

Borbála Samu: *Modal verbs in L2 Italian of English speakers: grammaticalization, lexicalization and polysemy copying*
Università per Stranieri di Perugia

Modal verbs, and modality in general, are well represented in grammaticalization studies. However, grammaticalization of modal means has been studied mainly in a diachronic perspective. This study investigates if some instances of linguistic development in the acquisition of Italian as a second language might be considered as a phenomenon of grammaticalization and discusses at what extent language change might parallel second language learning processes.

Giacalone Ramat (1992: 300) observes some cases in learner Italian where lexical elements develop into new grammatical tools, unavailable in standard Italian. She mentions the shift of the adverbs *sempre* 'always' to aspectual marker of continuity and *forse* 'perhaps' to epistemic marker. This study illustrates some cases in the domain of root modality, where some verbal constructions in the interlanguage develop deontic meanings, non-existent in the target language. The data are drawn from a learner corpus created *ad hoc* in order to investigate how English-speaking learners acquire modality in Italian. The examples (1)-(3) show the deviant uses, where an Italian native speaker would have employed the modal verb *dovere* 'must/have to/need to'.

- (1) ...ma non **hai andare** al ginnasio
(lit.) 'but you do not have to go to the gym'
- (2) ...**non vuole dare** il suo figlio cattivo *stimulation*
(lit.) 'you do not want to give bas stimulation to your son'
- (3) Amica, **hai bisogno** di diventare (...) meno grasso
(lit.) 'My friend, you need to become thinner'

Learners at a high level of competence abandon the deviant modal uses of the constructions *avere* 'to own/to have'+ infinitive (ex. 1), *non volere* 'do not want' + infinitive (ex. 1) and *avere bisogno di* 'to need/to require/have need to' + infinitive (ex. 3). If we consider the development of the interlanguage independent from the L1, we might regard at these examples as cases of grammaticalization or lexicalization. However, it is reasonable to assume that we are facing what Heine and Kuteva (2005) indicate as 'polysemy copying'. In fact, similarly to languages in contact, there are cases of grammatical transfer in L2 where an analysis in terms of polysemy copying (or grammatical calquing) provides the most plausible hypothesis.

The corpus offers also positive examples where we assist to actual grammaticalization/lexicalization processes. The data show that in epistemically modalized contexts root modal verbs may gradually acquire epistemic meaning, at advanced stages of the interlanguage development. The most typical epistemic contexts in the corpus are represented by lexical expression such as *io penso* 'I think' (ex. 4) or adverbs like *forse* 'perhaps' and *probabilmente* 'probably'.

- (4) se lui ha un cane sul metro, **penso** che (...) **deve essere** un cane di servizio
'if he have a dog on the metro, I think that it must be a service dog'

Similar contexts can be found in the Pavia corpus (ex. 5):

- (5) +++ io **penso** queo che sono: a:l u(l)timo acuni **possono scendere** a / a li at(r)i
+ possono ghiridare fuori pere: chied(e)re aiuto
'I think that those who are at the last (floor), some of them can come down, the others can shout out to ask for help'

In Functional Discourse Grammar terms (Hengeveld & Mackenzie 2008), the most favourable contexts are those where the modal verb at the layer of the State-of-Affairs description (event-oriented modality) combines with an expression of subjective evaluation at the layer of the Propositional Content (subjective epistemic modality), with a scope over the State-of-Affairs. These types of utterances are crucial for observing the development of epistemic meanings, because they could replicate the shift from root to epistemic, well documented in the history of modal verbs (for ex. in Goossens (1982) and in Traugott (1989)). In the corpus this shift is gradual, first observed in advanced-intermediate speakers and the first context-independent uses of epistemic modal verbs are found at the C1 level. The same process can also be observed in learners whose first language has no polysemic modal verbs, but separate tools to express radical and epistemic modalities. These facts confirm the hypothesis that we are not dealing with polysemy copying, but with true instances of grammaticalization.

- Auwera, Johan van Der & Plungian, Vladimir A. (1998), *Modality's semantic map*, in "Linguistic Typology" 2.1, pp. 79-124.
- Benincà, Paola & Poletto, Cecilia (1997), *The diachronic development of a modal verb of necessity*, in Kemenade, Ans van & Vincent, Nigel (eds.), *Parameters of morphosyntactic change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 94-118.
- Bernini, Giuliano (1995), *Lexical expression of modality in second languages: the case of Italian modal verbs*, in Giacalone Ramat, Anna & Crocco Galèas, Grazia (eds.), *From Pragmatics to Syntax. Modality in Second Language Acquisition*, Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag, pp. 295-318.
- Giacalone Ramat, Anna (1992), *Grammaticalization processes in the area of temporal and modal relations*, in "Studies in Second Language Acquisition" 14, pp. 297-322.
- Giacalone Ramat, Anna (1999), *Grammaticalization of modality in language acquisition*, in "Studies in language", 23.2, pp. 377-407.
- Goossens, Louis (1982), *On the Development of the Modals and of the Epistemic Function in English*, in Ahlqvist, Ander (ed.), *Papers from the 5th International Conference on Historical Linguistics*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 74-84.
- Goossens, Louis (1999), *Metonymic bridges as modal shifts*, in Panther, Klaus-Uwe & Radden, Günter (eds.), *Metonymy on Language and thought*, Amsterdam: Benjamins, pp. 193-210.
- Heine, Bernd & Kuteva, Tania (2005), *Language Contact and Grammatical change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heine, Bernd & Narrog, Heiko (2011) (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Grammaticalization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hengeveld, Kees & Mackenzie, Lachlan J. (2008), *Functional Discourse Grammar*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hopper, Paul & Traugott, Elisabeth C. (1993), *Grammaticalization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs (1989), *On the rise of epistemic meanings in English: an example of subjectification in semantic change*, in "Language" 65.1, pp. 31-55.