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On deriving complex polysemy: the grammaticalization of *get*[1]

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This paper examines the polysemy in the English verb *get*, which can denote possession, movement, causation, obligation, and change of state among other senses. The analysis builds on a decomposition of *get* (based on the Benveniste/Freeze/Kayne analysis of possessive constructions) into [ingressive + 'be' + preposition]; this lexical entry allows the current polysemy to be derived from a number of reanalyses within different syntactic contexts. Using diachronic data, I show that possession leads to movement as well as stative uses (possession and obligation), movement develops into the causative and inchoative, from which the passive develops, and the infinitival causative gives rise to permission and ingressive aspect. The appearance of each new meaning-construction is motivated by context-dependent mechanisms of reanalysis which account for language change as the result of the language learner reanalyzing the correspondences between syntactic and semantic elements.

1 Introduction

One of the primary concerns of lexical semantics is accounting for the systematic relations among different senses of lexical items. This paper examines one case of complex polysemy, the verb *get*, which, in Present-Day English (PDE), can express at least the following senses: possession, movement, change of state, causation, ingressive aspect, obligation, and permission. While this study is not exclusively concerned with lexical semantics, it does have implications for an approach to lexical entries and polysemy.

My approach to the multifunctionality of *get* includes two distinct but related parts. The first is a synchronic description of the uses of *get* in section 2, in which I point out the relevance of the syntactic context for the interpretation of the verb and propose a core lexical entry for it. The second part is a diachronic analysis of how this polysemy arose since its roots in Middle English. Thus, I trace the development of *get* to its current polysemy in a diachronic analysis and explain its multiple, context-dependent meanings as a function of construction. The analysis has both diachronic and synchronic validity, in that it proposes a model of historical

[1] This study began as a short paper written at the 1995 LSA Linguistic Institute. I would like to thank Joan Bybee for comments on it then and Bill Croft for discussion then and since. I also wish to thank audiences at the various places this paper has been presented – Lund University, the XVIth Conference of Scandinavian Linguists in Åbo, Catholic University of Tilburg, Utrecht University, and Leiden University. Special thanks are due to Bas Aarts and David Denison for invaluable criticisms, as well as to Lena Ekberg, Åke Viberg, and Johan Rooryck for discussions of the topic. My gratitude also extends to Gillis Kristensson for help with the Middle English data. However, none of these people should be held responsible for how I have used their suggestions. The research for this paper was carried out within the project Cross-Linguistic Lexicology, funded by Humanistisksamhällsvetenskapliga Forskningsrådet, to which I am grateful for financial support during 1995–96.

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development as well as a synchronic model for relating the various senses. Last but not least, a major contribution of this paper to the field in general is a classification of a large body of data on a verb central to the English language: *get*.

The synchronic part in section 2 presents a comprehensive overview of the various senses of *get* and the syntactic environments with which they are associated in PDE. Here, the polysemy in *get* is described as a function of combining the core meaning of *get* with the syntactic environment in which it occurs. I take the strong position that there is only one lexical entry for *get*, and from this entry, all the other meaning-constructions (henceforth MCs) are derived by context-dependent reanalysis, stated in terms of a semantic and structural decomposition. The goal to minimize the lexicon as much as possible is in contrast to most studies on lexical semantics, as I argue that much of the meaning of *get* is due to its syntactic construction. Section 2 also contains some generalizations about how the various interpretations of *get* are built up in context, while still assuming one lexical entry, although a complete explanation is beyond the scope of this paper.

The diachronic part of this paper deals with how the distribution of *get* has changed in a grammaticalization process leading to the current polysemy. Specifically, the analysis involves identifying historical links between the different MCs. These links motivate the polysemy in *get* and thus shed light on the mechanisms of language change. Under a solely synchronic approach, the relations between the various MCs remain obscure, whereas a diachronic approach explains these relations in terms of mechanisms of change. As for degree of grammaticalization, *get* lies in between lexical verbs and genuine auxiliaries. It is far more syntactic than most lexical verbs, both in meaning and distribution, while it is less grammatical than functional verbs, for instance the modals, as *get* has not lost its lexical uses. Thus *get* is only 'semi-grammaticalized' and the analysis necessarily deals with the early stages of evolution and the mechanisms of change that are relevant at this stage. This study provides evidence for the syntax leading the grammaticalization process, rather than the semantics, although the two proceed largely in parallel. The diachronic part thus has implications for the theory of grammaticalization and mechanisms of language change.

After the synchronic overview in section 2, section 3 discusses grammaticalization in general and in the domain of possession. In section 4, the diachronic analysis of the appearance of the various uses of *get* is presented, and links between source and resulting constructions are proposed. Finally, section 5 discusses the theoretical implications of this study for processes of language change.

2 Polysemy in modern English

Based on data from the Brown Corpus,[2] which contains 1,482 instances of *get*, I have found that *get* currently conveys such varied meanings as possession, move-

[2] The Brown Corpus was compiled at Brown University, USA. It contains 1 million words representing fifteen categories of American English texts printed in 1961. It is contained in the ICAME Collection of

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ment, causation, obligation, permission, passive, inchoative, and ingressive aspect. The uses of *get* thus range from lexical to grammatical meanings. A similar description of the polysemy in *get* is reported in Johansson & Oksefjell (1996). Let's briefly examine the structure of these uses in order to relate each sense to its syntactic structure, i.e. to identify the MCs which are central to this analysis.

2.1 *Onset of possession:* get + *(NP)* + *NP*

As a main verb, *get* signals the 'onset of possession' and is essentially an aspectual variant of *have* meaning 'come to have/possess'; the same sense is assumed in Johansson & Oksefjell (1996: 64) on *get*, Hoekstra (1984: 65) for Dutch *krijgen*, and Taraldsen (1995: 208) on Norwegian *få*. When *get* has one NP object, it can be interpreted actively as 'obtain', as in (1), or passively as 'receive', as in (2). In (1) the subject is an agent and in (2) it is a recipient. In (3), the interpretation of the subject is ambiguous between agent and recipient roles due to conflicting contextual clues; *would first have to* implies subject-oriented modality while *permission* is inherently granted by an external agent.

(1) Dwellers thereabouts preferred to get their apple pies at the local bakery (Jones, 'Santa Cruz Run', *Gourmet*. January 1961)
(2) But ask coach Darrell Royal what position he plays and you'll get the quick response, 'place-kicker'. (*The Dallas Morning News*. 10 October 1961)
(3) But I said I would first have to get the author's permission. (Endore, *Voltaire! Voltaire!* 1961)

The ditransitive construction in (4) and (5) partially disambiguates the subject's thematic role, as the recipient reading is no longer available. Here, however, the subject displays the ambiguity typical of causative constructions, where the subject may be a volitional agent (especially when animate) as in (4) or simply a causer without volitionality as in (5) (cf. Fujita (1996) and the discussion below in section 2.9).

(4) 'Tell me what to get her for Christmas.' (Bingham, 'Moving Day', *The Atlantic Monthly*. November 1961)
(5) temper tantrums, screaming, kicking, and hitting will not get him what he wants (Ragan, *Teaching America's Children*. 1961)

Another fairly common use of *get* means 'fetch' as in (6) and (7), and it arises especially when collocated with verbs of motion.

(6) The next week, forty soldiers were sent to get the miscreants. (Lippincott, *Indians, Privateers, and High Society*. 1961)
(7) If coffee is sold at the cafeteria, let a few workers in each department get it for the whole group. ('The Attack on Employee Services', *Factory*. November 1961)

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Depending on the semantic content of the complement, *get* can also receive a mental interpretation: cognition or 'understand' in (8) and perception in (9), and the subject is interpreted as an experiencer.

