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# **Grammatical categories and linguistic theory: elaborateness in grammar**

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Proceedings of Conference on  
**Language Documentation & Linguistic Theory 2**

Edited by Peter K. Austin, Oliver Bond, Monik Charette,  
David Nathan & Peter Sells

13-14 November 2009 School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

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ISBN: 978-0-7286-0392-9

This publication can be cited as:

Tania Kuteva. 2009. Grammatical categories and linguistic theory: elaborateness in grammar. In Peter K. Austin, Oliver Bond, Monik Charette, David Nathan & Peter Sells (eds) *Proceedings of Conference on Language Documentation and Linguistic Theory 2*. London: SOAS.

or:

Tania Kuteva. 2009. Grammatical categories and linguistic theory: elaborateness in grammar. In Peter K. Austin, Oliver Bond, Monik Charette, David Nathan & Peter Sells (eds) *Proceedings of Conference on Language Documentation and Linguistic Theory 2*. London: SOAS. [www.hrelp.org/eprints/ldlt2\\_03.pdf](http://www.hrelp.org/eprints/ldlt2_03.pdf)

# Grammatical categories and linguistic theory: elaborateness in grammar

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## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Kuteva and Comrie 2001 introduced the notion of elaborateness of marking a grammatical structure. The structure they focused on in that investigation was relative clause constructions. Thus in a survey of relativization strategies employed in the languages of Africa they came across a Mbam-Nkam language of Cameroon, Ngemba, which marks relative clauses by means of no less than five morphosyntactic segments:<sup>2</sup>

- (i) a relative conjunction/determiner (varying for number and nominal class);
- (ii) a complementizer marker *-bah*;
- (iii) pronoun-retention;
- (iv) a verbal suffix *-ne* (a multipurpose marker for topicalization, nominalization and relativization) a sentential definitizer *-la* (related to the determiner system), see Chumbow (1977: 296-297, 302).

This abundance of marking is illustrated in the following example. (The complementizer *-bah* is optional, the other four relativization markers are obligatory, however.):

- (1) Ngemba (Chumbow 1977: 290)
- |              |           |            |                     |             |           |           |          |
|--------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| <i>nyung</i> | <i>wá</i> | <i>bah</i> | <i>a-keshung-ne</i> | <i>mung</i> | <i>wa</i> | <i>la</i> | <i>a</i> |
| man          | REL       | bah        | he-TNS.beat-ne      | child       | DET       | la        | he       |
- kung*    *atsang*  
enter    into prison  
‘The man who beat the child went to prison.’

In the present paper I will argue that grammatical structures can be elaborate not only with respect to their expression but also with respect to their semantics. More precisely, here I will introduce the notion of *semantically elaborate grammatical categories*. I will argue that it is possible to distinguish between what – for lack of

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<sup>1</sup> I thank the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation as well as SOAS, University of London, for their generous support.

<sup>2</sup> All these frills of phonological substance accretion become even more spectacular if we recall that most of the world's languages employ exactly one – no more and no less! – marker for the relative clause construction (Comrie & Kuteva 2005).

a better term – I call (i) semantically straightforward grammatical categories and (ii) semantically elaborate grammatical categories.

The former are categories which belong to a single functional domain, e.g. temporality (past tense, future tense, hodiernal tense, hesternal tense, etc), or aspectuality (progressive, habitual, inchoative, etc.). It is also this kind of category that figures in comprehensive studies of how grammatical categories have emerged – and constantly re-emerge – in natural languages.

An example of a semantically straightforward category would be the simple past tense in its primary, i.e. deictic function:

(2) English

*The teacher arrived early this time.*

Unlike semantically straightforward grammatical categories, semantically elaborate ones – which are the focus of my interest here – involve more than one domain simultaneously. For instance, as I will show, a grammatical category can be related to aspectuality and temporality, and negation/counterfactuality at the same time.

Giving ample recognition to the phenomenon of semantically elaborate categories differs radically from the existing practice in the literature so far, and this is not surprising. As I will hypothesize here, the more semantically elaborate a notional category is – that is, the more specificities and richness of information it involves – the less likely it is for this category to receive a grammaticalized expression across languages.

