Can obligatoriness help us better understand grammaticality? Possibilities and limits of a neglected concept

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When we say that an expression is *grammatical,* we usually mean one of two very different things. Either that the expression at hand is grammatically correct (cf. Chomsky 1975) or that the expression belongs to the grammatical repertoire of a language. While the opposite of *grammatical* in the former sense is *ungrammatical* or *ill-formed,* the opposite of *grammatical* in the latter sense is *lexical.* The latter meaning of *grammaticality* will be at the core of my presentation.

Grammaticality, in the latter of the abovementioned senses, has stood in the centre of grammaticalisation studies for the past several decades. Surprisingly enough, however, an explicit definition has almost never been given (cf. Himmelmann 1992: 2, Diewald 2012: 452). This can be explained, following Boye and Harder (2012: 1), by the fact that we intuitively know what *being grammatical* means and that we are able to discern lexical from grammatical expressions even without a clear theoretical footing.

Against this backdrop, I will expound on the often-repeated idea that obligatoriness is the main or even sole factor responsible for the grammaticality of grammatical expressions (cf. Lehmann 1985, 2015, Diewald & Smirnova 2010: 99, Diewald 2009: 446, Bybee 1985: 202). Although obligatoriness is frequently claimed to play a central role for our understanding of grammaticality, it is, like grammaticality itself, hardly ever discussed in detail. For that reason, I will first generally introduce the notion. Then, I will comment on the use of the notion in recent theoretical works (Diewald 2010, Diewald & Smirnova 2010). Finally, I will compare the concept of obligatoriness to two closely related concepts: paradigmaticity (Lehmann 1985, 2015) and ancillariness (Boye & Harder 2012). At the end of my presentation, I hope to be able to shed some light on the limits and possibilities of obligatoriness for our understanding of grammar.

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