(8) it takes a great deal of sophisticated thought to get the impact of this fact (Copp & Peck, *Betrayal at the UN: the Story of Paul Bang-Jensen*. 1961)
(9) It was probably at this period that Littlepage got his first good look at the ordinary Russian soldier. (Davis, *The King's Chevalier: A Biography of Lewis Littlepage*. 1961)

Examples (8) and (9) show the well-known extension from the domain of possession to the domain of mental understanding. One account of this cross-linguistically common extension is in terms of a metaphorical transfer from possession to the cognitive domain; see Sweetser (1990).[3] Another, somewhat less vague, explanation can be offered using an enriched semantic composition as argued for in Pustejovsky (1995) and Jackendoff (1997). The interpretation of *I get the point of your argument* can be derived in syntax, for instance with Pustejovsky's (1995: 61) mechanism of co-composition, where the complement is a functor, alongside the verb, and therefore may shift or coerce the meaning of the verb according to its properties. This mechanism accounts for the contextual enrichment of semantically underspecified forms, for instance, light verb specification. However, as this study is concerned with the grammaticalization of *get* (as defined in section 3.1 below), purely semantic changes within one domain such as these are not addressed. See Gronemeyer (1997) for a more detailed description of this and other main verb uses.

To summarize the properties of main verb *get,* I have shown that the subject can be interpreted as agent, recipient, causer, or experiencer depending on the surrounding context. Furthermore, *get* may take one or two objects and is thus a two- or three-place predicate.

2.2 *Stative possession: (*have*)* got + *NP*

As shown in (10) and (11), stative possession can be expressed by (*have*) *got* + NP, a construction which represents 7 percent of all the instances of *get* in the Brown Corpus. Johansson & Oksefjell (1996: 72) take this MC to represent a new prototype, but this is unnecessary as this sense is predictable in the construction *have got*, i.e. the stativity is structurally determined. This is because the construction originated as the perfect tense of *get* (Denison, 1993: 341), which denotes the consequent state of an earlier event.

[3] In fact, there is evidence against assuming that *get* has an inherent perception or cognition meaning. The mental activity sense in (8) 'understand the consequences' arises with a small group of objects, and the meaning of these combinations tends to be idiomatic, as in *get the picture* 'understand the situation' and *get the notion* 'start thinking'. The perception sense in (9) also arises with a restricted group of objects denoting perception events, e.g. *view*, *feel*, and *impression*. Furthermore, the fact that these senses make up a small portion of the main verb uses of *get* supports a compositional approach to this verb's meaning.

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(10) I've got / I got a call to make.
(11) You see ... we all got schedules, like any business! (Shannon, *The Ace of Spades*. 1961)

In PDE, the form *got* signals stative possession in its own right, without the support of anterior *have*, as in (11), and the two verbs can be used almost synonymously for stative possession, disregarding stylistic differences. Note that the stative form *got* is distinguished from a second form of the past participle in GET: *gotten*. The stative (12a) has only present temporal reference, whereas (12b) refers to the resultant state of a past *getting*-event. If this eventuality is shifted to the past, the form *gotten* in (12d) can occur in the pluperfect, while *got* in (12c) is simply redundant for the expression of a past state.

(12) (a) I've got a new book.
(b) I've gotten a new book.
(c) I had (*got) a new book.
(d) I had gotten a new book.

2.3 *Movement:* get + *(NP)* + *PP/particle/adverb*

Leaving behind the possession senses, *get* has many uses as a 'light' verb, that is a functional verb with little inherent content. The first of these is the locative construction which represents 37 percent of all the examples in the Brown Corpus and denotes movement to a goal, expressed by a directional PP, particle or adverbial complement. The movement can refer to the subject, as in (13), or to the object in (14), depending on whether or not *get* is constructed transitively. Metaphorical uses of this construction, illustrated in (15) and the first instance of *get* in (16), are quite common (about 45 percent). In colloquial speech, *get* without any complement also expresses movement as in (17).

(13) And Paul Lipson, as Morris, the faithful one who never gets home to his Shirley's dinner, was fine, too. (*The Providence Journal*. 4 July 1961)
(14) the board would cooperate so far as possible to get the children to where the parents wanted them to go. (*The Oregonian*. 24 October 1961)
(15) they had enough difficulty getting from day to day, let alone having an awful crime thrust upon them (Green, *The Heartless Light*. 1961)
(16) I got a girl in trouble and we had to get married. (Uris, *Mila 8*. 1961)
(17) God dammit, get. And don't come back. (Gass, 'The Pedersen Kid' in *The Best American Short Stories*. 1962)

2.4 *Obligation: (*have*)*got + to-*infinitive*

In (18), we see the stative form *got* functioning as a deontic modal expressing strong obligation. This form can also mark epistemic probability as in (19), although the deontic sense is much more frequent.

(18) we all got to put up with inconvenience sometimes (Shannon, *The Ace of Spades*. 1961)

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(19) This has got to be some kind of local phenomenon. (Harmon, 'The Planet with No Nightmare', *If*. July 1961)

The status of *got* as a modal auxiliary is shown i) by its extension to epistemic uses as in (19) (see also Quirk et al., 1985: §348) and ii) by the contracted form *gotta* which is typical of auxiliaries and occurs commonly in spoken, informal language, as in (20). However, in standard English, *gotta* cannot be used in the third person without the *-s* ending for the auxiliary *has*, which indicates that *gotta* is not grammaticalized as a finite verb.

(20) I've got to / I gotta make a call.

2.5 *Inchoative:* get + *(NP) + AP*

Another commonly occurring use, representing at least 10 percent of the examples in the corpus, is the inchoative construction. When followed by an adjective or an adjectival past participle, *get* functions as a change-of-state marker, as in the second instance of *get* in (21) and (22).

(21) If you're a good ballplayer, you've got to get mad. (Sports, *Newsweek*. 14 Aug. 1961)
(22) we simply can't afford to get Ken mad at us ('No Room in My Heart to Forgive', *Modern Romances*. Nov. 1961)

2.6 *Passive:* get + *(NP) + past participle*

When constructed with a verbal past participle, *get* enters into a passive construction as in (23) and (24). As the *get*-passive is dynamic, it is used instead of the stative *be*-passive when a continuous state is not intended to be expressed.

(23) 'You're gonna get caught' (Hebson, *The Lattimer Legend*. 1961)
(24) 'Don't get yourself killed for something that doesn't concern you.' (Chadwick, *No Land Is Free*. 1961)

The *get*-passive is conceptually distinct from the inchoative construction, but the boundary between the two uses is subtle and many examples are ambiguous. The corpus contains 75 instances of *get* with a past participle, and of these, 38 percent may be considered inchoative. It is difficult to distinguish adjectival and verbal past participles in English, and none of the diagnostics proposed in the literature is watertight (see Levin & Rappaport (1986) for some diagnostics). For this reason, the criterion I use to distinguish the two MCs is perhaps simplistic but intuitively correct: a thematic relation exists between the matrix subject and the internal argument position of the passive participle, *the conference got started*, whereas in the inchoative the matrix subject controls the external argument of the adjectival participle, *we got started*.

For some reason which is not clear to me, a significant percentage of *get*-passives denote events which have a detrimental effect on the subject (of the 46 *get*-passives

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in the corpus, 48 percent are adversative), for instance *How many times must we get burned before we learn?* (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 5 November 1961) (see also Quirk et al. (1985: §3.66)).