Notice, however, that in the course of my discussion I will flesh out this hypothesis as a tendency and not as an either-or-dichotomy (see also Kuteva *forthc.*). My claim is that beside the semantically straightforward grammatical categories (e.g. temporal categories, modal categories) – which are the ones mainstream linguists have traditionally dealt with – there also exist semantically elaborate categories, which have remained largely under-researched in the literature.

For this purpose I will discuss two semantically elaborate categories from the functional domain of tense, aspect and mood, namely the avertive, and the *lest*-clause structure. Finally, despite the challenge of the task, I will propose a principled way to measure – at least in one particular type of situation – the elaborateness of semantics of one grammatical category relative to another.

## 2. THEORETICAL PRELIMINARIES

### 2.1. Grammatical categories

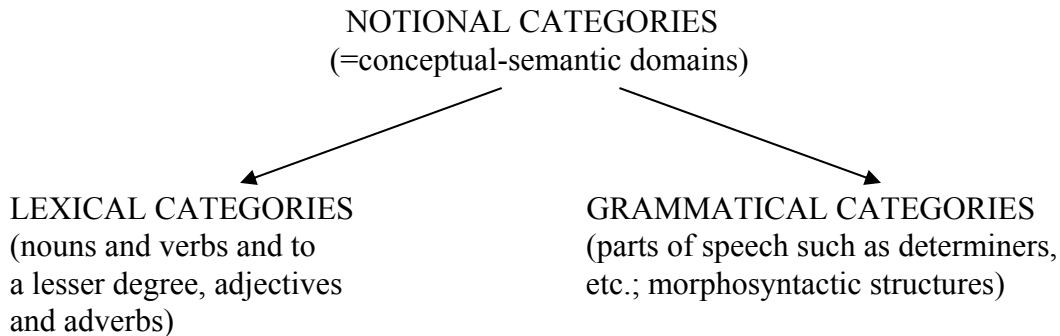
Here I will be referring to the following major types of category: lexical categories, grammatical categories and notional categories.

Notional categories – I will assume – are conceptual-semantic domains which are expressed either by lexical or by grammatical or by both lexical and

grammatical means in individual languages. Lexical categories have also been referred to as lexical classes or parts of speech. Grammatical categories are those notional categories which have received grammaticalized expression (that is, they are encoded by grammatical morphemes) in individual languages, see Fig. 1.

**Figure 1**

The relationship between notional, lexical and grammatical categories



Accordingly, I will be referring to lexical categories such as NOUN and VERB (for a discussion of why ADJECTIVE and ADVERB are categories but not as lexical as NOUNS and VERBS, see Heine and Kuteva 2007) on the one hand, and to grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, and mood (*features* in Ramat's 1999 terminology) as well as their concrete realizations (*values* in Ramat's 1999 terminology) such as past, present, future, progressive, habitual, etc.

### 2.2. Theoretical framework: grammaticalization theory

The theoretical framework for the present study is grammaticalization theory. I will be applying the methodology of grammaticalization theory in a way which is consistent with my previous work on grammaticalization (Kuteva 1998, 2000, 2001, Heine and Kuteva 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, see also Heine and Kuteva, *forthc.*). Accordingly, I will understand grammaticalization as a process which concerns the development from lexical to grammatical forms and from grammatical to even more grammatical forms and constructions. I will be referring to the lexical and the less grammatical structures as the 'sources', and to the more grammatical structures as the 'targets' of grammaticalization paths. I will assume that underlying the process of grammaticalization there is a cognitive mechanism whereby concrete and salient concepts serve as vehicles or structural templates to conceptualize less concrete and less readily accessible concepts – with the effect that linguistic expressions for concrete concepts, such as physical objects or actions, are recruited to express more abstract concepts. In this way, visible and tangible objects such as body parts or physical landmarks serve to express non-physical relations, such as spatial relations, and concrete actions serve as conceptual vehicles to express more abstract concepts describing the aspectual, temporal, or modal contours of events.

The process of grammaticalization can be illustrated by the development of the body part term *head* (as in *The baby has such a small head!*) into the temporal prepositional phrase *ahead of* (as in *ahead of time*) in English, where *head* is the source of the grammaticalization path and *ahead of* the target of that path.

### 3. SEMANTIC ELABORATENESS AND THE LEXICON

Here I will argue that semantically elaborate categories get expressed in the domain of the lexicon more often than in the domain of grammar.

