

From Temporality to Causality. The Grammaticalization of German *da* and *nachdem*

It is a well known fact that causal connectors develop along the same typologically well-attested grammaticalization path leading from a temporal to a causal connector (e.g. König/Traugott 1991). A previous or simultaneous event is reinterpreted as being the cause of the event in the main clause (e.g. *Since Susan left him, John has been very miserable*¹. 'From the time that Susan left him, John has been very miserable' > 'Because Susan left him, John has been very miserable'). This also pertains to the German subjunctive *da* 'because, since', which diachronically evolved from the temporal connector *da* 'when' (e.g. Arndt 1960). In contemporary German the subjunctive *nachdem* 'after' is subject to a similar development: Especially in southern varieties, *nachdem* not only occurs in temporal, but also in unambiguously causal contexts (e.g. AdA). However, empirical studies on the development of causal connectors in German are missing.

Therefore, I conducted two corpus studies and I investigated the metonymic shift from temporality to causality of *da* and *nachdem*. Firstly, I studied the occurrences of the German connector *da* in 18th Century texts. In this period *da* was ambiguous and denoted temporal as well as causal relations similar to the connector *since* in contemporary English. The objection of the study was to determine which contexts favor either the temporal or the causal reading. The data suggests that semantic factors such as actionality of the verbal event contribute to the function of the connector. Furthermore, text types appear to exert an impact; philosophical texts, for example, display a higher amount of causal usages than novels.

Secondly, I investigated the causal usages of the connector *nachdem* in contemporary German. I studied the occurrences of *nachdem* in a corpus of Parliament discussions available within the German Reference Corpus (Deutsches Referenzkorpus, DeReKo). It turns out that in some language regions *nachdem* displays a similar ambiguity as *da* in the 18th century texts. Interestingly, the contexts exhibiting the causal sense resemble the initial contexts of causal *da*.

Overall, the results of my studies give new insights on the grammaticalization path from temporality to causality.

¹ Example cited from König/Traugott (1991:194).

References

Corpora

German Text Archive (Deutsches Textarchiv): <http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/>

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