2.7 *Permission:* get + to-*infinitive*

Intransitive *get* denotes permission when followed by a dynamic *to*-infinitive, as in (25)–(27), where dynamic refers to all nonstative predicates, including activities, accomplishments and achievements.[4]

(25) I filled a five-gallon jug for him and brought it to the hospital. I don't think he ever got to drink any of it. (Berg & Berg, *Molly and Me*. 1961)
(26) You did what you were told and if you did it for long enough you'd get to turn around someday and tell someone else what to do. (Watkins, *Stand Before Your God*. 1993)
(27) Jill: You'd think they'd have hired a car. Jennifer: Well, no. It's part of the deal that they get to use Linda's and Robert's car. (*BBC Radio 4*. 7 October 1996)

This sense is infrequent in the Brown Corpus and it is not distinguished in Quirk et al. (1985), but the *OED* does mention the meaning 'to secure an opportunity' (*get* §32a), and it is discussed in Austin (1998). Kimball (1973: 210) describes the permission sense as the inchoative of modal *may*. As a native speaker of American English, I find this sense well established, as it is quite common in informal speech, perhaps more so in child language than adult language (thanks to Åke Viberg for pointing this out).

I use permission in the standard sense of deontic modality, meaning that the subject is permitted by an external circumstance or force the possibility or opportunity of doing something. Closely related are the senses 'manage to' and 'secure an opportunity' which I take to be contextually determined variants, since neither is general enough to be a good paraphrase of (26) and (27).

2.8 *Ingressive:* get + *(NP)* + (to)-*V*-ing / get + *(NP)* + to-*infinitive*$_{stative}$

When followed by a stative verbal form (a stative infinitive or the *-ing* form of a dynamic verb), *get* is interpreted as meaning 'to start/begin V-ing'. That is, *get* functions as an aspectual marker denoting the beginning of a state, for which I use the term ingressive. Although this use is not mentioned in the standard works on English, the *OED* (*get* §32c) gives the meaning 'to come to be doing something'; Brinton (1988) also lists *get* in the constructions *get to* V / (*to*) V-*ing* as one of the new ingressive aspectualizers in PDE (Brinton, 1988: 116). This construction occurs commonly in expressions like *get going*, but also in more varied environments; the

[4] Thanks to Frances Austin for bringing (26) and (27) to my attention as well as for correspondence which helped clarify my understanding of this sense. See also Austin (1998) for a description of this usage.

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-ing complement is shown in (28) and (29), while the infinitive complement is shown in the second instance of *get* in (30) and (31):

(28) That night the older men got to talking about going possum-hunting on a moonlight night. (Rushing, 'Against the Moon', *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. Summer 1961)
(29) Fred's doctor got him drinking decaf on Tuesday. (Ritter & Rosen, 1993: 530)
(30) It wasn't like getting cheated at the fair. They were always trying, so you got to expect it [i.e. getting cheated, C.G.]. (Gass, 'The Pedersen Kid', in *The Best American Short Stories*. 1962)
(31) John got the students to understand the problem.

Although this sense is rare in the synchronic data, it exists in both intransitive and transitive variants, (28), (30) and (29), (31) respectively. The transitive constructions combine the meaning of ingressive with causation, as in 'cause object to begin'. There is no semantic difference between the two complement types, rather the choice between infinitive and *-ing* depends on the type of embedded predicate: dynamic verbs take *-ing* and stative verbs the infinitive. The Brown Corpus includes examples like *get (to) talking*, *dancing*, *moving*, *sweating*; and *get to know*, *like*, *understand*, *expect*. The complementary distribution between the two complement types suggests that they are configurationally determined variants of the same underlying structure.

The distribution of the infinitive versus *-ing* is explained as follows. The ingressive interpretation is only possible with stative predicates; in order to embed dynamic predicates, a morphologically stative form must be used. Dynamic predicates can be made stative with the morphological marking *-ing*, thus allowing these in the ingressive construction as well. Guéron & Hoekstra (1995) note that *-ing* only occurs with predicates with an internal temporal structure (i.e. dynamic). They argue further that *-ing* functions as a partitive quantifier (i.e. like an indefinite determiner but in the verbal domain) picking out an arbitrary point in an ongoing event, thus making dynamic predicates stative, i.e. lacking internal (temporal) structure like mass nouns. The gerund is thus a morphologically stative form derived from a dynamic predicate.

Interestingly, *to* may sometimes introduce the gerund as in *get to talking.* This same construction occurs after *take* as well, also denoting ingressive aspect, as in (32):

(32) When he had recovered his breath somewhat, and was able to think calmly, he began to giggle, and from giggling he took to laughing, and he laughed till he had to sit down under a hedge. (Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*. 1908)

There are some potentially important restrictions on when *to* must, or may not, be present, although I can offer no analysis of them at present. Before the gerund, *to* is ungrammatical in the transitive uses (*we got him* (**to*) *talking*) and the imperative (*get* (**to*) *talking!*), while it is optional for the intransitive ones (*we got* (*to*) *talking*). This variation might be attributed to the gerund's inherent categorial ambiguity, as it can be analyzed either as a nominal preceded by a P or as a verb without P, depending on the context.

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Structurally, the permission and ingressive readings of *get* are very similar, the only difference being whether the embedded predicate is stative or not, as summarized in (33):

(33) (a) *get* *to* $\text{infinitive}_{\text{dynamic}}$ (permission)
(b) *get* (NP) *to* $\text{infinitive}_{\text{stative}}$ (ingressive)
(c) *get* (NP) (*to*) $[V_{\text{dynamic}}\text{-}ing]_{\text{stative}}$ (ingressive)

2.9 *Causation:* get + *NP* + *XP*

When followed by an object and another argument, *get* denotes causation, as shown for the *to*-infinitive in (34):

(34) For years the United States had been trying to get these countries to exclude Castro's representative from secret military talks. (87th Congress, 1st Session. *Congressional Record*. 1961)

Although I have not made it explicit so far, this causative component is common to the interpretation of all the double-object examples of *get*. For the sake of simplicity, I consider all secondary predicates to be second objects and will refer to all the examples in (35), from Haegeman (1985: 56), as double-object constructions, regardless of the category of the second object. About 15 percent of all the examples of *get* in the Brown Corpus are ditransitive and thus have a causative interpretation.

(35) (a) John got her dozens of roses. (NP, lexical causative)
(b) John got his girlfriend in trouble. (PP)
(c) John got his feet wet. (AP)
(d) John got his girlfriend invited to all the meetings. (past participle)
(e) John got his students to work on another topic. (*to*-infinitive)
(f) John got his students working on another topic. (*-ing* participle)

The ditransitives in (35) all express the core meaning that 'the subject causes the object to have/be/do/start the second object'. The relevant connective auxiliary is determined by the category of the second object: an NP predicate gives the 'cause to have' interpretation, an AP or past participle gives the 'cause to be or become' interpretation, and an infinitive or *-ing* gives an eventive 'cause to do/start' interpretation. The structure I assume for the causatives is shown in (36), where the third argument can be any of the categories in (35).

(36) NP_1 *get* NP_2 $[NP/PP/AP/VP]_3$

The causative interpretation of *get* is not inherent to its lexical meaning, rather it is a function of the transitivity of *get*. When *get* is constructed ditransitively, the subject *must* be interpreted as either a causer or an agent. This thematic ambiguity is characteristic of causative constructions in general and the readings are distinguished by volitionality (Fujita,1996). A volitional subject is an agent, a nonvolitional subject a causer. There is one exception to this generalization; in the happenstance passive (Baron, 1977: 95), an experiencer reading of the subject is also

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Table 1 *Synchronic frequencies of the different complement types*

NP	PP/prt./adv.	AP	infinitive	past participle	*-ing*
39%	37%	9%	7%	8%	1%

Table 2 *Syntactic-semantic correspondences in* get

	noncausative	causative
onset of possession	*get* + NP	*get* + NP + NP
stative possession	*got* + NP	—
movement	*get* + PP/prt.	*get* + NP + PP/prt.
permission/causation	*get* + *to*-infinitive	*get* + NP + *to*-infinitive
obligation	*got* + *to*-infinitive	—
inchoative	*get* + AP/adjectival participle	*get* + NP + AP/adjectival participle
passive	*get* + passive participle	*get* + NP + passive participle
ingressive	*get* + (*to*)-V-*ing*	*get* + NP + V-*ing*
	get + *to*-infinitive$_{\text{stative}}$	*get* + NP + *to*-infinitive$_{\text{stative}}$

available as in *I got my ankle twisted in the fall*, where the object is a part of the subject. For more discussion of the configurational derivation of the causative reading and of the argument structure of *get* in general, see section 2.11.

