

In the meeting of the syntax-semantics colloquium of IEAS,

Ulrike Schneider (Mainz)

will give a talk on:

From *bringing oneself to speak to making oneself relax*

A Contrastive Diachronic Analysis of the English Multi-Word Causatives *bring, make, get and force*

When? 5.2.2018, 16.15-17.45

Where? IG 3.201

Abstract

This paper expands on Mondorf and Schneider (2016) who investigate diachronic changes of the *bring* causative construction in the Early Modern and Modern English periods – long after the grammaticalisation of *bring* from a transport sense to a causative. The construction has previously (Andersson 1985, Mair 1990a, Mair 1990b) been shown to be largely restricted to reflexive causees and to uses in the passive as well as to uses in “grammatically or semantically negative environments” (“negative bias” Mair 1990a), such as in (1).

(1) She couldn't bring herself to believe what she had overheard. (BNC, wrldom1)

Mondorf and Schneider's (2016) diachronic analysis provides a more nuanced picture. On the one hand, it reveals that 20th century *bring* has an even more narrow bias, namely towards modal, negated, reflexive uses (see (1)). On the other hand, they show that these narrow boundaries are, in fact, merely the (currently) latest stage in the gradual diachronic development of a dying construction: the prototypical token of the *bring* causative construction in the 16th and 17th centuries was non-modal, affirmative, active and non-reflexive, such as (2). Though the construction generally allowed for a more varied range of causers and causees and was less restricted concerning the kinds of modification it permitted.

(2) [...] so soon as we had brought my Parents to consent. (Peter Bellon *The Court Secret* 1689)

I now place these findings in a larger context by contrasting them with changes in neighbouring constructions – both *bring* constructions and other multi-word causatives, such

as *get* and *make*. By investigating the nature of the boundaries between constructions at several stages spaced over the past 500 years and with the help of transitivity parameters (Hopper and Thompson 1980) such as reflexive, negation, modality, finiteness, kinesis etc. I aim to determine whether the diachronic development of causative *bring* reflects a shift in constructional boundaries – i.e. whether causative *bring* is being pushed into a niche by widening constructions – or whether we witness a change in the nature of the boundaries – i.e. whether causatives ‘specialise’, leading gradual boundaries to become more rigid. Such a loss of intersective gradience would mean that there is less overlap between constructions and could thus reduce processing complexity (Bates & MacWhinney 1987).

Andersson, Evert (1985): *On Verb Complementation in Written English*. Malmö: Gleerup/Liber.

Bates, Elizabeth and Brian MacWhinney (1987): “Competition, Variation, and Language Learning.” In MacWhinney, Brian (Ed.): *Mechanisms of Language Acquisition*. London/New York: Routledge. 157-93.

Hopper, Paul J. and Sandra A. Thompson (1980): “Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse.” *Language* 56 (2). 251-99.

Mair, Christian (1990): “A contrastive analysis of object-control in English and German.” *Papers and Studies in Contrastive Linguistics* 25. 85-101.

Mair, Christian (1990): *Infinitival Complement Clauses in English*. Cambridge: CUP.

Mondorf, Britta and Ulrike Schneider (2016): “Detransitivization as a Support Strategy for Causative *bring*.” *English Language and Linguistics* 20 (3). 439-62.

Everyone is cordially invited!

Manfred Sailer, Frank Richter, Gert Webelhuth

You will find an up-to-date program of our colloquium at:

<https://www.english-linguistics.de/oberseminar/oberseminar-wise-201718/>