Metaphor and pragmaticalization of Romance motion verbs

James Law[1]
[1]Brigham Young University, jimlaw@byu.edu

Keywords: Discourse markers, Pragmaticalization, Romance languages

The pragmaticalization pathway from motion verb to discourse marker is well documented (see, for example, papers in Devos & van der Wal 2014). This is especially true in Spanish, where discourse functions of *vaya* 'go', *vamos* 'let's go', *venga* 'come', and *anda* 'walk' have received considerable attention (González Ollé 2002; Romero Aguilera 2006; Polanco Martínez 2013; Tanghe 2016b; Tanghe 2016a; Ruiz-González 2021). These markers serve conative, expressive, and metadiscursive functions, drawing on the metaphor DISCOURSE IS A JOURNEY (Romero Aguilera 2006; Tanghe 2016a). Portuguese shows similar productivity to Spanish, and Italian has discourse markers derived from both GO and COME (Fedriani & Molinelli 2019). French, however, only draws discourse markers from *aller* 'go', not other motion verbs (Drescher 1997; Sierra Soriano 2006; Bunkham 2022: 211–224).

The difference in this metaphor's productivity across Romance remains unexplained and is this study's focus. A cline from most to least grammaticalized of French > Italian > Spanish has been proposed (De Mulder & Lamiroy 2012). If this pattern applies to the pragmaticalization of motion verbs, then we should expect a state of decreased productivity (i.e. with only a GO verb as discourse marker, not COME or other motion verbs) to represent a more advanced stage.

Data are drawn from conversational corpora of French (CFPP2000), Italian (KIParla), Portuguese (CRPC-Oral) and Spanish (CABank), as well as from the 15th century text *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, noted for its representation of spoken Middle French (Roger 2013). Modern French discourse markers derived from *aller* 'go' (*allez*, *allons*, *vas-y*) show the full functional range covered by the more varied markers derived from GO, COME, and WALK in Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. Although there are no discourse markers in Modern French derived from *venir* 'come', examples such as the following are found in Middle French:

(1) *Et **vien** ça ; qu'as tu meffait a ton pere qui te veult tuer ?*
'Come on now (lit. and **come** here), what wrong did you do to your father that he wants to kill you?'   (*Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* p. 325)

In this context, Modern French would not permit *venir*, and other markers including *allez* 'go' could perform this expressive function. In this respect, Middle French is typologically closer to Spanish or Italian than to Modern French, an observation that has also been made regarding other features (Smith 2002). Modern French appears to be at a more advanced stage of this pragmaticalization pathway, wherein the GO verb, the least marked motion verb, has taken on its broadest discourse functionality and replaced other verbs.

This analysis supports a pragmaticalization model where later stages show greater abstraction from the source concept and the structural coherence of metaphorical mappings degrades. This aligns with the insight that mappings may become restricted to simplified schemas stored in the target domain (Boroditsky 2000). As the pragmaticalization of motion verbs progresses, mappings to particular kinds of motion in the source domain weaken, allowing the most generic item to take over the paradigm.

References

Boroditsky, Lera. 2000. Metaphoric structuring: understanding time through spatial metaphors. *Cognition* 75(1). 1–28.

Bunkham, Nichuta. 2022. *Etude typologique et contrastive des morphèmes aller/venir en français et paj/ma en thaï central*. Université de Lyon doctoral thesis.

Cent Nouvelles nouvelles. 1966. Franklin P. Sweetser (ed.). Geneva: Droz. Published online by ENS Lyon in the Base de français médiéval, last revision 2007-05-31, http://catalog.bfm-corpus.org/cnn.

De Mulder, Walter & Béatrice Lamiroy. 2012. Gradualness of grammaticalization in Romance. The position of French, Spanish and Italian. In Kristin Davidse, Tanja Mortelmans, Lieselotte Brems & Tine Breban (eds.), *Grammaticalization and Language Change: New reflections*, 199–226. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Devos, Maud & Jenneke van der Wal. 2014. *"COME" and "GO" off the Beaten Grammaticalization Path*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Drescher, Martina. 1997. French interjections and their use in discourse. In Susanne Niemeier & René Dirven (eds.), *Language of Emotions: Conceptualization, expression, and theoretical foundation*, 233–246. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Fedriani, Chiara & Piera Molinelli. 2019. Italian ma 'but'in deverbal pragmatic markers: Forms, functions, and productivity of a pragma-dyad. *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana* 26. 29–55.

González Ollé, Fernando. 2002. Vamos. De subjuntivo a marcador (con un excurso sobre imos). In Pedro Álvarez de Miranda & José Polo (eds.), *Lengua y diccionarios. Estudios ofrecidos a Manuel Seco*, 117–135. Madrid: Arco Libros.

Polanco Martínez, Fernando. 2013. "Vino mucha gente, buena bebida, buena música... vamos, que fue genial". La función de la partícula que en enunciados recapitulativos: el caso de <vamos/vaya, que + enunciado verbal> en español coloquial. *Onomázein* 28. 128–142.

Roger, Geoffrey. 2013. Direct Speech in the Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles : A Linguistic Analysis. *Le Moyen Français* 72. 143–167.

Romero Aguilera, Laura. 2006. La gramaticalización de verbos de movimiento como marcadores del discurso: el caso de "vamos". *Res Diachronicae* 5. 46–56.

Ruiz-González, Natalia. 2021. Movement Verbs as Discourse Markers in Spanish: The Case of Vamos in the City of Granada, Spain. *Languages* 6(4). 156.

Sierra Soriano, Ascensión. 2006. Interjections issues d'un verbe de mouvement : étude comparée français-espagnol. *Langages* 161(1). 73–90.

Smith, John Charles. 2002. Middle French: When? What? Why? *Language Sciences* 24(3). 423–445.

Tanghe, Sanne. 2016a. *Marcadores Derivados de Verbos de Movimiento: Una Aproximación Cognitiva a Su Polifuncionalidad*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Tanghe, Sanne. 2016b. Position and polyfunctionality of discourse markers: The case of Spanish markers derived from motion verbs. *Journal of Pragmatics* 93. 16–31.