2.10 Summary

Table 1 shows the synchronic frequencies of the different complement types of *get*. Percentagewise, the lexical meanings on the left of the table are much more common than the grammatical meanings on the right-hand side. Note that the infinitive complement is used for obligation, causative, ingressive aspect, and permission, while causative is also expressed by other categories.

Table 2 shows the correspondences between the structure and meaning of *get* in its various constructions. These correspondences are quite good, although they represent a slight simplification of the data. There is a fair amount of semantic overlap in specific examples making it impossible to count frequency on the basis of meaning alone.

The data presented in 2.1–2.9 make it clear that the interpretation of *get* depends to a high degree on its syntactic context. There are two primary factors which interact to create the synchronic polysemy in *get*: transitivity and the category of the second object. The ditransitive constructions express an underlying causative component of meaning, and the subject must be assigned an external theta role – causer/agent. The category of the second object affects the interpretation of *get* in a predictable way: there are evident differences between prepositional, adjectival, and verbal complements denoting locations, properties, and events respectively. Other

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relevant factors for the interpretation of *get* are the stativity of the embedded predicate and the stativity of the form of *get* itself.

Previous descriptions of *get* have been successful in relating many of these uses, but have failed to provide a unified analysis of all the MCs presented above and to capture the relations among the various uses. For instance, Baron (1977) treats only the causative uses. The *OED* describes most of these senses, but includes 34 partially overlapping entries not counting the prepositional constructions with specialized meanings. A lexical model which posits so many entries implies unnecessary multiple listings, homonym status for all the different uses, and misses generalizations about the compositionality of the different senses. Johansson & Oksefjell (1996), relying on traditional grammatical description, reduce the number of lexical entries to 19 uses and two prototypes, but this is still unnecessarily many, and they furthermore miss the infrequent uses like ingressive and permission. Miller (1985) discusses *get* both diachronically and synchronically, but due to the localist framework he assumes (which claims that spatial relations underlie all other semantic relations), Miller encounters difficulties in explaining the possession use. Haegeman's (1985) analysis treats the main verb construction denoting possession as the exception rather than the most basic construction from which the others are derived, as does this study. The present study also differs from Haegeman's in exploring the semantics of *get* and relating the various senses to their syntactic expression. Kimball (1973) relates a number of senses to 'come to have/be' within a generative framework but does not have the empirical basis of this paper. In the spirit of Kimball, I shall present a unified analysis of *get*: I propose one lexical entry for *get* to which all the different MCs are related by configurational factors. That is, the lexeme GET may have the same cognitive representation regardless of its function in different constructions. By assuming configurational determination of an underspecified lexical entry, my approach highlights general patterns of polysemy in natural language.

2.11 Skeletal meaning of get

I take *get* + NP to be the most basic construction for *get*.[5] The main verb construction has the simplest syntax, and it dominates use of this verb in both language acquisition (Baron, 1977: 151) and adult language; the main verb represents 39 percent of the examples in the Brown Corpus. Given that main verb *get* denotes the onset of possession, paraphrasable by 'come to possess', I propose (37) as the basic lexical entry for *get*.

(37) *get* = ingressive + 'have'

In (37), possession is coded by 'have', and the onset ('come to') is expressed by the ingressive component. I take the ingressive aspectual component to encode the initial point of a state, that is, the point at which the state begins to obtain (cf.

[5] There is strong diachronic support for this claim as *get* has only the main verb construction in early Middle English, that is before 1350.

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Frawley, 1992: 321). Johansson & Oksefjell (1996: 72) propose to capture the inherent meaning of *get* in a 'prototype', made up of the components [+agentive subject], [+change], and [+cause]. That these three elements make up the prototype is doubtful in my view. As discussed in section 2.9 above, agentive subjects and causation are interdependent and both result from the transitivity of *get*. The feature [+change] is the only viable candidate for a primitive, but I shall now argue that it is not the correct characterization of *get*.[6]

There have been different opinions in the literature about which aspectual features to assign to *get*. Resultative is suggested by Quirk et al. (1985: §3.66) and Denison (1993: 421, citing Wekker, 1985), while inchoative is suggested in Kimball's (1973: 206) 'come to have/be', as well as in Baron (1977: 93) and Johansson & Oksefjell (1996: 72). In some sense, both characterizations are correct while neither is sufficient. The trouble is that *get* enters into both resultative and inchoative constructions. As a main verb, *get* is resultative, and this is implied by the stative 'have' component; as a light verb, the whole construction composes to give the aspectual interpretation. *Get* does not denote the actual process of transition from one state to another as a true inchoative does (e.g. *become*), but rather the initial stages of a state, i.e. the emergence of a new state. This of course implies that a change-of-state has occurred.

Instead, I propose ingressive aspect as a component of the skeletal meaning of *get*, as it is abstract enough to capture both resultative and inchoative interpretations. Ingressive implies a polarity reversal (a term due to ter Meulen, 1995: 25) in the truth value of the embedded eventuality, where an eventuality which did not obtain prior to time *t* obtains as of the getting-event at *t*. Thus, resultative and inchoative are configurationally determined variants of the inherent meaning of ingressive aspect. Depending on the category of the complement and the context, different portions of the time axis of an emerging eventuality are focused, and this is reflected in these two terms. The decomposition of the meaning of *get* into an aspectual component and a stative verbal element thus provides both consistency and malleability in the meaning of *get*. A more useful 'prototype' for *get* is the basic lexical entry in (37): *get* = ingressive + 'have'. As we shall see in section 4, all the other uses of *get* can be derived from this abstract entry, which has the desirable effect of obviating multiple listings in the lexicon and avoiding homonym status for the different uses of *get*.

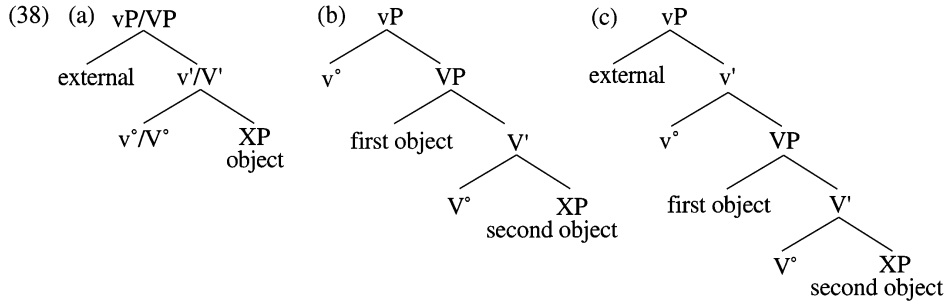
Let us briefly review the thematic structure of *get*. Essentially, *get* is a two- or three-place predicate, selecting an internal argument (the underlying object) and at least one other argument, an external argument and/or a second object. This argument structure allows three possible types of VP, shown in (38a–c). The simplest structure in (38a) is transitive with one internal and one external argument. The structure in (38b) is a two-place unaccusative predicate with two objects (cf.

