The diachrony of nominalization and nominalizers

Over the past decades, nominalization has been the object of renewed attention in typologically oriented studies. While traditionally investigated in relation to subordinate clauses, word formation, and parts of speech classes (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993, Croft 1991 and 2001, Hengeveld 1992, Malchukov 2004, Comrie and Thompson 2007), nominalization has been shown to play a pervasive role in a wider variety of grammatical domains cross-linguistically. For example, the reanalysis of consructions involving nominalizations can give rise to new alignment, TAM, voice and word order patterns (Gildea 1998, Yap and Wrona 2011, among others). The ellipsis of a main predicate taking a nominalized complement can lead to a pattern where the latter is used independently to convey the meaning originally associated with the construction as a whole, for example background information, various types of modal meanings (wishes, requests, commands, obligation, possibility), exclamations, or hot news (insubordination: Evans 2007, Mithun 2008, Cristofaro to appear).

While these phenomena highlight several diachronic processes applying to nominalizations (in terms of reanalysis of the syntactic structure of the construction, or extension of individual constructions from one context to another), research on nominalization has mainly remained synchronically oriented so far. General studies of nominalization have produced classifications of the synchronic structural and semantic properties of different nominalization types, in terms, for example, of argument structure, presence vs. absence of dedicated morphology, or the entity type denoted by the construction (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993, Malchukov 2004, Comrie and Thompson 2007). Studies focusing on nominalization in individual languages also usually describe the synchronic range of contexts in which particular nominalizations are used in the language, sometimes pointing to possible paths of extension from one context to another. Comparatively little attention has, however, been devoted to the diachronic origins of nominalization, that is, what source constructions give rise to nominalizations in the first place, to what extent these constructions motivate the properties of the resulting nominalizations, and why the latter are initially used in certain contexts as opposed to others.

Some cross-linguistic evidence is now available about a number of possible sources for nominalizers, including for example demonstratives and nouns meaning 'person', 'thing', 'matter', 'place' and the like (DeLancey 1986, Carlson 1994, Noonan 1997, LaPolla 2003, Yap and Wang 2011, Yap and Wrona 2011). This evidence is in principle relevant to various general issues pertaining to nominalization, for example the idea the properties of individual nominalizations reflect non-prototypical uses of the relevant lexical roots (Cristofaro 2012), or the relationship between nominalization and a number of word order correlations (Givón 2012). The relevant data are, however, scanty, and they are usually not discussed in relation to the properties of the resulting nominalizations, or theories of nominalization in general.

The workshop aims to bring together scholars working on nominalization in a diachronic perspective, with the general goal to expand our knowledge of the processes that can give rise to nominalizations cross-linguistically, and investigate possible relationships between these processes and the properties of the resulting constructions, for example in terms of argument structure, presence vs. absence of nominalizers, nominal vs. verbal properties, or distribution across different contexts, e.g. different types of complement, adverbial, or relative clauses. Contributions on the history of particular nominalization types in individual languages and ones investigating the relevant processes in a broader cross-linguistic perspective are equally welcome.

Abstracts

Please send your abstracts to the organizers

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by April 15th, 2016. Notification of acceptance is by April 30th, 2016.

Abstracts should be in English, in pdf format, no longer than two pages (including examples and references) and anonymous. The language of the workshop is English.

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