According to Talmy (1985), some conceptual-semantic domains regularly get a grammaticalized expression across languages, e.g. tense, aspect and phase, causativity, valence/voice, mood, speech act type, etc.; while, other conceptual-semantic domains are not amenable to grammaticalization. Talmy (1985) argues that this latter group of domains includes speaker's state of mind (e.g. interested, bored), color of an event participant, spatial setting (e.g. indoors, outside), rate (e.g. slowly, quickly), degree of realization (e.g. almost, just barely).

It is not straightforwardly clear what it is that makes a conceptual-semantic domain likely or unlikely to receive a grammaticalized expression in language. If we take a closer look at the domains not amenable to grammaticalization, there are – at first sight at least – two possible interpretations. First, one may argue that the notions of the latter group do not lend themselves easily to grammaticalization because there would be too many conceptual-semantic values of the potential grammatical category to make such a category viable (or useful). For instance, there are too many members of the conceptual-semantic domain color (red, blue, white, black, etc), at least in more familiar languages. We have a similar situation with different states of mind of the speaker: a speaker can be active, passive, excited, inspired, interested, euphoric, angry, sad, bored, disappointed, encouraging, discouraging, etc. Second, there is too much subjectivity in-built in evaluating the specific value of the potential grammatical category. Let us take for instance, the conceptual-semantic domain of rate: what for one language user is a slow rate of performing an action may very well be judged as fast by another language user.

A look at the relevant literature reveals that no study so far has posed the question: What makes a conceptual-semantic domain amenable to grammaticalization? In other words, what should a conceptual-semantic domain be like in order for it become expressed by grammatical(ized) linguistic means?

What has been observed is something about the sources of grammaticalization: these involve basic level notions, as a rule. For example, it is usually verbs like 'go' or 'come', but not like 'crawl', or 'run', that regularly grammaticalize into future tense markers across languages (Heine and Kuteva 2002). When it comes to the target of grammaticalization developments, however, we still have not found a common denominator or characteristic(s) which the domains non-amenable to grammaticalization all share.

I hypothesize (see also Kuteva *forthc.*) that the answer to this question has to do with semantic elaborateness. It appears to be the case that the commonalities between the conceptual-semantic domains not amenable to grammaticalization have to do with the level of specificity: they are all rather specific in a sense in which the conceptual-semantic domains such as temporality, or aspectuality, or modality, for instance, are not.

It seems that the more semantically elaborate a notional category is, that is, the more specificities it involves, the less likely it is for this category to receive a grammaticalized expression.

A strong argument in favor of the above hypothesis comes from heterosemous expressions, i.e. expressions which have both lexical and grammatical functions. Here one can straightforwardly point out the difference in terms of semantic elaborateness between lexical and grammatical morphemes: when a linguistic expression comes to acquire a grammatical function in addition to its lexical one, the semantics of that expression in its erstwhile lexical function is richer, i.e. more elaborate than the semantics of the same expression in its grammatical function. The verb *do* in English presents an example of a functional morpheme – which used to be lexical only in Old English – and which has become less elaborate as it grammaticalized into the so called ‘dummy’ (or semantically ‘empty’) verb in interrogative and negative sentences. It is precisely developments like this that allow us to characterize grammaticalization as a process accompanied by what has been termed *semantic bleaching* in the literature on grammaticalization; lexical morphemes come to obtain grammatical functions over time and lose some of their initial semantics in the process. It should be only natural then to expect that – on a synchronic level – grammatical morphemes are semantically less elaborate than lexical ones.

In other words, the information that grammatical morphemes encode is less rich, less specific, less elaborate than the information encoded by lexical morphemes, compare for example the semantics of the plural grammatical morpheme *-s* (‘more than one’) and the semantics of the lexical morpheme *bachelor* (‘unmarried adult human male’).

Thus we can assume that grammatical categories are semantically less elaborate than lexical morphemes, that is, the following two correlations are easy to establish:

- (i) semantically elaborate expressions < - > lexicon and;
- (ii) semantically straightforward expressions < - > grammar.

Moreover, the above assumption is compatible with knowledge about grammaticalization developments that has been collected by students of grammaticalization already.

