

Ilijana R. Čutura
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6815-1337>

Ivana R. Ćirković Miladinović
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9810-1106>
University of Kragujevac
Faculty of Education in Jagodina
Department of Philology

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GRAMMATICALIZATION AND OTHER RELATED PROCESSES

(exemplified by invariable words in the Serbian language)¹

Abstract: The paper analyzes grammaticalization in the context of and in relation to other processes—such as, on the one hand, decomposition, creating multi-lexical units (e.g. complex conjunctions, adverbial expressions, complex prepositions, etc.), and, on the other hand, univerbation and word-merging. The analysis incorporates the terminological and methodological system used in the studies and linguistic literature on the Serbian language. Research papers, directly or indirectly related to this topic, are used as the primary corpus. The main idea is to provide some insight into the processes that are gradual and that diverge or converge with the theory of grammaticalization. In this sense, the paper does not bring novel insights but rather provides an overview of available literature.

Keywords: grammaticalization, lexicalization, univerbation, decomposition, orthographic norm.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to systematize research focusing on the complex relations between grammaticalization and other related processes, such as lexicalization, univerbation, and the decomposition of lexical items, in the Serbian language. These processes result, on the one hand, in transforming a phrase into a lexical item, and on the other hand, in transforming a lexical item into a phrase. Therefore, they are generally considered to be opposites. However, the focus of this research is to emphasize that, despite their (apparent) oppositeness, there are firm linking principles among all these processes.

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The research was conducted using a descriptive method, involving procedures such as analyzing relevant research papers, content analysis, and synthesizing the results from a comparative perspective. Our approach offers an overview of recent research in this field and summarizes it, with a focus on our main topic. The analysis will include the terminology and methodological scope primarily formed in the studies of the Serbian language. However, due to the extensive research interest in each of the mentioned processes, the selection had to be restrictive. It is important to mention that the results and conclusions in the selected literature were derived from analyzing a sufficiently large corpus, which includes different functional styles (registers).

1.2. Contemporary literature emphasizes that the research interest in these processes is not recent, and that Meillet (in *L'évolution des formes grammaticales*, 1912) defined grammaticalization in the way in which it is still dominantly defined (Campbell, Janda 2001): according to him, the essence of grammaticalization is that the autonomous lexeme gets the role of a grammatical element. And, as these authors state, the discussion on important features of grammaticalization (the “weakening” of the meaning and phonetic changes) also starts with Meillet. Additionally, Haspelmath (1999), citing Bopp’s and Humboldt’s opinions, testifies that the interest in grammaticalization started a long time ago, even since the early 19th century. Decades later (in the 1970s, according to Haspelmath 1999), the researchers came back to this topic, but without reaching an agreement on the nature of grammaticalization and its features (Campbell, Janda 2001).

In the earlier phases of interest in grammaticalization, issues of its irreversibility (unidirectionality) were not given attention, as it was assumed to be self-evident (Haspelmath 1999: 1047). The arguments of some researchers (Ramat 1992; Harris, Campbell 1995) that the reversibility of grammaticalized items (“degrammaticalization”) is possible and systemic were opposed by emphasizing the fact that such cases are extremely rare. Besides, there are disputes regarding the temporal scope of grammaticalization. Lehmann (2004) opposes reducing grammaticalization to a merely diachronic process or placing it among historical phenomena: “The principle that variation is the synchronic manifestation of (diachronic) change applies to grammaticalization as it applies to analogy, assimilation, or just any linguistic process. Grammaticalization could never be a kind of diachronic change if it were not also a kind of synchronic variation” (Lehmann 2004: 154).

1.3. For our analysis, some of the most important features are lexicalization and semantic bleaching of lexemes, which become parts of grammaticalized junctures. We will elaborate on this later, by observing the relations between grammaticalization and other processes.

GRAMMATICALIZATION AND LEXICALIZATION, UNIVERBATION, DECOMPOSING

2.1. Lehmann (2002, 2004) discusses grammaticalization and processes related to it, specifically the connections between grammaticalization and lexicalization. His starting point is that it is necessary to limit the concept of grammaticalization itself, so that the grammaticalization would not be understood as grammatical change in general, or as the only way of forming grammatical items and structures. Lehmann (2004) speaks about analogy, reanalysis, conversion, and lexicalization as mechanisms that are, to a certain extent, in intersection with grammaticalization. But, as he points out, they are not necessarily interrelated. For us, it is crucial that Lehmann (2004) argues that the relation between grammaticalization and conversion can be defined by revising the traditional idea that there are “grammatical” and “less grammatical” lexical classes. Instead, the word in the same class can be more or less “grammatical”, which means that there is no assumption that a lexeme becomes “more grammatical” by simply converting it into another word class. Moreover, Lehmann states, “In many languages, prepositions are actually an open class just like nouns and verbs” (Lehmann 2004: 162).

