
SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE 22ND DIACHRONIC
GENERATIVE SYNTAX CONFERENCE:
INTRODUCTION

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This special issue is a collection of papers originally presented at the 22nd Diachronic Syntax Conference (DiGS) and its satellite workshop on Syntactic Change in Progress (SCiP).¹ Originally scheduled to take place in Konstanz in mid-2020, like so many events at that time, the conference had to be rescheduled, eventually taking place online, 19th–22nd May 2021. Organizing a fully online conference at that time was still a relatively new challenge, and came with a number of disadvantages, especially as regards social interaction: conference attendees were invited to relax on the shores of an 8-bit version of Konstanz’s famous lake, in a Gather space. Nevertheless, the technology held up, and the quality of contributions remained very high. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the reviewers for the conference, the workshop, and this special issue, for helping to sustain this high level of quality, as well as our student assistants Sarah Einhaus, Chiara Rieger, and Laura Weisshaar. For financial support we are indebted to funding provided by the ERC as part of the project STARFISH.²

The thirteen papers in this special issue are a subset of those presented at the conference, and have all undergone full peer review. In these papers we see syntactic change being dealt with from a variety of perspectives and in a variety of languages. The issue opens with a paper by Sali A. TAGLIAMONTE & Laura RUPP, ‘Legacies of syntactic change in a conservative dialect,

1 For more information about DiGS and its history, see Crisma & Longobardi (2021) and the list of conferences at <http://walkden.space/digs/>.

2 Sociolinguistic Typology And Responsive Features In Syntactic History (project number 851423). More details can be found at <https://www.ling.uni-konstanz.de/en/walkden/starfish/>.

York, England', dealing with the zero definite article in York English, and making the case for the complementarity of different methods and subdisciplines: historical linguistics, syntactic theory, dialectology, and variationist sociolinguistics. Anne BREITBARTH'S paper 'V3 after central adverbials in German: continuity or change?' also brings data from present-day acceptability judgements and corpora to bear on a question of diachronic syntax, finding that the increasing acceptance of verb-third orders may herald a change in progress.

Continuing with the theme of V2 and V3, the paper by Ailís CURNANE & Espen KLÆVIK-PETTERSEN deals with 'The role of the conservative learner in the rise and fall of verb-second' in two settings: one present-day (Germanic urban vernaculars) and one further back in time (Old French). Another paper that bridges older and present-day syntax is by Afra PUJOL I CAMPENY, 'The emergence and syntax of *sí que* in Catalan' – a story that starts with the grammaticalization of Latin SIC and ends with an emphatic assertion construction in Modern Catalan. Silvia TERENCEHI'S paper 'Last in, first out' documents and analyses patterns of reduction in demonstrative systems, also taking a pan-Romance perspective and proposing a structural principle governing feature loss in this domain. The paper 'Indirect passives in English and Greek', by Morgan MACLEOD, Elena ANAGNOSTOPOULOU, Dionysios MERTYRIS and Christina SEVDALI, investigates the development of this uncommon syntactic property in corpora of historical English and Greek, demonstrating that both languages pass through a stage where the indirect passive is lexically restricted to specific verbs.

A classic question that has been of interest to the DiGS community for many years³ is the relationship between syntax and morphology, and this collection contains several papers that deal with this relationship. 'The loss of morphology and the emergence of analytic structures in Chinese', by Barbara MEISTERERNST, proposes a split-VP structure underlying Archaic Chinese derivational morphology, and that the loss of this morphology was part of a broader typological change from synthetic to analytic. Laura GRESTENBERGER'S paper 'The diachrony of verbalizers in Indo-European: where does *v* come from?' also deals with the reconstruction of derivational morphology; adopting a Distributed Morphology perspective, she argues that morphological change, like syntactic change, is characterized by upward reanalysis.

The next two papers address the connection between morphology and syntactic movement. Edith ALDRIDGE'S paper 'The loss of object focus and wh-movement in Early Middle Chinese' proposes a link between the loss of the genitive particle and the loss of object focus fronting. Guido MENSCHING

³ See e.g. the papers in Lightfoot (2002), and Biberauer & Walkden (2015: 6–9) for discussion.

investigates ‘The Old Sardinian quantifier *tottu* “all”’, which displays peculiar agreement properties, and provides a Minimalist analysis. Meanwhile, ‘*Laissez-faire* analogical change’, by Jordan KODNER, takes on the many-headed hydra of analogy in morphological change, making the case via mathematical modelling and simulations that input sparsity must play a crucial role.

Mathematical and computational modelling of language acquisition and use, and how this can lead to change – as in Kodner’s paper – is a somewhat newer trend within the DiGS literature, but one that is well represented in this special issue. Henri KAUHANEN’s paper ‘Grammar competition, speaker models and rates of change’ critically reappraises the Constant Rate Hypothesis of Kroch (1989), addressing the question of how to choose between different models and adopting an information-theoretic model selection technique. Information theory is also central to Sophia VOIGTMANN & Augustin SPEYER’s contribution ‘Where to place a phrase? An informational and generative approach to phrasal extraposition’, which investigates the placement of prepositional phrases in Early New High German and assesses the effects of length and of Information Density.

The introduction of quantitative sophistication into diachronic generative syntax owes much to one man: Anthony (Tony) Kroch, one of the founders of DiGS, who sadly passed away shortly before the 2021 conference.⁴ Much of the corpus-based work presented in these pages would be impossible without the series of parsed corpora that Tony and his students and colleagues initiated. At the DiGS 2021 business meeting it was agreed that this special issue would be dedicated to his memory.

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⁴ Santorini (2021) provides an obituary in the journal *Language Variation and Change*, of which Tony was again one of the founders.

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