In the present study (see also Kuteva, *forthc.*) I argue, however, that the correlations in (i) and (ii) above do not represent an either-or-dichotomy. Rather, they represent a tendency. Thus in the following section I will show that

semantically elaborate categories can also get an expression within the domain of grammar (see also Kuteva, *forthc.*).

#### 4. SEMANTICALLY ELABORATE GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES

##### 4.1. *The avertive*

##### 4.1.1. *The avertive: grammatical category in its own right*

An example of a semantically elaborate category, which has only recently been identified as a cross-linguistic grammatical category, is the avertive (Kuteva 1998, Kuteva 2000, Kuteva 2001a). It is used only in past contexts and stands for a verb situation which was on the verge of taking place but did not take place ('was on the verge of V-ing but did not V'; here V stands for verb). Thus the avertive sits at the intersection of no less than three functional domains: temporality (it denotes pastness), aspectuality (it stands for a verb situation which was imminent), and modality (counterfactuality: the verb situation was not realized). In other words, it is a semantically elaborate category involving three meaning elements, past, imminent, and counterfactual:

- (3) Bulgarian  
*Štjax da padna.*  
 want.1SG.IMPERF to fall.down.PERF.1SG.PRES  
 'I nearly fell down.'

In Standard English, there is no grammaticalized verb construction which encodes avertive meaning. In some southern American dialects, however, there are still traces of an earlier, highly grammaticalized way of expressing the avertive meaning:

- (4) Southern American English (Kytö and Romaine 2006)  
*I liketa had a heart attack.*  
 'I almost had a heart attack.'

The avertive has also been identified in a number of African languages, e.g.:

- (5) Venda (Poulos 1990: 332)  
 (a) *Ndo toḁa u mu rwa*  
 I want.PERF INF him hit  
 'I wanted to hit him.'
- (b) Venda (Poulos 1990: 332)  
*Ndo toḁa- u mu rwa*  
 I want.PERF- INF him hit  
 'I nearly hit him.'

As Kuteva 2000 and Heine & Kuteva 2002 argue, this is an example of the grammaticalization of the volitional/purposive verb structure into an avertive.

The avertive has proved to be a very elusive category for a long time and it is highly plausible that – as I will show below – one of the reasons behind this has to do with the fact that in past contexts it comes close to yet another recently identified grammatical category, the proximative (see also Kuteva 2001a).

#### 4.1.2. *The avertive vs. the proximative*

The proximative has been noticed in a number of individual languages but has been traditionally considered a specific verb construction rather than a grammatical category. An exception to this practice is Comrie (1976: 64-5) and Comrie (1985: 95), who has not only pointed it out (under the names of *prospective*, and *immediate future*, respectively), but has, moreover, acknowledged that the form in question expresses a grammatical distinction. Later, Heine 1992 identified the proximative (which he first called an ‘almost’-aspect) as a full-fledged grammatical category across languages. König 1993 presented a further investigation of the same gram and proposed the term ‘proximative’ which has been adopted by Heine and his associates in a number of subsequent works (Heine 1994a, Heine 1994b, Heine and Kuteva 1995), cf. also Romaine 1999.

The proximative defines *a temporal phase located close before the initial boundary of the situation described by the main verb*. It indicates a moment shortly before the possible occurrence of the given verbal situation, with (crucially) *no* implication that the situation did not actually occur. Yet another essential characteristic of the proximative is that it can be used in both past and non-past contexts. In other words, the proximative is a purely aspectual gram, its essential semantic characteristic being *imminence*. Consider, for instance the examples from Ewe and Nandi, where the volitional verb ‘want’ has come to function as the auxiliary of the grammaticalized proximative construction e.g.:

- (6) Ewe (Kwa, Niger-Congo; Ameka 1990: 145)  
*tsi dí bé ye- a dza.*  
 water want that LOG- IRR fall  
 ‘It is about to rain.’ (Lit.: Water wants to fall.)

- (7) Nandi (Southern Nilotic, Nilo-Saharan; Chet Creider and Jane Creider, p.c., cited in Kuteva 2001b: 125)  
*mâ- ko- rárak- tà así:s(ta)*  
 want- 3- fall- ITV sun(NOM)  
 ‘The sun is about to set.’

