The evolution of grammar

1 Metaphorical extension theory: for
Consider the following examples (adapted from Heine et al. 1991: 152):

(1) Monica prepared food for the cats.
(2) Monica set off for work.
(3) Monica worked hard for her wages.

In English, prepositions often perform the functions that are carried out by case markers in other languages. According to Heine et al., the polysemy of for illustrates the evolution of more grammaticalised concepts from existing grammaticalised concepts. Recall that Heine et al. claim that grammaticalisation involves metaphorical extension from more concrete to more abstract concepts, so that more abstract senses are ‘more grammaticalised’.

a. First, work out which case functions are illustrated by the use of for, in the examples above. You may need to consult a dictionary of grammatical terms.
b. Next, work out the predictions of Heine et al.’s theory for the relative order in which each of the functions of for might have emerged.
c. Once you have mapped out your hypothesis, consult an etymological dictionary in order to find out whether your hypothesis receives any support from the historical facts.

2 Metaphorical extension theory: with
Consider the following examples (adapted from Heine et al. 1991: 164):

(1) Monica’s husband opened the champagne with a sabre.
(2) Monica ate the sushi with gusto.
(3) Monica went to the restaurant with her husband.
Develop the same kind of analysis for the preposition *with* in these examples as you did for the preposition *for* in the previous exercise.

### 3 Invited inferencing theory: speech act verbs

Consider the following examples from Traugott and Dasher (2002: 201–22):

1. **insist** < Latin *in* ‘in, on’ + past participle of *sta-* ‘stand’
2. **concur** < Latin *con* ‘with’ + *curr-* ‘run’
3. **concede** < Latin *con* ‘with’ + *ced-* ‘go away, withdraw’
4. **promise** < Latin *pro* ‘forward’ + past participle of *mitt-* ‘send’

Traugott and Dasher argue that the evolution of speech act verbs from verbs with spatial senses illustrates the process of subjectification.

a. Explain how these examples might be analysed from the perspective of invited inferencing theory.

b. How do you think this type of grammaticalisation illustrates subjectification in Traugott and Dasher’s sense of the term?

### 4 Comparing and contrasting metaphorical extension with invited inferencing

Prepositions often have both spatial and temporal meanings conventionally associated with them. Consider the following examples deploying the preposition *in*:

1. **TEMPORAL CONTAINER sense**
   The election will be held in May.
2. **AMOUNT OF TIME REQUIRED/TAKEN sense**
   John ran the marathon in three hours.
3. **AMOUNT OF TIME UNTIL OCCURRENCE sense**
   I’ll call you in twenty minutes.

a. Provide plausible explanations for how the temporal senses may have been derived from the earlier spatial senses, employing (i) the metaphorical extension account and (ii) the invited inferencing account.

b. Comment on any problems that these examples present for either of these accounts.

c. Now check the *Oxford English Dictionary*, or some other suitable source, in order to establish the historical accuracy of the paths of evolution you proposed.
5 Langacker’s subjectification approach: get

Consider the following examples (some of which are adapted from Langacker 1999b: 312):

(1) Monica got two bags of candy floss.
(2) Monica got a pay rise.
(3) Monica’s husband got a black eye.
(4) Monica got herself promoted.
(5) Her husband got fired.
(6) His bike got stolen.

According to Langacker, the grammaticalisation of *get* from a full lexical verb in (1)–(3) to a function close to that of the passive auxiliary in (4)–(6) is the result of subjectification, particularly with respect to the attenuation of subject control.

a. How do these examples illustrate Langacker’s analysis?
b. Has *get* been fully grammaticalised as a passive auxiliary?
c. Provide additional examples to support your discussion and comment on any problems that you encounter.

6 Accounting for the future

In English, one way of referring to future time is by means of the modal verb *will*. This evolved from the Old English form *willan*, which was a full lexical verb meaning ‘to want or desire’. Experiential accounts suggest that the future meaning arose because desire is inherently future-oriented. In other words, an invited inference of desiring something is that the act of obtaining the desired object lies in the future; therefore, the statement of a desire implicates future attainment. Languages employ a variety of constructions to grammaticalise futurity; some examples are provided below. In each, the first (functional) English gloss provides the English free translation equivalent, while the second (literal) gloss explains the original and literal sense of the construction.

(1) Danish  Jeg skal komme i morgen
           ‘I’ll come tomorrow’
           ‘I must come tomorrow’

(2) Inuit    Atuarniarpara
           ‘I’m going to read it’
           ‘I try to read it’

(3) Modern Greek   Θα πάω στην Αθήνα
                   ‘I’ll go to Athens’
                   ‘I want to go to Athens’
(4) Spanish
Voy a comprarlo
‘I’m going to buy it’
‘I am going (somewhere) in order to buy it’

(5) Hungarian
Jól fogunk szórakozni
‘We’ll enjoy ourselves’
‘We catch a good time’

a. For each example, try to provide a plausible experiential motivation for the shift to future meaning.
b. Employ one of the theories discussed in Chapter 27 to account for how this shift might have occurred.