[6] The feature [+change] could yield false predictions about the aspectual interpretation of *get*, as it does not specify the transition referred to; instead of the initial stages of a state, [+change] could denote the final stages.

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experiencer predicates), the first of which raises to subject position. The most complex structure is in (38c) where all three argument positions are filled.[7] The causative–unaccusative alternation in *get* (i.e. between 38b and c) is due to the general optionality of indirect objects with many verbs, e.g. *write/send/read somebody something*.

(38)



An external role is available in the causative, ditransitive structure (38c) as well as in (38a). The transitive structure (38a) is used for the 'obtain' reading of the main verb, as in *she got the book with her own money*, where the subject is a volitional agent, and for unergative uses with XP = PP, such as *she got up quickly*. In this case, the particle *up* counts as the complement of *get*; compare Hale & Keyser's (1993) analysis of unergative predicates as underlyingly derived from a light verb and an incorporated content word, e.g. *laugh* = 'do a laugh', except that *get* can be a periphrastic unergative. In the two-place unaccusative structure (38b), no external role is available and the subject cannot be interpreted as an agent or causer; therefore, this structure generates the 'receive' reading of the main verb as well as change-of-state MCs with XP = AP.

Structure (38c) is always causative, and I claim that the causative interpretation of *get*, as exemplified in (35), is due only to this configuration. The configurational derivation of causation can be explained in the following way, drawing on Ritter & Rosen's (1993) analysis of the causative use of *have*. The fact that *get* does not lexically specify the thematic roles of its objects allows the first object to be interpreted as thematically more closely linked with the second object, which is a predicate itself. That is, the two objects are interpreted together as a predication. There is a general tendency in ditransitive verbs for the two objects to be thematically related; in *she sent the book to her mother*, the PP is the goal of the movement of the NP object. Thus, when *get* takes a full predication as its complement, a complex predicate with two event specifications is formed, and *get* can introduce a new participant into the event expressed in the complement. The ingressive component in *get* marks the beginning of the embedded predication, thus

[7] I analyze *get* as an object control verb, contra Haegeman's (1985) analysis as a raising verb. Following a suggestion by Johan Rooryck (personal communication), I take the fact that the complement of *get* may be of any category as sufficient evidence for a control analysis as opposed to Exceptional Case Marking (ECM).

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extending the duration of the complex event back in time to include its causation, hence the causer/agent interpretation of the external argument of *get*.

Despite the appearances of lexical complexity presented in section 2, there is no need to posit a number of different lexical entries for *get*. Rather, the above senses can be derived from the basic lexical entry in (37) in composition with different syntactic environments if one assumes a theory of meaning incorporating enriched composition. In section 4, I examine how these different syntactic environments first became possible for *get*.

3 On explaining polysemy

In order to explain the polysemy in *get* which was described in section 2, it is necessary to explain how the different syntactic contexts arose in which this verb appears. When viewed diachronically, the minimal changes in the syntax and semantics of *get* can be isolated in their order of development; this shows immediately how the various MCs are related to one another, which can remain opaque in a purely synchronic approach. While chronological ordering is necessary to assign a relationship between source and resulting constructions, it is not sufficient evidence and some semantic and/or structural proximity must be identified as well. Therefore, in a diachronic analysis, I shall try to explain the syntagmatic changes in complement type and overall construction of *get* in order to show how the current polysemy came to be.

3.1 Grammaticalization in general

One of the most common diachronic changes in language is grammaticalization, the process whereby a linguistic item assumes a more grammatical meaning and increased grammatical function than it had previously. Semantic change alone is not a sufficient criterion for grammaticalization, rather a change in semantic features must be mirrored by a change in the syntactic distribution of the item. I assume that lexical items consist of a set of features (Chomsky, 1995), including syntactic, semantic, and phonological features, which determines the distribution of the item. Of the semantic features, some are more lexical (e.g. manner features) and others more grammatical (e.g. aspectual features); the difference should be intuitively clear, although I do not explore this question in detail. Grammaticalization of an item thus involves the loss of (some of) its semantic features, the lexical ones, leaving the functional ones to determine a more grammaticalized distribution.

Grammaticalization cannot involve the addition of lexical semantic features as this putative process would be totally unconstrained. This constraint on change is expressed in the hypothesis of unidirectionality, which assumes a universal 'pathway that channels change through a limited number of structures that are minimally different from one another' (Traugott & Heine, 1991: 4). That is, the source and resulting MCs of the item are minimally different, and the relation between them

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can only go in one direction, i.e. from lexical to grammatical. It is in this respect that grammaticalization differs from parameter shift, which can go in either direction between two values.

However, the path of development cannot be predicted by simply crossing off lexical features one after another, and unidirectionality does not imply a single path of development, because items are not used in isolation. These facts form the basis of the source determination hypothesis (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca, 1994: 9), which claims that 'the actual meaning of the construction that enters into grammaticalization uniquely determines the path that grammaticalization follows, and consequently, the resulting grammatical meanings'. An item may become associated with different uses in different contexts, leading to more than one grammaticalization chain; cf. Craig's (1991: 455) 'polygrammaticalization'. These chains are observed synchronically in the polysemy of a single item, where the degree of semantic proximity between different uses corresponds to the relative stages of the grammaticalization chain (Craig, 1991: 456). As for which items are candidates for grammaticalization, lexical items are affected under the conditions of semantic generality and frequency (cf. Traugott & Heine, 1991: 9). This explains why *get*, which is both general and frequent, becomes grammatical rather than another verb from the same domain like *obtain* or *acquire*.

Most work on grammaticalization has been done within a functional framework (see for instance Bybee et al., 1994; Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer, 1991; Hopper & Traugott, 1993), although there are formal accounts of the phenomenon as well, for example Roberts (1993). My approach mixes aspects of both approaches where useful, making the analysis somewhat eclectic from a theoretical point of view.

The present study assumes, with formal approaches, that (imperfect) acquisition is the locus of language change. Feature change occurs when learners of generation G_X attribute specific components of the meaning of an utterance to specific components of its structure in a slightly different way from speakers of a previous generation G_{X-1}, thus acquiring a novel feature set for the item. The adult speaker has a more limited role to play in grammaticalization; when confronted with a MC not generated by her own lexicon, she may, if contact with the use is sufficient, as in L2/dialect situations, posit a new, less lexically contentful set of features for the item alongside the original lexical set of features.

Although the locus of change is acquisition, learners of G_X wouldn't make a novel analysis of the input if this were the same as that to G_{X-1}. That is, the usage of an item must change just enough during the time between acquisition by G_{X-1} and G_X to be compatible with a more grammatical feature set for the item. These subtle changes in input are due to language use. Contextual changes in usage can be motivated by cognitive processes of the kind espoused in functional approaches. Grammaticalization is thus the result of context-induced reanalysis, one of the most basic principles of grammaticalization (Heine, 1996).

This study is similar to functionalist works in examining the evolution of a linguistic unit, rather than a series of synchronic grammars as in most formal

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diachronic syntax (see however Fischer (1994) for a formal syntactic analysis of the evolution of *have* + *to*-infinitive). Tracing the evolution of an item involves the following three steps: first, the empirical work of identifying minimally different sources and resulting constructions; second, the descriptive work of stating the reanalysis and the context in which it occurred, and third, motivating the reanalysis by positing a reasonable link from the source to the resulting construction.

The links from source to resulting construction are mechanisms of change which account for the 'actuation problem' (cf. Weinreich, Labov & Herzog, 1968: 102). Actuation poses the question of what sets off a change at a given point in time in a given language, i.e. what triggers speakers of G_X to posit a different feature set for an item from speakers of G_{X-1}. These mechanisms should be abductive, in the sense of Andersen (1973), where language learners proceed from (limited) observed input, invoke a rule (or feature set), and infer that something may be the case on this basis. As an anonymous reviewer points out, a novel analysis is only abductive if the inference is 'wrong', but this is necessarily the case from the perspective of the relevant feature set in G_{X-1}.