2.2. This is also evident in the Serbian language, especially when we consider the models of preposition formation. They are either formed of complex (multilexemic) units, which become lexicalized at the diachronic level, or they are constructed as multilexical units at the synchronic level. The latter ones are constructed to express the complexity of logical and meaning relations, and are not being lexicalized. The same applies to adverbial expressions (i.e., multilexical adverbs) and complex conjunctions.

Therefore, we can say that we are dealing with a very broad and dynamic process that is being intensively researched. The nature of this process (which results in a lexicalized item with shifted meaning with respect to the original unit, or, oppositely, it leads to decomposition of a lexeme into its lexical and semantic components) shows connections between grammaticalization and decomposition. Moreover, it also reveals connections between the two mentioned processes, univerbation and lexicalization (for relations between decomposition and univerbation, see Radovanović 2004a).

Analysing complex prepositions, Bučar (2009: 188) states that grammaticalization precedes lexicalization because each expression goes through certain changes to become a new lexical item. As an example, Bučar (2009: 191) talks about the German preposition *aufgrund* (according to Lehmann 2004) and, later, considers secondary prepositions (i.e., derived expressions which are used in prepositional function). She concludes, referring to Lehmann (1991), that the formation of secondary prepositions through grammaticalization is typical and active in many Indo-European languages.

It is not always easy to define boundaries between secondary prepositions, complex prepositions, and (free) constructions, whether they are verbal or case forms. However, there are, undoubtedly, some indicators of their identification (Bučar 2009: 192–193), such as: the possibility of (semantically partial or complete) substitution by another prepositional expression or lexeme, possibility of use in another functional category, invariable order (and we would add lexical blocking) of constituents, phonological reduction (as in preposition *izuzev*), and, as a key indicator, de-semanticization (“bleaching”) which leads to a general and relational meaning of a multilexical unit (expression).

On the other side, there are also opposite claims that semantic generalization is a prerequisite, and not a consequence, of routinization and grammaticalization (Haspelmath 1999), or that semantic “bleaching” is neither a condition nor the most important feature of grammaticalization (Campbell 2001). Interestingly, there is a similar discussion on univerbation. Dragičević (2018: 112) states,²

The famous metaphor about univerbization as a form of semantic thickening or condensation [...] of two-part units into single items does not really hold true. If that were so, syntagms would completely give way to univerbs, and that is not happening. Our research shows that univerbization actually achieves semantic dilution and spilling, not condensation.

2.3. Semantic generalization, “bleaching” (or whichever term we use without prejudging the primacy or the secondaryness of this feature) is one of the key characteristics of grammaticalized units, which can be shown with adverbial expressions. They are generally non-referential, so that their syntagmatic subtype must be formed using a noun which is semantically general, neutral, and functions as a lexical exponent of category semantics (e.g., *mesto* [place], *vreme* [time]; see: Čutura 2009). In this sense, Ivić (2005: 73–81) and Dragičević (2008) speak about semantic underspecification, while Klikovac (1998: 20) speaks about explicit categorization, where categorial seme is regularly extracted by a semantically general noun. Radovanović, when discussing decomposed adverbs (i.e., those adverbial expressions which have their lexical equivalents), notes that the adverbial element of the decomposing lexeme becomes an adjective (determiner), and the general, inherent property of the concept (e.g., “quality”, “manner”) is extracted as a noun which is “necessarily abstract” (Radovanović 2004: 15).

To sum up, we deal with units like *ovde – na ovom mestu* [here – at this place], *tako – na taj/takav način* [thus – in that/this way] etc. Such units create the complex system and facilitate the development of other systems of interconnected multilexical items through very productive patterns.

Prepositional-pronoun subtype of adverbial expressions (e.g. *zbog toga, uprkos ovome*) is even more general in meaning because the whole unit is re-

² All quotes in this paper are translated by the authors.

duced into relational semantics. Prepositional and conjunctive expressions are very similar to adverbial ones in terms of meaning, and they are also created through similar patterns (forms). Kovačević notes that “anaphoric demonstrative pronoun, as the indicator of clause synsemanticity [...] may have any syntactic function” (Kovačević 2007: 54). That is why one of the types of such relations is realized by items which consist of a monosemic preposition or prepositional expression and a demonstrative pronoun (Ibid. 56).

