Grammaticalization as a Factor of Formation of the Semantics of Modal Verbs in the Modern German Language

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Abstract. The article points out the modal verbs of the German language, which in their historical development have passed a way from full verbs (lexemes) to auxiliary verbs (grammemes) and demonstrated the ability to rethink their linguistic meanings. Peculiarities of new grammatical meaning of the modal verbs confirm the fact of existence of grammatical precedential meaning as its prototype – the first grammatical meaning. The process of redefining the first grammatical meanings into the secondary ones is carried out in the course of grammaticalization of the modal verbs.

1. Introduction
This article is devoted to consideration of the modal verbs of the German language in terms of its participation in the process of grammaticalization. The main goal of this research is the study of different functions of modal verbs from the perspective of grammaticalization. Both synchronic and diachronic aspects of this phenomenon are considered.

In the diachronic perspective we are talking about of emergence of grammatical functions in linguistic signs which originally had lexical-denotative functions that is about continuous process of recruiting new signs from grammatical functions from the field of lexical signs.

In synchrony the language fixes a reinterpretation of the primary grammatical meaning to the secondary meaning.

Modal verbs of the German language are subject to rethinking based on the contradiction between grammatical meaning and context, so the description of their interpretation should take into account their cognitive and linguistic features.

Grammaticalizing variants of modal verbs along with their primary variants form a modal system of the German language, within which types of modality differ.

2. The participation of the modal verbs of the German language in the process of grammaticalization

2.1. Cognitive Grammar
The definition of the language as a tool for the realization of the cognitive ability of a person is due to the fact that the language transfers information about the world, is associated with the processing of this information, participates in its organization, construction, improvement and presentation. Besides, the language is involved in ensuring the flow of communication. This allows us to pay special attention to the role of cognitive linguistics as a special paradigm of modern linguistics.
The focus of the new field of theoretical and applied linguistics is the cognitive aspects of linguistic phenomena of different linguistic levels and the role of language in cognitive processes and the generalization of human experience. The special role of cognitive linguistics is in the powerful and conscious tendency to the recontextualization of grammar [16].

Cognitive grammar solves at the present a number of problems, one of which is the study of language means for the transmission of secondary – precedent – meaning, which is the cognitive basis of precedent grammatical meanings.

Among many language means, which is considered as the precedent units [8, 9], a significant place is taken in German by modal verbs, which are attracted to and attract the attention of many scientists within different linguistic paradigms.

The peculiarity of modal verbs is that most of their meanings are not lexical, but grammaticalized, derived from the primary meaning, and on this basis they are grammatical precedent units.

The meanings of modal verbs form an entire system. At the center of this system is the primary or “core” meaning, from which the derivatives (precedent) meanings inextricably linked with the primary meaning, which is manifested in the use of modal verbs to express the epistemic modality [4, 5].

Thus, grammatical units can be considered precedent in case of their participation in the process of grammaticalization.

2.2. The process of grammaticalization

In linguistics the process of grammaticalization is paid much attention. Grammaticalization is defined as the process of emergence of a grammatical sign from lexical or strengthening its grammatical function. Speaking about the study of the processes of grammaticalization, we are talking about the study of the transitional phenomena that is about processes of transformation of a lexical unit into a grammatical one with a change of lexical meaning in grammatical.

This phenomenon is not new to linguistics. The study of grammaticalization in recent decades has become an extensive independent linguistic field in German linguistic studies. The study of the phenomenon of grammaticalization began with the French linguist A. Meillet. The scientist has established that the emergence of grammatical forms is explained by two different processes, namely, analogy and grammaticalization. By analogy, the form is formed sur le modèle d'une autre “on the model of another”, by grammaticalization le passage d'un mot autonome au rôle d'élément grammatical occurs “the use of an independent word as a grammatical element” [13]. But already Wilhelm von Humboldt in the composition of 1822 paid attention to the issues of morphology and syntax [10], which are developed in modern studies on grammar.

In the works focused on this problem, grammaticalization is understood as the loss of the word lexical independence associated with the habitual use it in secondary functions.

In diachrony, grammaticalization is the process by which lexical entities develop grammatical functions over time, and then elements that have already discovered grammatical functions develop further or acquire more important / major grammatical functions. G. Diwald, referring to K. Lehmann, notes that the essence of this process can be characterized by two general features, namely, the loss of autonomy of linguistic material and integration into the mandatory rules of the grammatical system [3, 4].

Recent studies of the process of grammaticalization indicate that the new grammatical function does not occur homogeneously / uniformly for all uses, but is associated with their origin in special linguistic "contexts" and “constructions”. It is believed that only the complete construction and not just the lexical meaning of the verb are a harbinger and a source of a new grammatical meaning [2].

