

Priming effects in diachronic corpus studies: what to expect and how to measure it? (Freek Van de Velde, KU Leuven)

The potential relevance of priming effects for language change has been pointed out repeatedly (Jäger & Rosenbach 2008; Hilpert & Correia Saavreda 2016; Pickering & Garrod 2017; Mair 2017). As a psycholinguistic concept, priming has been mainly tested in laboratory settings, or synchronic corpora, rather than in historical corpora, and the claim appears to be that priming will lead to a frequency increase, and that increased frequency will contribute to routinization, and from there to grammaticalization and lexicalization.

If that is correct, priming may act as a diagnostic for grammaticalization or lexicalization. But here, confusion arises: should we expect highly grammaticalized forms to occur in the vicinity of priming words? Or do we rather expect highly grammaticalized forms to be *less* responsive to priming, as they become discursively secondary (Boye & Harder 2012), and more routinized (Haiman 1994). I will argue that the latter is the case, and this might also explain why Hilpert & Correia Saavreda (2018) unexpectedly find results that go against Jäger & Rosenbach's claim.

I will discuss different case studies in support of this view, also highlighting how we can operationalize priming in diachronic corpus studies. The first case study (De Smet & Van de Velde 2017) deals with *-ly* adverbs in English, and argues that there is an inverse correlation between the occurrence of priming words and the frequency of the word, which in turn is related to lexicalization/grammaticalization. The second case (De Troij & Van de Velde 2020) deals with the *soort*-construction in Dutch, a member of the SKT-family that is familiar from English as well (Keizer 2007, Ch.7). The third case study (Petré & Van de Velde 2018) deals with English *be going to*. The latter two case studies focus on the use of 'dispersion' (Gries 2008) as a quantitative measure for priming effects in diachrony.

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