The connection between this type of units (adverbial expressions) and complex subordinative conjunctions lies exactly in their constructional models. As Kovačević (1998: 234–245) emphasizes, the main connection is the constructional parallelism, which leads to the expansion of the conjunction system. In her very detailed analysis, Đurkin (2018) shares Kovačević’s views. We will shortly illustrate this with one example of complex conjunctions created through adverbial expressions (syntagmatic subtype): complex conjunctions with spatial meaning *na mestu gde* [on the place where] is created by chaining the noun *mesto* [place], mostly in locative form and in the function of the exponent of spatial semantics, and spatial pronominal adverb *gde* [where] (Đurkin 2018: 41–42). The further classification and description of similar complex conjunctions in other semantic fields prove that the nouns in all such units have categorical (and therefore, the broadest and the most general) meaning: *u/za vreme kad(a), u doba kad(a), za vreme dok, u trenutku dok, u trenutku/momentu pošto, na taj način što, na način kako* (Ibid.).

Concerning the semantics of lexical components of such units, it is particularly interesting that A. Belić points to very similar semantic properties, but from the opposite aspect (the origin and meaning of adverbs). He points out that adverbs always have a complex, “syntagmatic meaning”, despite their simple morphological structure, e.g., “on *lepo* peva” = “*lepim, prijatnim, dopadljivim načinom*” [He sings beautifully = He sings in a beautiful, pleasant, and likable manner] etc. (Belić 2000: 561; 2000a: 170). Lexical adverbs, as he emphasizes, have syntagmatic meaning, while adverbial expressions have a syntagmatic nature. Consequently, Belić concludes that adverbs are, diachronically speaking, “truncated” expressions from which the implied (therefore, general or categorical) lexeme was omitted. For example, *utom* came from *u tom momentu* (or similar), since the temporal noun could be easily omitted because it can be easily implied (Belić 2000: 170–171). As we can see, Belić’s work in the 1920s anticipates key aspects of lexicalization and grammaticalization, addressing both form and meaning. His insights also apply to the reverse process – forming multi-word units through decomposition or structural modeling. In this sense, it is significant that decomposition is in a specific relationship not only to semantic generality and lexicalization, but also, vice versa, to the process of “composing” multilexical units that do not have single-lexical equivalents.

Summarizing research findings, it is clear that the process of creating multilexical adverbial, prepositional, and conjunctive elements is as important and

frequent as their decomposition and lexicalization. Similarly, Dragičević (2018: 115–116, referring to Ćorić 2008) concludes that univerbs co-exist with their motivational phrasal lexemes, i.e., they do not displace them. It is not due to their use in different functional styles, but due to their semantic difference (ambiguous, contextual dependence vs. precise).

Therefore, neither univerbation nor grammaticalization nor decomposition should be seen as the processes that lead to displacing one type of units by another one, i.e., as one-way and progressive tendencies. They should rather be seen as modes of creating more complex (sub)systems of lexical and phrasal items, and as possibilities of expressing the same or similar semantic content in different ways (see also Nedeljković 2022).

2.4. This fully applies to systems of multi-lexical adverbial, prepositional, and conjunctive units in Serbian, which do not have lexical equivalents. Such units, therefore, fill “empty places” in different semantic (sub)fields. In these cases, certain morphosyntactic patterns are grammaticalized, and they become compensatory mechanisms for filling out lexical gaps. On the other hand, such patterns, once created, also act in the opposite direction – by “breaking down” (decomposing) lexical units, leading, finally, to the alternative use of multi-lexical units and single lexemes.

2.5. Decomposition in the Serbian language was brought into focus by M. Radovanović. He researched the decomposition of predicates first and foremost (Radovanović 1977: 53–86). M. Ivić (1995a: 180–187) deals with decomposition, while Tanasić (2005) expands the matter of decomposing predicates onto decomposing verbs in any function. Radovanović and Klikovac view decomposition as a stylistic phenomenon, linking it to functional styles and features of bureaucratic language (Klikovac 1999; 2000: 14–18). Radovanović (2004) also connects nominalization to a broader concept of cognitive style. A similar perspective is found in the work of Ivić (1995) and Popović (1966), who approach the phenomenon from cognitive and pragmatic perspectives, emphasizing its role in expressing nuanced meanings and reflecting developments in science and public communication.