Heine 1992, 1994a has shown that the most important characteristic of the proximative is that it is an aspectual notion. A corollary, and one that will prove crucial for our analysis, is that it can be used either in past contexts or in non-past contexts:



- (8) Swahili (Heine 1992)
- (a) *Ngoma i- na- taka ku- pasuka.*  
 Drum C9- PRES- want INF- split  
 ‘The drum is about to split.’
- (b) *Mvua i- li- taka ku- nyesha.*  
 rain it- PAST-want INF- rain  
 ‘It was about to rain.’

Likewise, consider the examples from Zulu, where *-cishe* is a form historically derivable from the verb ‘want’ and synchronically meaning ‘about to, almost, on the point of’:

- (9) Zulu (Bantu, Niger-Congo; Doke 1930: 203)
- (a) *Wa:-cishe wafa, wabuye wabangcono.*  
 ‘He was on the point of death when he recovered.’
- (b) *Ngicishe ngiwe*  
 ‘I almost fell.’
- (c) *Ngiyokucishe ngifike*  
 ‘I shall be on the point of arriving.’

Having outlined and exemplified the proximative, I will now try to determine how it differs from the avertive (see also Kuteva 1998, 2001a)<sup>3</sup>. The proximative and the avertive differ both in textual distribution and in semantics. Whereas the avertive can, typically, be used in past contexts only, the proximative can (as we have seen) be used in both past and non-past contexts. What makes it hard to readily recognize them as two distinct, even though closely related, grams is the partial functional overlap between them in past contexts. That is, the avertive (which is used in past contexts only) comes close to the proximative when the latter is used in the past. Let us take for example Zulu again. Examples like (10) demonstrate that this language has an avertive, which is encoded by means of the morpheme *-cishe* (deriving from a volitional verb):

- (10) *Nga:cishe ngawa*  
 ‘I nearly fell.’

In addition to the avertive, however, Zulu also has a proximative, which, too, uses the morpheme *-cishe* in its formal expression, cf. (9a) above. A comparison of the examples in (9a) and (10) shows both *formal* commonalities – that is, identical

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<sup>3</sup> Notice that in traditional linguistic descriptions the avertive and the proximative are not usually distinguished from one another, Comrie (1976: 64-65; 1985: 95) and Haiman (1980: 160) being notable exceptions.

formal expression which involves the morpheme *-cishe* and *functional/semantic* commonalities. This does not, however, mean that the proximative and the avertive should be taken as identical to each other, but only that they can be regarded as two distinct grams which overlap functionally in particular past contexts. Thus, the Zulu example in (9a) with the proximative being used in the past makes it clear that what is highlighted by the proximative (even when used in the past) is the imminence of the verb situation, its being on the verge of taking place in the past, rather than its counterfactuality. Even though the example in (9a) involves a verb situation which has been narrowly averted, it is the *imminence* of that situation in the past that is being foregrounded. Hence, (9a) exemplifies the proximative rather than the avertive. By contrast, (10) expresses something which was on the verge of happening but did not happen, and should therefore be analysed as avertive.

Finally, it may be pointed out that a number of languages have distinct conventionalized structures for expressing the avertive and the proximative, respectively. This strongly favours their analysis as two distinct grams rather than as contextual variants of the same single gram. Let us take as an example Koasati; here the avertive gram involves the suffix *-á:pi-*, (termed ‘modal’ by Kimball 1991), whereas the proximative is realized by means of the combination of the intention suffix *-á:hi* and the dubitative suffix *-má:mi-* (Kimball 1991: 183), cf.

- (11) Koasati (Muskogean; Kimball 1991: 196)  
*im- ho:pá:ci-l- á:pi- Vhco- k am- máтта- t*  
 3DAT- hurt-1SS- MODAL- HABIT- SS 1SSTATS- miss- PAST  
 ‘I almost injured him but I missed.’

- (12) Koasati (Kimball 1991: 183, 520)  
*máh hiná:p falánk- á:hi- má:m*  
 listen(INTJ.) lo awaken(SG)- INTENT- DUBIT  
 ‘Look! Lo! He is about to awaken.’