Such a view is shared by G. Diewald and W. Bisang. Scientists believe that constructions provide a framework within which combinations of syntactic elements and semantic components can be analyzed in a new way, which can lead to a change in the language if it spreads from individuality to community [3].

E. Traugott gives the following definition of grammaticalization, which also includes the concept of “construction”. By grammaticalization she understands the process by which lexical material in
relatively forced pragmatic and morphosyntactic contexts establishes grammatical functions, and the existing grammatical functions realize greater grammatical functions [17, 18].

Both the synchronic and diachronic aspects of this phenomenon are relevant for the process of grammaticalization. Scientists are unanimous in the opinion that modal verbs dürfen, mögen, können, sollen, müssen, wollen are polyfunctional [1, 3, 7, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21]. At the same time, it should be noted that the methods of use, in which an analogy is found in all six verbs, predetermine the degree of grammaticalization, namely, a stronger grammaticalized variant diachronically has an earlier development.

The term “grammaticalization” implies the first degree of grammatical functionality of one feature as opposed to the lexical method of use. In the synchronic perspective, the degree of grammaticalization is measured simultaneously with the existing other ways of use, while grammar and vocabulary are understood not as strictly separate areas, but as a continuum with the focus of certain centers. In the diachronic perspective, we are talking about the emergence of grammatical functions in language signs that originally had lexical-denotative functions, that is, a continuous set of new lexical signs for grammatical functions. On the one hand, the continuity between lexicon and grammar and, on the other hand, the relevance for all times (panchronicity), i.e. the integrative interpretation of synchronous coexistence and diachronic development – these are the two central theses of the study of grammar.

2.3. Grammaticalizing variants of modal verbs
The transition of lexeme to modal verb is considered to be lexical, less grammaticalized – non-deictic use, which implements the first stage of grammaticalization. The acquisition, already a modal verb, other modal value is understood as grammatical, grammaticalized – deictic use. This “unusual” distinction between the two uses of modal verbs is based on the thesis that their grammaticalization, in fact, there is a change of semiotic sign classes, in which the original lexical sign goes into the class (grammatical) deictic sign.

An example of coexistence of lexical and grammatical meanings of the same linguistic sign is the use of modal verbs for expression of deontic and epistemic modalities:

(1) Der Polizist allein konnte den Autodieb verfolgen. [11]
← The police officer was able to track the car thief alone.

(2) Er kann den Schlüssel verloren haben. [6]
← Perhaps, / perhaps he has lost the key.

In the synchronic system of modal verb, there is the aforementioned discrepancy: when used in (2) there is much more grammaticalized function that is close to the function of verbal mood, while the use in (1) has lexical-denotative and predicative function and, thus, is similar to the function of “normal” lexical meaning of the verb. In (1) konnte is a lexical verb, the meaning of which can be described as “having the ability, to be able to”. Konnte in this case is “an integral part of the informative function of sentences”, that is part of the proposition. In this use, the modal verb können predetermines the state of the subject, namely, the correspondence of the subject's ability to realize the action expressed by the infinitive. It is also said that in this case the modal verb has a narrow scopus.

The modal verb kann in (2) is not part of the content, it has no semantic relationship to the subject of the sentence, it has a wide scopus, and that is, it modifies the general statement. The modal verb expresses here the assumption of the speaker about the degree of reliability of the presented propositions. He pointed to the uncertainty of the speaker as to the reliability of the content of the proposal, while retaining the right to consider it possible. This relationship between a speaker and a language expression is a common feature of grammatical meanings (for example, time categories). The estimation of reliability, made by means of modal verbs, belongs to the functional area of verbal mood that is, indicative and subjunctive. In this case, the uses of modal verbs take part in the grammatical paradigm, which is expressed in its other values flexibly.
Hence, the way of using können in (1) is designated as deontic, and in (2) – as epistemic, that is, in (1) we are talking about lexical, less grammaticalized, in other words, nondeictic use, in (2) - about grammatical, grammaticalized, that is, deictic use.

3. Conclusion
At the present stage, in the process of grammaticalization, all modal verbs have acquired new meanings in varying degrees and forms, which reveal both deontic and epistemic interpretations. In addition, we can talk about the emergence of new trends in the grammaticalization of modal verbs – changes in their morphological characteristics (the process of adverbialization and adjectivization), as well as spelling variations.

Thus, grammaticalization is the process of the historical development of the language, which is associated with the formation of the lexical sign of grammatical meaning. As for the historical development of modal verbs, we can talk about getting them a new grammatical content, which is fundamental, namely, in its semiotic function, and differs from the old lexical meaning, which serves to transfer the lexical semantics.

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