it is understandable that, in order to highlight the differences between generative grammar and GT most prominently, rather more attention is paid to research on linguistic variation and change at either extreme of the two approaches, this inevitably leads to a rather polarised view of the two models. Some recent work in the Minimalist Program, for example, Adger & Smith (2005), on the relationship between quantitative sociolinguistics and syntactic structure, illustrates how some formalists are engaging with syntactic variation in an attempt to refine the model. Fischer does acknowledge such exceptions in a footnote (fn. 5, p. 90), but even here I think there is some misrepresentation, since research of the kind carried out by Adger & Smith is concerned with “context and the communicative situation”, even if it still privileges a separate syntactic module.

My first observation regarding the challenge that Fischer’s book sets out for GT concerns the importance of an equal focus on form and meaning, and the choice of a suitable framework, in which changes in both form and meaning must be addressed. Recent work on GT and Construction Grammar (for example, Fried 2008 and Traugott 2008) has addressed precisely this issue. Although the publication of the research just cited postdates the publication of Fischer’s book, work by Croft (2001) and Bybee (2003) has advocated a constructional approach to grammaticalization for some time. This would not be an issue were it not the case that, having read Fischer’s

book, it struck me that in many ways, this is at heart a Construction Grammar book. So many of Fischer's claims resonate with a constructional approach to language structure, acquisition and change: consider the following, from the final chapter: "The system of every language forms a complex network in which each linguistic sign, both concrete and abstract, is organized with respect to all other signs, both within each level and between levels (i.e. the phonetic, the morphological, the syntactic, the semantic-pragmatic, and the discourse levels)" (p. 323). This is essentially a description of the constructional network. The main thesis is clearly allied to the more "cognitive" school of linguistic structure, so in some ways it is perhaps surprising that there is little reference to constructional approaches to language structure.

As noted above, in Fischer's model of grammaticalization, analogy is of greater prominence in morphosyntactic changes than reanalysis, contra e.g. Hopper & Traugott (2003[1993]). The similarities and differences with Kiparsky's grammaticalization as optimization model (Kiparsky forthcoming) are intriguing; they both see analogy as a significant force in morphosyntactic change, but have rather different things to say about the creation of "new" structures. Some parts of Fischer's argument regarding analogy – particularly its relation to reanalysis – remain a little opaque. The significant question remains as to whether or not reanalysis must create something new. For instance, on p. 145, in a discussion of the development of *be going to* in English, Fischer writes that reanalysis may simply involve a string moving to a different token set: *be going to* "leaves the construction-type of [V[*to* INF]] and joins the construction-type of [Aux V]". For Fischer this is analogy, not reanalysis, because it involves pattern-matching to an extant type. But for Kiparsky (forthcoming) the mechanism of analogy is a kind of reanalysis; and it is hard to see how such a shift from one construction type to another involves anything other than a new set of dependencies resulting in the emergence of a new construction (see also Haspelmath 2004).

A contentious topic that Fischer addresses in the book concerns differences between grammaticalization and lexicalization (§5.1, as part of an analysis of clause combining). Fischer proposes that grammaticalization involves "construction-types (which may partly consist of tokens)" (p. 229), while lexicalization "always involves a single token or group of tokens" (p. 227). Presumably this group of tokens must be related in some way, but this nonetheless illustrates a nice distinction between the two processes. Yet in

other places, Fischer makes some rather perplexing comments about the relationship between the two kinds of change. For example, she suggests that the difference between grammaticalization and lexicalization “is probably to a large extent a terminological one” (p. 252), and even more worryingly that lexicalization “involves *symbolization*, i.e. using the items in question on a more abstract, more purely linguistic level” (p. 253, emphasis original). This cannot be the case – if anything, increased symbolization and abstractness (or schematicity) must correlate with grammaticalization. It is also questionable to claim that the discussion by Brinton & Traugott (2005) of the differences between grammaticalization and lexicalization rests on “a too facile distinction between lexical and functional material” (p. 229).

Although there is perhaps more criticism of GT than P&P in this book, Fischer does provide a detailed account of the merits and disadvantages of both approaches. This is no mean feat, and readers will value the systematic approach Fischer takes in discussing and illustrating the two models of morphosyntactic change. The book addresses a number of issues which are at the heart of current thinking about morphosyntactic change generally, and grammaticalization in particular. In conclusion, it is clear that this is a most welcome, challenging and insightful book, which is undoubtedly required reading for anyone interested in the processes of morphosyntactic change.

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Societas Linguistica Europaea

9–12 September 2009

University of Lisbon – Faculty of Letters

Department of English Studies
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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

(1 October 2008–1 March 2009)

This list acknowledges the receipt of recent works on languages and linguistics. Note that no book can be returned to the publisher and that by accepting a book no promise is implied that it will be reviewed in this journal.

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- Willems, Klaas & Ludovic De Cuypere, eds. 2008. *Naturalness and iconicity in language*. (Iconicity in Language and Literature 7). Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Pp. ix + 249. ISBN 9027243430.

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Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin &
Societas Linguistica Europaea

ISSN0165-4004 print
ISSN1614-7308 online