#### 4.2. The *lest*-clause

In this section I will discuss another grammatical structure, which – I will argue – also represents a case of a semantically elaborate grammatical category. Austin (1981: 224ff.) refers to this structure as the *lest*-clause in Diyari and Thirriari, and so does Dench (cf. the *lest*-construction in Dench (1988: 108ff.)) in his description of Martuthunira. Austin (1981: 224) defines the structure under discussion in the following way: ‘*Lest*-clauses basically serve to indicate some situation which the speaker considers to be unpleasant and which should be avoided. They are most commonly used as admonitions or threats but they are also used in giving warnings.’ He also points out that *lest*-clauses – which in Diyari and Thirriari are marked by the affix *-yat□i* – follow the main clauses on which they are dependent; most commonly the main clause verb will be inflected for the imperative mood. It is possible, however, to also have a tense inflexion for the

main clause verb. The following examples illustrate the *lest*-clause structure in Diyari:

(13) Diyari (Austin 1981: 225)

*ɲama- ø- ni- mayi/ yura puri- yaɲi*  
 sit- IMP- NM- EMPH 2PLS fall-LEST  
 ‘Sit down or you’ll fall.’

(14) Diyari (Austin 1981: 226)

*pulaŋa miŋka- ɲi kuɲi- ipa- yi ɲanali*  
 3DLO hole- LOC hide- TR- PRES 3PIO  
  
*ɲayi- yaɲi palpa- li*  
 see- LEST some-ERG  
 ‘(He) hides them in a hole lest some of the others see (them).’

Dixon (1980) uses the term *apprehesional* for roughly the same grammatical category in Yidiny. He describes it as an inflexion which specifically marks the verb of a subordinate clause, and denotes an undesirable event which is to be avoided; the main clause involves steps to be taken to effect the avoidance. It is expressed by two suffixes, *-l* (which is one of the non-past verb suffixes in Yidiny, see Dixon 1980: 380) followed by the suffix *-ji*:

(15) Yidiny (Dixon 1980: 380)

*Yiɲu waguɲa garba-ɲ gudaga- ɲgu bajaa- l-ji*  
 This.ABS man.ABS hide- PRES dog- ERG bite- APPR  
 ‘The man is hiding, lest the dog bite him (i.e. for fear that the dog might otherwise bite him).’

Dixon (1980: 380) points out that the ‘apprehensional’ can also be used in past contexts such as ‘I didn’t go across the muddy patch lest I slip down’. In other words, there is no temporal restriction on the use of this expression. Instead, there is the following restriction, which has to do with language (morphosyntactic) structure: the ‘apprehensional’ inflexion in Yidiny can only be used in subordinate clauses.

What is relevant for the present discussion is that *lest*-clauses:

- (i) denote undesirable verb situations that are/were to be avoided;
- (ii) are characterized by the following linguistic (i.e. morphosyntactic) restriction: they are used in subordinate clauses which more often than not involve irrealis semantics (they describe verb situations that are assessed as counterfactual rather than factual; hence the frequent similarity/identity of form between the expression of ‘apprehensional’ and irrealis semantics, see, for instance, Dixon (1980: 381)).

It is due to the facts in (i) and (ii) that I regard the *lest*-clause structure as semantically elaborate.

## 5. DISCUSSION: MEASURING SEMANTIC ELABORATENESS

Here I will argue that the semantic elaborateness of grammatical categories can be measured – in a principled way – in at least one type of situation: when the semantics of one grammatical category encompasses/includes the semantics of another grammatical category.

In other words, I will claim that even though it is hard to measure the semantic elaborateness of grammatical categories in absolute terms, it is possible to do so in relative terms.

### 5.1. *Semantics of use*

That it is hard to measure semantic elaborateness of grammatical categories – or of any linguistic structure for that matter – should come as no surprise, and the reason for this is very simple: there is no consensus in the literature on what meaning is, in the first place. Further, there is no consensus on whether it is justifiable to separate pragmatics from semantics.