The primary mechanism for grammaticalization is reanalysis, which accounts for syntagmatic rule change occurring suddenly; see among others Hopper & Traugott (1993). Once a reanalysis has occurred, it may become conventionalized and established by a secondary mechanism – analogy, which accounts for the paradigmatic spread of rules and may occur gradually. Note that analogy is also relevant to adult speakers, who may spread an innovation to new contexts in the search for expressivity. In addition, I propose a type of reanalysis that I call *lexical excorporation* and that occurs when one of the components of the item, which would have been incorporated into it, is lexicalized as a separate element.[8] That is, a component which would have gone into building up the lexical meaning of the item instead occurs independently, and the item is thus 'bleached' of this component. This is partially inspired by Croft's (1995) mechanism of reanalysis called hyperanalysis which accounts for the loss of semantic content from the linguistic unit to the context, although I apply it here to the structural components.

Mechanisms such as reanalysis, analogy, and my lexical excorporation can sometimes be further motivated by appeals to cognitive processes like generalization, inference, learning strategies, and various speaker-oriented goals, like creativity and expressivity. Inference leads to the addition of abstract meaning to the item, while generalization leads to the loss of concrete meaning in a linguistic item. Generalization differs from my proposed lexical excorporation in that the 'bleached' semantic component is realized overtly in the latter. Metaphor is often taken to motivate conceptual shift, and while it often characterizes a grammaticalization chain as a whole, this study has found no evidence that metaphor drives the process.

Synchronic semantic processes of enriched composition can also feed diachronic

[8] Technically, this assumes that verbs are a derivative category, as suggested by Hale & Keyser (1993) and argued more generally by Hoekstra (1994). However, the details do not concern me here.

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reanalysis, and several reanalyses to be discussed in section 4 are driven by the mechanism of type-coercion (cf. Pustejovsky, 1995). In type-coercion, a complement is coerced to a well-formed semantic interpretation by a governing item in the phrase, even if its syntactic type does not match the semantic type required. For instance, in *Mary began a beer*, the NP complement is coerced to an activity reading 'drinking a beer' (1995: 61). Diachronically, a reanalysis occurs when type-coercion ceases to take place. Thus, synchronic mechanisms affect syntactic use which feeds diachronic processes.

Within a formalist approach, Roberts (1993) proposes that diachronic reanalysis is driven by a general learning strategy to eliminate movement, thereby creating the simplest syntactic chains possible. For the evolution of the auxiliaries, this implies a reanalysis of a lexical verb as an element base-generated in the head of IP (rather than undergoing obligatory V-to-I movement). An analysis along these lines would locate *get* in its most grammatical uses in an aspectual or modal phrase, but not as high as the canonical position for auxiliaries in IP, since it lacks the NICE properties of auxiliaries: *get* patterns with the lexical verbs in taking *do*-support and in not allowing subject inversion, negative contraction, or VP deletion. This type of reanalysis is relevant to the later stages of grammaticalization, once an obligatory movement can be reinterpreted as the elimination of movement. This study of the early stages of grammaticalization explores the loss of lexical semantic features which must precede elimination of movement. However, my approach to polysemy assumes a learning strategy such that as few lexical entries are posited as possible, particularly when they are related to each other in predictable ways.

In summary, an item grammaticalizes when it is given a novel feature set (i.e. is reanalyzed) by the learner. The change in input to the learner is the result of functional and pragmatic processes generally at work in human beings. In section 4, I examine the loss of lexical features in *get*; I present the analysis in terms of a structural and semantic decomposition and motivate the grammaticalization of *get* in terms of the mechanisms discussed above.

3.2 The grammaticalization of the semantic domain of possession

The verb *get* is a typical example of a verb which has undergone grammaticalization – its meaning is highly dependent on the context (in fact, it can only be determined in context), and it has variable subcategorization properties resulting in multiple meanings. In short, it is a good example of polygrammaticalization. As many lexical uses of *get* remain, this study is concerned with the beginning of the grammaticalization process (increased syntacticization) rather than with the later loss of lexical uses (increased grammaticalization). Clearly, not all the senses described in section 2 are 'grammatical', but all the innovations are equally good examples of grammaticalization given the above definition.

Given that the early stages of grammaticalization often lead to polysemy, one may wonder to what extent the polysemy found in *get* is to be expected from its lexical

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source, possession. Some language-internal support for the source determination hypothesis is found in the following comparison with another verb from the same source domain, namely *have,* which comes from the Old English *habban* and was an active verb meaning 'to hold (in hand)'. Consider the examples in (39):

(39)		*have*	*get*
(a)	causative	She had him arrest us.	She got him to arrest us.
		She had him arrested.	She got him arrested.
(b)	movement	(40)	They got him away from the fight.
(c)	passive	He had his head cut off.	He got his head cut off.
(d)	obligation	He has to go now.	He's got to go now.
(e)	probability	You have to be joking.	You've got to be joking.
(f)	possession	I had a book.	I got a book.
(g)	resultative	I have the paper finished.	I got the paper finished.
(h)	anterior	I have finished the paper.	I got finished *(with) the paper.

Although *have* has lost the movement sense, in Middle English, it could take a locative complement as in (40), denoting either subject or object movement depending on transitivity.

(40) His knyghtes toke hym and hadde hym awaye fro the bataylle (1490. *Eneydos I. OED have* §16a)
'his knights took him and got him away from the battle'

The examples in (39a)–(e) show a parallel pattern in the distribution of *have* and *get*, i.e. they enter into a number of the same MCs. This overlap in usage indicates that these verbs have undergone similar developments, at least in the early stages. This supports the source determination hypothesis in that lexical items with similar meanings are likely to develop in similar ways in the same contexts. Comparative evidence for this is also found in the similar polysemy in the etymologically unrelated verbs in Germanic languages. In Swedish, *få* denotes the onset of possession, 'to be successful' or 'to manage', permission, obligation, causation, and ingressive aspect with perception verbs. Although Dutch *krijgen* denotes the passive onset of possession 'receive', it has developed the causative sense 'strive/manage to' with adjectival and participial complements (Hoekstra, 1984: 67). Causative readings of *krijgen* are thus available even though the main verb cannot have an agentive role associated with it.

However, the source determination hypothesis does not claim that lexical items with the same meaning must follow the same evolution, because grammaticalization is determined not by the item but by the construction in which it occurs. This is also seen in the comparison of *get* and *have* in (39f)–(h), where their uses diverge due to aspectual differences among other things. The basic aspectual difference is evident already in the possessive example (f). In contexts where this difference is neutralized, such as (d)–(e), there is no difference in meaning. Both verbs can be used resultatively (g), but in different tenses, and while *have* is the general temporal auxiliary marking anterior tense, *get* does not have purely temporal uses; the would-be anterior tense in (h) is inchoative. That the participle following *get* in (h) is

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adjectival is shown by the fact that it does not license case for its object as does the verbal past participle following *have*.

Synchronically, there are even more differences between *get* and *have.* Some of these may depend on the degree of grammaticalization; for instance, causative *have* is constructed with a bare infinitive, a VP, while causative *get* requires the infinitive marker *to*, an IP. On the pattern of the modal verbs, a more grammaticalized verb would be expected not to select the infinitival marker *to*. Other differences point to further divergence. Causative *get* has a wider distribution among complement types than causative *have*, which cannot be constructed with locative or adjectival complements. Although both verbs have the obligation and causative constructions, only *get* has the permission, ingressive, and inchoative readings. The locative movement construction in *have* could in principle have led to developments similar to those in *get*, such as the inchoative. But crucial to the current differences between *get* and *have* is that *have* + locative died out and these developments never occurred. That is, the increased syntacticization of *have* gave way to increased grammaticalization, and its polysemy was curtailed. The beginning stages of grammaticalization include a widening in the distribution of an item and a generalization of its meaning, e.g. the current status of *get*, while the later stages include a narrowing of distribution and a specification of meaning within one grammatical domain, e.g. the current status of *have*.

