

## Experimental Replication of Historical Reanalysis Processes (EXREAN)

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In historical linguistics, semantic reanalysis is defined as the process by which speakers assign a new meaning to a specific grammatical construction (cf., e.g., Detges and Waltereit, 2002). While many scholars agree that reanalysis is a necessary step in grammaticalization processes, the conditions that allow reanalysis to occur are largely unexplored. Consequently, it is difficult to explain why given similar constructions in different languages, reanalysis may occur in some but not all of these languages.

The ERC-funded EXREAN project (2024-2029) is the first project to systematically address this question. EXREAN has three main innovative objectives: (a) to develop a methodology that allows replicating historical reanalysis processes in a laboratory setting, (b) to determine in which context types reanalysis occurs, (c) to determine which social, language-specific, and individual determinants favor or disfavor reanalysis and its actualization.

In this talk, I will present the first results from the project. While many historical linguists subscribe to the assumption that similar lexical meanings give rise to the same implicatures, thereby leading to the same grammaticalization pathways (the so-called Lexical Determination Hypothesis) (Bybee et al., 1994; Rosemeyer and Grossman, 2021), our results provide the first empirical proof of this assumption. We examine whether the conditions that led to the reanalysis of the Spanish verbal periphrasis 'ACABAR + de + INFINITIVE' as a recent past marker (cf. 1) are detectable in English, where such a grammaticalization process has not occurred in the parallel construction 'FINISH + GERUND' (2).

- (1) *Acab-o de comer un bocadillo.*  
finish-PRS.IND.1SG of eat-INF a sandwich  
'I just ate a sandwich' [LIT. 'I finished eating a sandwich']
- (2) *I finished eating a sandwich.* [NOT: 'I just ate a sandwich']

In Spanish, this periphrasis has evolved from its compositional meaning ('to finish doing something') to a non-compositional recent-past meaning ('have just done something'). Previous studies assumed that this process occurred in bridging contexts characterized by (a) temporal subordination and (b) low informativity/high expectedness of the non-finite verbal form (Rosemeyer and Grossman, 2017). We asked 164 native English speakers to judge the temporal distance between two separate events. The experimental design is a 2x2 within-subjects setup, manipulating informativity of the non-finite verbal form (low vs. high) and sentence structure (subordinate clause vs. two main clauses).

<b>Subordinate, low informativity</b>	When Peter finished playing the guitar, he cycled to the lake.
<b>Subordinate, high informativity</b>	When Peter finished selling the guitar, he cycled to the lake.
<b>Main, low informativity</b>	Peter finished playing the guitar. He cycled to the lake.
<b>Main, high informativity</b>	Peter finished selling the guitar. He cycled to the lake.

Participants rated temporal distance between the two events to be significantly lower in subordinate clauses with low-informativity events. These results suggest that the cognitive processes leading to the inference of recent past are the same in Old Spanish and Present-Day English speakers, supporting the Lexical Determination Hypothesis.

## References

Bybee, Joan L., Revere D. Perkins and William Pagliuca (1994). *The Evolution of Grammar. Tense, Aspect and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

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