For the purposes of the present study, I will distinguish between semantics (dealing with the meaning of linguistic expressions) and pragmatics (dealing with the use of linguistic expressions) but I will not be treating them as isolated from one another. On the contrary, I will be speaking of the *semantics of use*, rather than of *semantics vs. use*. This is the core of an approach to meaning which gives full recognition to the use of linguistic expressions in distinct types of context. It is elaborated on in Keller 2006, 2008 whom I will follow here. Keller, 2006, 2008 distinguishes between what a linguistic expression means and what a speaker means by a linguistic expression in a certain situation. Keller calls the former *meaning of an expression* and the latter *sense of an utterance* and points out that this distinction has nothing to do with the distinction that Frege makes between *Bedeutung* ‘meaning’ and *Sinn* ‘sense’ (Keller 2008: 3). Whereas the sense of an utterance becomes clear by explicating the intention with which it was uttered, the meaning of an expression can be described by formulating its *rule of use* (see also Wittgenstein 1968 on the idea that the meaning of a word is its rule of use). Accordingly, it is justifiable to speak of two distinct standpoints from which the same chunk of linguistic material can be viewed, whereby both of these involve use: (i) pragmatics of use (sense of an utterance) and; (ii) semantics of use (meaning of an expression).

In the present study I am interested in the latter only, i.e. the semantics of use. From that perspective the meaning of the English lexeme ‘woman’, for instance, constitutes the rule of its use: ‘apply this expression for an entity that is simultaneously female, human, and adult’. The rule of use of the adjectival suffix *-er* in English, on the other hand, is: ‘apply this suffix to quality-denoting words

when they simultaneously (i) express a higher degree of that quality in comparison to a standard, and (ii) are no longer than two syllables’.

*5.2. Domains of usage: first approximation to measuring semantic elaborateness*

What is crucial to the present discussion is the following distinction between five broad domains of usage (or *parameters of usage* in Keller’s terminology) that Keller 2006 makes (see also Radtke (1998: 49) with regard to the rules of use of linguistic expressions, that is, their meaning): (i) external world, (ii) world of feelings and attitudes, (iii) social world, (iv) linguistic world, and (v) world of discourse. Notice that in all five domains we are dealing with rules of use as social customs. It is because we know the social custom relevant to a linguistic expression, i.e. its rule of use, that ‘it is possible for us to find out (with the help of other knowledge of the world and the respective context) what a speaker means in a certain situation’ (Keller 2006: 10). In what follows I will briefly illustrate each of the five domains of usage.

*The domain of the external world* involves descriptive attributes of linguistic expressions. If a linguistic expression can be related to this domain, it means that its rule of use constitutes a social custom of talking about a particular portion of the external world. Thus to know what the word *boy*, for instance, means in English is to know that you can use this word to refer to a young male human being. In this case the meaning components ‘young’, ‘male’, and ‘human’ constitute the truth conditions as well as the descriptive attributes of the expression.

*The domain of feelings and attitudes* is about evaluative components of meaning, i.e. about adopting an approving or disapproving attitude to something, based on certain attributes. Most evaluative expressions also involve a descriptive component of meaning, that is, their rules of use fall – simultaneously – within (i) the domain of the external world and (ii) the domain of feelings and attitudes. As Keller (2006) points out, the English word *stingy*, for instance, is used to refer to a person with a particular descriptive attribute (being careful with money) from the former domain as well as a particular speaker’s attitude (disapproving) towards that person’s economic behavior. The latter is an evaluative component, which belongs to the domain of feelings and attitudes. Notice, however, that Keller also identifies linguistic expressions which only support an evaluative component of meaning, such as the adjective *good*. An example of *good* as an expression of only an evaluative element of meaning would be *This has been such a good day for me!*

*The domain of the social world* is about rules of use which relate to social customs such as politeness, for instance. Thus the Bulgarian expression *ako običaš/te* (lit. ‘if you love’), which corresponds to the English adverbial politeness modifier *please* – if used either with an imperative or interrogative clause – falls within the domain of the social world because its rule of use is: ‘use this expression in order to request something in a polite manner’ (Kuteva, *forthc.*).

*The domain of the linguistic world* is the world of those rules of use which have to do with language-specific use conventions. For instance, it is a specific

use restriction in English that the progressive aspect cannot be used with the mental verb *know* (Engl. \**I am knowing the answer*).

*The domain of the discourse world* encompasses rules of use which are relevant to discourse management. The use of the word *well...*, followed by a pause at the beginning of an utterance in English can serve as a pertinent example of a linguistic expression the meaning of which – that is, its rule of use – belongs in the domain of the discourse world.