4 Diachronic development

Let us now examine the diachronic development of *get* in order to relate the different senses to one another. The historical analysis is crucial as I only assume synchronic links when they are confirmed as possible by diachronic changes. Most of the data are taken from the Helsinki Corpus of Historical English,[9] although other sources are used as well, and the study contains about 500 instances of *get*.

The lexical roots of *get* are found as recently as Middle English. Etymologically, *get* comes from the Old Norse *geta*, Old English **gietan*, from the Old Teutonic **getan* 'to get, obtain', Old Aryan **ghed*, **ghod* 'to seize, take hold of'. The development of the different complement types with *get* is summarized in percentages in Table 3. Note that the causative variants often precede their intransitive counterparts (see the past participle and infinitival constructions), indicating that, in general, a category change occurs more easily for the second object than the first and when two objects are present that can be interpreted as a predication.

4.1 The main verb construction

Until the late fourteenth century, *get* is constructed only as a main verb, denoting the onset of possession (ingressive + 'have'). Centered around this basic meaning,

[9] The diachronic part of the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts contains 1.5 million words from a selection of text types from the Old, Middle, and Early Modern English periods. Like the Brown Corpus, it is contained in the ICAME Collection of English Language Corpora.

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Table 3 *The grammaticalization of* get *in the Helsinki Corpus*

	1150–1350	1350–1420	1420–1500	1500–1570	1570–1640	1640–1710	Mod. Eng.
NP	100%	67% (51)	75% (75)	63% (51)	64% (75)	50% (69)	37% (544)
NP + NP		13% (10)	13% (13)	5% (4)	4% (5)	1% (2)	.9% (13)
PP/prt/adv		1% (1)	3% (3)	6% (5)	8% (10)	29% (40)	30% (438)
NP + P/prt/adv		9% (7)	9% (9)	25% (20)	17% (20)	7% (9)	9% (127)
infinitive						.7% (1)	5% (71)
NP + inf.				1% (1)	6% (7)	6% (7)	2% (23)
AP						3% (4)	8% (119)
NP + AP						1% (2)	.9% (14)
past participle						1% (2)	5% (77)
NP + past part					.8% (1)	.7% (1)	3% (45)
-ing							.4% (6)
NP + *-ing*							.3% (4)
total		69	100	81	118	137	1481

there are several sub-domains of meaning, which are related to it by co-composition (Pustejovsky, 1995: 62), where the complement affects the meaning of the head. The *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED*) lists the following senses for the main verb: a) 'acquire, earn, win, buy, find, receive', as in (41–42); b) 'catch, get hold of, seize, conquer, capture, win a friend or spouse', as in (43); c) 'fetch, bring', as in (44); d) 'to be successful, win', as in (45); e) 'to give (sth. to sb.), provide', as in (46); f) 'beget, conceive a child', as in (47);[10] and g) 'make, produce, create', as in the rather rare (48). While concrete objects are typical for *get* at this early stage, abstract objects are also found, as in (45) and (49).

(41) Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye Than that the person gat in monthes tweye
(Chaucer, *The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. c1387–95)
'In a day he got himself more money than the parson got in two months'

(42) Wel is set þe mete þu etes And þe hire þat þu getes (*Havelok*. c1300 (*MED get* 1/2))
'well is set the food you eat and the wages that you get'

(43) Arthure, which had grete warre in hys dayes for to gete all Inglonde into hys honde (Malory, *Morte Darthur*. 1470)
'Arthur, who made great war in his days in order to get all England into his hand'

(44) Waspasion … bade Wellosian goo in hast to gete hyme a dessipull of Cryst. (*The Siege of Jerusalem in Prose*. c1500)
'Waspasion requested Wellosian to go quickly to get him a disciple of Christ'

(45) I schel þe helpe wiþ alle me miȝt, Wiþ dent of swerd to gete þe riȝt. (*The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*. c1330)
'I shall help you with all my power, with stroke of sword to get you justice'

[10] This archaic sense is last found in the Helsinki Corpus in 1630.

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(46) Now complayneth Curtoys that he with payne had goten a puddyng in the wynter (Caxton, *The History of Reynard the Fox*. 1477–84)
'Now Curtoys complains that he with difficulty had gotten a sausage in the winter'
(47) ne children sholde I none upon hire geten (Chaucer, *The Merchant's Tale*. c1395)
'neither would I have any children with her'
(48) The flesh shall first be roten and neewe geten ayen at the general assemblee (*Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*. c1450)
'The flesh shall first become rotten and newly created again at the general assembly'
(49) Certes I wolde say that he woulde get hym soueraigne felicitie and blessednes. (Colville, *Boethius*. 1556)

Given the source meaning 'to seize', the subject in the earliest stages is typically but not necessarily agentive. When the object of *get* is abstract, the subject is less likely to be interpreted agentively (note, however, (45), where the object is abstract and the subject agentive), and ambiguous readings of the subject become possible. The frequency of agentive subjects decreases with time, as shown in Table 4 below; this change is facilitated (i) by the explicit mention of the source in an adjunct, as in (50), and (ii) by the increased frequency of objects like *knowledge* or *permission* (51), which are inherently granted by an external agent.

(50) þarfore drink of me gettes þou nane (*The New Testament: St John.* c1388)
'therefore you get nothing to drink from me'
(51) And jn no wyse I kwd not getyn no grawnth of here to sesyn tyl ge com hom (Paston, *Letter to Husband*. 1448)
'and in no way could I get permission from her to cease until you come home'

To conclude, even in the source construction, the meaning of *get* is general, and its specific sense depends on the semantic properties of the object and the context in general; i.e., the various senses listed in the *MED* are contextually determined.

In order to understand further developments, we must have a more detailed analysis of possessive constructions. Crosslinguistically, there are two major ways to express possession, represented in (52) (cf. Ultan, 1978: 33–5).

(52) (a) possessor 'have' possessum (I have a book.)
(b) possessum 'be' P_{LOC} possessor (Lat: Est mihi liber. 'is to-me book')

The relation between the two constructions is structural in that 'have' in (52a) corresponds to 'be' + a locative preposition in (52b); this basic alternation between the two different surface realizations of possession was first noticed by Benveniste (1960). Typological evidence for this connection is presented in Freeze (1992), and the structural relation is made explicit in Kayne (1993). Kayne's analysis implies that both constructions in (52) have the same underlying structure. If P_{LOC} is lexicalized, possession will be expressed by a locative construction (52b), whereas an abstract P_{LOC} will be incorporated into the verb, and the surface expression of possession will be 'have'.

As *get* is an aspectual variant of *have,* it is possible to establish the following analogy: *get:become* :: *have:be*. Each pair includes a possessive and a copula verb, and the first pair has ingressive aspect while the second is stative. Therefore, I

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Table 4 *The decline in agentivity inherent to the subject of* get

	agentive	recipient or ambiguous
1350–1420	87%	13%
1420–1500	72%	28%
1500–1710	62%	38%
present	42%	58%

propose the decomposition in (53b) as more explicitly representing the structure of the components of *get*.

