

The diachrony of subjective amenazar 'threaten'. On Latin-induced grammaticalization in Spanish.

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Author:

Cornillie, Bert

Octavio de Toledo y Huerta, Álvaro

Abstract:

In the functional-linguistic literature, amenazar and other 'threaten' verbs have been accounted for in terms of grammaticalization and subjectification of the lexical construction/reading of amenazar + infinitive into a subjective construction/reading of amenazar + infinitive. On the basis of diachronic corpus data we show that this view does not hold: the syntactic schema of subjective amenazar + infinitive starts from a construction of the Latin verb minari 'threaten' with a deverbal noun. The origin of the subjective construction with amenazar and the pace of the extension of the new construction depend heavily on the contact with humanist, Latin-based discourse traditions. The proposed analysis suggests the need of revisiting earlier accounts of 'threaten' verbs that were based on conceptual and pragmatic criteria only.

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