2.6. However, it is clear that the determinative *decomposed* in the terms *decomposed adverbials/prepositions/conjunctives* is restrictive. It denotes only those multi-lexical units which are obtained by semantic and morphological “splitting” of one lexeme into a multi-lexical structure. Such terms do not cover multi-lexical items that do not have lexical equivalents, but constructionally are the same as decomposed ones.

They are composed using the same prepositional-case forms, which are limited. Furthermore, they are lexically almost completely restricted (“blocked”), allowing a very restrictive possibility of interpolating an optional lexeme (e.g., *iz ovih razloga – iz svih ovih razloga* [for these reasons – for all these reasons]). Here we can refer to Prčić’s analysis of phrasal nouns. He points out that a phrasal

lexeme is formally a syntagm, but “in terms of function, content and use, it behaves like a word” (Prčić 2011: 59).

It is also important to note that the terms as *decomposed adverb* imply that an equivalent single lexeme (adverb in this example) is primary, i.e., that it is a necessary “starting point” in the creation of a multi-lexical unit. However, both diachronically and synchronically, there is an opposite process going on (analogously about prepositions, see Popović 1966: 195–196).

On the one hand, as we already pointed out, the process of merging multi-lexical adverbs, conjunctions, and prepositions into one lexical item is very active; however, on the other hand, many constructions “resist” lexicalization, especially preposition+noun constructions (Klajn 2002: 139). This leads to non-stable orthography (see Babić 2019; Brborić 2012; Dešić 2019; Kovačević 2011; Kovačević 2019; Čutura 2019). From the aspect of grammaticalization and lexicalization, this can be seen as a phase of staggering, as it is sometimes explicated in introductory paragraphs in: Pravopis (1960: 84, it. 98); Pravopis (1964: 68). Therefore, the distinction between a lexeme and its phrasal equivalent is merely an orthographic difference (Piper 1988: 10–11; Stevanović 1991 I: 378). Of course, such fluctuations exist in other languages as well: for example, *sonst wie* and *zurzeit* (German) have changed their status oppositely (from the previous orthographic solutions *sonstwie* and *zur Zeit*) (Nedeljković 2023). It is also clear that this instability in Serbian is caused by the accentual properties of such constructions. Namely, lexicalization is strongly supported in the Serbian dialects in which the accent moves to a proclitic (preposition).

Whatever possible causes are involved, we can say that lexicalization is often (but sometimes unstably) regulated by orthographic norm, because of the absence of unequivocal criteria which could regulate such vivid processes (Čutura 2013).

2.7. Now we will shortly consider multi-lexical units that do not show this kind of vacillation, and which are either only partially replaceable by their mono-lexical equivalents, or not replaceable at all. Here we deal with (sub)systems of adverbial, conjunctive, and prepositional expressions, which are, in many cases, derived from each other. Therefore, they share the same components and are analogous in structure.

The reason for the high productivity and grammaticalization of their structural models might be the low productivity of the word formation models for prepositions and conjunctions. Klajn (2002: 139–140) states that there are few real compounds among conjunctions in Serbian (*iako, mada, premda* – all of them meaning “although”; the other compound conjunctions are archaic). Klajn also stated that there are only two types of compound conjunctions: (1) preposition+preposition type (e.g., *ispod, ispred, između, izvan*) and (2) preposition+noun type (e.g., *navrh, povrh, ukraj*). Prepositions created by conversion (from nouns in nominative/accusative or instrumental form) also do not form a group of significant scope (*vrh, čelo, dno, m(j)esto, kraj, duž; pomoću, posredstvom*, etc.). This group includes a small

number of lexemes that function as prepositions or adverbs (such as *blizu, posl(ij)e, pr(ij)e, više, niže, preko, van*) (Klajn 2003: 386–387; Mitrović 2023).

