

Exaptation

In evolutionary biology, the term ‘exaptation’ is used for the co-optation of a certain structure for a new function, a typical example being the use of feathers, originally a thermo-regulatory device, for flight. The term was borrowed into linguistics by Roger Lass, who (1990:80) defines it as ‘the opportunistic co-optation of a feature whose origin is unrelated or only marginally related to its later use.’ Lass originally understood exaptation in a narrow sense, as changes affecting functionless (‘junk’) morphology, resulting in a ‘novel’ function, but both functionlessness and novelty have been challenged (e.g. Vincent 1995, Smith 2006), to the effect that the definition of exaptation has been broadened to ‘[t]he re-use of morphological markers’ (Booij (2010: 211)). This definition, in turn, has raised the question of whether exaptation can still be said to be a meaningful concept (De Cuypere 2005).

In this workshop, we aim to explore a number of issues that have been raised in relation to exaptation, including the following questions: (i) is exaptation a separate type of change or does it reduce to more traditional mechanisms such as reanalysis and analogy? How does exaptation relate to such concepts as ‘regrammaticalization’ or ‘hypoanalysis’?; (ii) is exaptation indeed irregular and unpredictable, and hence infrequent and language-specific?; (iii) is ‘novelty’ a useful criterion for a change to be qualified as exaptation? And if it is, does it refer to (a) an entirely new category in the grammar, (b) a function unrelated to the morpheme’s old function, or (c) a different though perhaps not totally unrelated function from the old function?; (iv) what is the relation between exaptation and (de)grammaticalization? Does exaptation always result in degrammaticalization, or is it, on the contrary, the final stage in grammaticalization? These questions will be addressed in both empirically oriented and theoretically oriented papers.

References

- Booij, G. 2010. *Construction morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
De Cuypere, L. 2005. Exploring exaptation in language change. *Folia Linguistica*

Historica 26: 13-26.

Lass, R. 1990. How to do things with junk: Exaptation in language evolution. *Journal of Linguistics* 26: 79-102.

Smith, J.C. 2006. How to do things without junk: The refunctionalization of a pronominal subsystem between Latin and Romance. In *New perspectives on Romance linguistics. Volume II: Phonetics, phonology and dialectology*, edited by J.-P.Y. Montreuil, 183-205. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Vincent, N. 1995. Exaptation and grammaticalization. In *Historical linguistics*, edited by H. Andersen, 433-445. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Projected participants and their paper titles

Norde, Muriel & Freek Van de Velde. 'Introduction'

Smith, John Charles. 'Adfunctionalization: a missing term in the science of form' Part A

Smith, John Charles. 'Adfunctionalization: a missing term in the science of form' Part B

Booij, Geert. 'The re-use of inflectional markers in Dutch constructions: exaptation and hypoanalysis'

Dammel, Antje. 'Refunctionalizing inflectional classes - a case of exaptation'

De Cuypere, Ludovic. 'On the applicability of exaptation in linguistic theory'

Joseph, Brian. Title: TBA

Nair, Gopinathan. 'On Exapation and Grammaticalization'

Narrog, Heiko. 'Exaptation in Japanese'

Scott, Alan. 'The relationship between possessive -s and the genitive case in German'

Simon, Horst. 'What happens if you do things with non-junk? Consequences of exaptation for morphological paradigms'

Szczepaniak, Renata. 'Is the development of linking elements (in German) a case of exaptation?'

Tarpen, Marie-Lucie. 'Exaptation by cooption: the new Coast Tsimshian "preposition [da]"'

Van de Velde, Freek. 'Exaptation in Germanic verbal inflection: rescuing morphology in times of system breakdown'

Vincent, Nigel. 'Partial exaptation: feature reassignment in morphological change'

Willis, David. 'Degrammaticalization and exaptation: Lexical futures for disintegrating paradigms'.