Here I propose that we can use the number of domains of usage for a particular linguistic expression as a metric for the semantic elaborateness of that expression: The more domains of usage the expression's rule of use relates to, the more semantically elaborate that expression is. Thus there is one rule of use for every linguistic expression but a rule can be elaborate, i.e. it can involve more than one domain of usage. Therefore, rules of use – and accordingly, the linguistic expression they are linked to – can differ in terms of semantic elaborateness.

With respect to the categories under discussion here, a helpful diagnostic tool in measuring semantic elaborateness of a grammatical category would be to take into account whether that category can be related to one or more domains of usage. For instance, the *lest*-clause structure belongs not only to the domain of the external world (undesirable event, which is to be avoided) but also to the domain of language (use only in subordinate clauses). This very fact is sufficient enough for us to treat it as a semantically elaborate grammatical category.

### 5.3. *A caveat*

Notice, however, that once this first step of determining the number of domains of usage is taken, we need to determine the degree of elaborateness (or specificity) of the expression's rule of use, since an expression can have a differing number of meaning components irrespective of the number of the domains of usage. Thus even if an expression's rule of use falls within a single domain of usage, it is still possible for that expression to be semantically elaborate, depending on the level of specificity at which this expression is used. In other words, even within a single domain of usage, the more meaning components an expression has, the more semantically elaborate it is. The rule of use for the English word *bachelor* (based on the descriptive attributes male, human, adult, unmarried), for instance, belongs to a single domain of usage, the one of the external world. Likewise, the rule of use for the word *man* (based on the descriptive attributes male, human, adult) belong to the domain of usage of the external world. Since the expression *bachelor* is more specific – that is, it has more meaning components – than *man*, we can say that the former is more semantically elaborate than the latter. Further, in spite of the fact that they belong to a single domain of usage, each of these expressions is semantically more elaborate than the English word *stingy* – which only has two meaning components (one based on the descriptive attribute 'careful with money', and another based on the evaluative component 'speaker's disapproval') – even though the rule of use for *stingy* relates to two domains of usage, the external world, and the world of feelings and attitudes.

#### 5.4. *When can we measure the semantic elaborateness of a grammatical category?*

There is a sense – I propose – in which we can argue that grammatical categories such as the proximative, or the past, are not as semantically elaborate as the avertive, for instance, for the following reason. The rule of use of the avertive (involving the elements pastness, imminence, counterfactuality) subsumes the rule of use of the proximative (imminence) on the one hand, and on the other hand, the rule of use of the avertive subsumes the rule of use of the past (pastness) in its primary function as a deictic tense. Notice that comparing the avertive to the proximative on the one hand, and to the past on the other, represents the easiest case of comparing grammatical categories in terms of their semantic elaborateness (see Type-A situation below).

In other words, there exists a particular level of generality/specificity on which the avertive is more elaborate – semantically – than the proximative on the one hand, and the past, on the other.

Taking into account both the number of domains of usage and the level of generality/specificity, I propose that in measuring the semantic elaborateness of a linguistic expression – irrespective of whether it belongs to the lexicon, or the grammar, or somewhere between the two (i.e. irrespective of whether we are dealing with lexical or grammatical or lexico-grammatical expressions) – we are confronted with three types of situations, with the first being the easiest to assess in quantitative terms.

**Type A situation:** the rule of use of one expression may include the rule of use of another expression. For instance, the avertive is more elaborate – semantically – than the past since the rule of use for the avertive (involving pastness, imminence, and counterfactuality) includes the rule of use of the past in its primary, deictic function (pastness). The outcome of the comparison between the avertive and the past – in terms of semantic elaborateness – is then a straightforward one.

**Type B situation:** the rule of use of one expression may overlap – partially – with the rule of use of another expression. For instance, the avertive shares one meaning element with the *lest*-clause, namely counter-factuality. In order to determine then which of the two is more elaborate semantically, we will have to compare the number of the remaining meaning elements for each of the grammatical categories. In doing so both the relevance to a larger number of domains of usage as well as a higher level of specificity (a larger number of meaning elements within the domain(s) of usage) would indicate a higher semantic elaborateness.

**Type C situation:** the rule of use of one expression may include none of the meaning elements of the other expression. This situation type is similar to the previous situation type, the only exception being that there is no overlap in rules of use.

To sum up, whereas Type-B situation, and especially Type-C situation, present a challenge to measuring the semantic elaborateness of the grammatical categories involved, Type-A situation is easy to handle.

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