Finally, although the structural models of creating adverbial expressions are numerous and productive, it has been proven, at least in the field of non-pronominal adverbs with spatial meaning, that the specificity of the Serbian language compared to Russian is their less frequent use. In Serbian, this is compensated by the use of other word classes, and, most often, by the use of prepositional-case constructions in all meanings related to the kinetic aspects (Medenica 2014: 255). Also, compared to mono-lexical conjunctions, a large number of productive structural models are noted for creating complex conjunctions of all semantic fields (local, temporal, modal, comparative, conditional, causal, exceptional, final, concessive, specificative, see: Đurkin 2018). Kuburić Macura (2021) provides an extensive overview of models of expressing concessiveness, which confirms that the participation of multi-lexical units is exceptionally significant. The types of those units are different: adverbial expressions, conjunctions followed by a semantic verifier or multi-lexical conjunctions, e.g., *pa ipak, pa i pored svega toga, and a opet*. Kovačević (2012) states that the same applies to causal semantic fields. Additionally, Kovačević's analysis is important because it is the first clear establishment of almost schematic models of grammaticalization in the Serbian language. According to him, “causal pronominal adverbs are in direct generative relations with prepositional-case causative constructions. The grammars, as a rule, state only the following pronominal adverbs: *zato, stoga, and zašto*, which are formed of prepositions and the case form of the pronoun (*za+to, s+toga, za+što*). [...] Causal adverbial expressions (which are most often studied as case syntagms in Serbo-Croatian linguistics) are directly connected with them, as their functional and semantic equivalents. Causal adverbial expressions differ from pronominal adverbs only because the connection between the preposition and demonstrative pronoun is not lexicalized, but the relation between those elements is so strong that it can hardly be broken by any other lexeme – it is almost blocked” (Kovačević 2012: 57–58).

Complex conjunctions are formed in the next step, based on the adverbial expressions system, and “those conjunctions can only be formed through cataphorically used adverb or adverbial expression by ‘merging’ with a basic conjunction *što* or *da* (e.g. *zato što, usled toga što, zahvaljujući tome što, s obzirom na to da*, etc.)” (Kovačević, 2012: 58; similarly, about the semantics of linkers: Klikovac 2008). Kovačević also highlights that the number of causal pronominal adverbs is small, and that adverbial expressions, contrary to monolexical adverbs meaning general causality, can express more specific relations. This is also confirmed for German causal and causally-final periphrastic adverbs (Nedeljković 2012a; 2012b).

CONCLUSION

If we accept, as a starting point, that the creation of productive models of adverbial expressions, complex conjunctions and prepositions often involves multi-level grammaticalization, we can assume that it is due to: (a) a small number of lexemes with specific meanings, (b) the ability of multi-lexical units to express certain meanings more precisely, and (c) the productivity of models of creating such multi-lexical units.

Besides, the grammaticalization of adverbial, prepositional, and conjunctive expressions is inextricably connected to the grammaticalization of clausal types.

These expressions are particularly important in semantic (sub)fields in which there are absolutely no monolexical items. Speaking of adverbial expressions as starting items for the formation of complex conjunctions, there are no lexical adverbs in Serbian in the (sub)fields of following semantics: a) intentionality/purpose, b) circumstances, c) exception, d) concessiveness, e) substitution, f) addition, g) contrast (Čutura 2010; 2020: 266–275).

Finally, we established a clear link between decomposition and “composing” as a process of forming a stable multi-lexical unit without a mono-lexical equivalent. We conclude that Serbian researchers find multi-lexical units far more numerous than mono-lexical ones, semantically more nuanced, and much more productive in creating similar units in other classes. Moreover, if we refer to Lehmann’s argument that “complex units may be grammaticalized without having been lexicalized” (Lehmann 2002: 15), we can speak about two-level grammaticalization in Serbian. At the first level, grammaticalized adverbial expressions are constructed following the model of semantical and morphological decomposition of lexical units. Such models also create expressions which do not exist as lexical items, filling the gap even in whole semantic (sub)fields, and, at the second level, producing multilexical prepositions and conjunctions.

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Илијана Р. Чутура

Ивана Р. Ћирковић Миладиновић

Универзитет у Крагујевцу

Факултет педагошких наука у Јагодини

Катедра за филолошке науке

ГРАМАТИКАЛИЗАЦИЈА У КОНТЕКСТУ ДРУГИХ ЈЕЗИЧКИХ ПРОЦЕСА

(на примеру непроменљивих речи српског језика)

Резиме: У раду је, на основу анализе и синтезе резултата релевантних истраживања, а на примеру непроменљивих речи у српском језику, дат преглед разма-траних појава које се могу посматрати у контексту граматикализације. Разматран је и саоднос граматикализације и других, сродних или опозитних појава у језику. С једне стране, реч је о процесима декомпозиције, креирању мултилексемских јединица (на пример сложених везника, прилошких израза, сложених предлога и сл.) и – с друге стране – универбације и „улексемљења”. Анализа је обухватила терми-нолошки и методолошки систем србистике и лингвистике, и као примарни корпус научне радове који су се директно или посредно бавили овом темом. Показује се да

наведене појаве заокупљају значајну пажњу истраживача, те да су посматране са различитих аспеката, односно у светлу више лингвистичких поддисциплина.

Кључне речи: граматикализација, лексикализација, универбација, декомпоновање, ортографска норма.