(53) (a) *get* = ingressive + 'have' (cf. (37) above)
(b) *get* = ingressive + ['be' + P_{LOC}]

The decomposition in (53b) is abstract, and P_{LOC} does not surface here as an overt preposition. P_{LOC} can be taken as a functional element which, if lexicalized, is realized by the category P, synchronically a closed class of functional items. The P may remain abstract, therefore being incorporated into the verb, or it can be lexicalized, leading to a different sense for the whole construction, as we shall see. Although the remainder of the analysis is not concerned so much with the underlying structure of the constructions, it is necessary to appeal to such an analysis of the basic components in order to understand further developments, in particular to relate the two dominant constructions: possession and movement.

4.2 Locative constructions

The first extension in the construction of *get* is to the locative complement which occurs in the late fourteenth century; both the transitive and intransitive variants appear at the same time, contra Baron (1977: 90). Discussion of the transitive examples is postponed until section 4.3 on causative *get*, although the same reanalysis applies to both. During the period between 1500 and 1640, subject-oriented movement is frequently constructed with a reflexive pronoun as in (54), especially in biblical style and in the imperative. Jespersen (1909–49, 3: 325, 331) suggested that the intransitive locative in (55) evolved from the reflexive transitive one in (54) by deletion of the reflexive. However, as Baron (1977: 91) notes, and this is supported empirically in the Helsinki Corpus, this cannot be correct, because the reflexive does not become common until after 1500.

(54) þat yure wyl be euir at gete yu fra scaþe; þat ye gete yu fra iuil þohtes (*The Benedictine Rule*. a1425)
'that your will be ever to get yourself from danger/harm; that you get yourself away from evil thoughts'

(55) Fader . . . get vp in bedde, wiþ þis mete þou sal be fedde. (*Cursor* (Frf 3721). a1400. (*MED get* 5))
'Father, get up in bed, with this food you shall be fed.'

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The locative construction is an innovation both syntactically and semantically: it is not *get* itself which signals movement, but rather *get* + its locative complement. This construction is derived straightforwardly from the decomposition in (53b) by the mechanism I have called lexical excorporation. In the resulting construction, the locative preposition is not abstract and therefore not incorporated into the verbal head. Rather, it is lexicalized as an independent word: *up, from, into, on,* etc., leading to the interpretation of *get* as [ingressive + 'be'], as in (56).[11]

(56) (a) [ingressive + 'be' + P] + NP >
(b) [ingressive + 'be'] + $P_{lexicalized}$ + NP >
(c) *get* + PP = locative construction denoting movement

Get thus loses the incorporated prepositional component and retains only the components [ingressive + 'be'] = *come to be*, which can often be used to paraphrase *get* in this sense. This reanalysis is crucial as it opens the way for several of the other MCs which develop in *get*. In the locative, the thematic role of the complement is quite different from that of the object in the possession construction. This is due to the lexicalized P which specifies the complement's role as a goal. The thematic role of the internal argument of *get* is best characterized as lexically unspecified and determined first in context.

Further support for assuming a structural connection between possession and locative movement comes from Baron's acquisition data, which show that the intransitive locative construction has the second highest frequency after possession and that these two senses are acquired either simultaneously or the possession sense first followed closely by movement (Baron, 1977: 151–2). Moreover, the same polysemy was seen in (40) for *have.*

To summarize, from the transitive structure in (56a), we get the 'intransitive' structure in (56c) by the lexicalization of the prepositional element, shown in (56b). This structural change is reflected in the loss of possession meaning and the resulting movement interpretation. Lexical excorporation immediately explains why the grammaticalization of a unit often involves bleaching of its lexical meaning: previously incorporated elements are lost to the context when lexicalized. This mechanism also explains the sudden jump in the evolution of *get* from a transitive verb to an intransitive construction.

4.3 Causative constructions

The evolution of causative *get* has received some attention in the literature; see e.g. Baron (1977) and the references cited there. Baron takes *get* + NP + locative to be

[11] It was suggested to me independently by Henk van Riemsdijk and João Costa that this may be a reanalysis of the preposition in a dative possession construction during a period when dative case marking was lost. However, to my knowledge, there is no evidence that Middle English had a dative possession construction, except in limited examples such as *a father to me*. Neither Visser (1963) nor the *OED* gives any indication of the copula *be* being used to denote possession and this construction is not attested for *get*.

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the first causative construction, which she assumes is derived from *get* + locative by the insertion of an object. Instead, I suggest that a more likely source is the benefactive variant of the main verb construction 'provide somebody with something', shown in (57)–(59):

(57) And bar þe mete to þe castel, And gat him þere a ferþing wastel. (*Havelok*. c1300)
'And took the food to the castle, and there got himself a farthing loaf'
(58) 'quat es your will?' 'Gett vs a king.' (*Cursor Mundi*. a1400 (a1325))
'what is your will? Get us a king.'
(59) I xal purueyin for þe & getyn þe frendys to helpyn þe. (Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, vol. I. c1438)
'I shall provide for you and get you friends to help you.'

The object in (57) is reflexive but it is nonetheless explicit and induces the causative interpretation. The benefactive, which can reasonably be attributed to the general optionality of expressing indirect objects, is attested at least as far back as 1150–1250, and it is inherently causative: *get* + NP_{IO} + NP_{DO} means 'cause NP_{IO} to have NP_{DO}' (cf. 35 above).

As expected given the underlying structural connection between possession and locative movement discussed above, the first extension from the benefactive is to causative locative complements. This extension also occurs by lexical excorporation, in the late fourteenth century. Some examples are shown in (60)–(61):

(60) that a man coveyte to geten alle thise thynges togidre (Chaucer, *Boethius*. a1425 (c1380))
'that a man wants to get all these things together'
(61) For with that orison sche getyth to God ful many soules þat were in oure power fast beforn. (Reynes, *The Commonplace Book of Robert Reynes of Acle*. 1470–1500)
'For with that prayer she gets to God many souls that had been firmly in our power.'

The next extension in the causative paradigm is to infinitival complements; this occurs first with the copula *be*, as in (62), and somewhat later with content verbs, as in (63):

(62) and I wyll see yf that I can gete another to be bownd with me. (Mowntayne, *The Autobiography of Thomas Mowntayne*. 1553)
'and I will see if I can get another to be bound with me.'
(63) and yet I cannot get you to leaue her company. (Deloney, *Jack of Newbury*. 1597)

The change from prepositional to verbal complements can be explained in the following way. In both cases, *get* is followed by the relator *to*, which is formally ambiguous between the general directional marker of goal arguments and the infinitive marker; that is, *to* can take NP or VP complements and its meaning is determined by the category of the complement. This 'ambiguity' is certainly not an historical accident; the reanalysis of *to* is functionally determined. It has been argued in the literature that the infinitive marker is a preposition; see for instance Español-Echevarra & Mahajan (1995), Disterheft (1977), Miller (1985: 179), and Duffley (1992). The real change is one of the preposition's complement type from noun to

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infinitive. The NP denotes the goal of a movement, a location, which can be interpreted as being in a state. A state is also denoted by the first extension to the copula in (62). This change is thus a type-coercion where the category is extended while the semantic selection of a goal is upheld. In the next step, the category of the complement (infinitive) is held constant while there is an extension to eventive infinitives when type-coercion ceases to occur. Thus, in the first step, the semantic selection of a goal is held constant while the new category is introduced, and then because the new category is multifunctional it introduces a new potential MC. This category change is accompanied by the inference that if an object is moved to an eventuality, expressed in the infinitival potential future (Stowell, 1982), then the object is associated with that activity at a point in time after the getting-event (Bybee et al., 1994). As *get* marks the beginning stages of the event, the causative denotes obligation to start engaging in the activity. These changes are summarized in (64):

(64) *get* + PP = to_{goal} $\text{NP}_{\text{location/state}}$ > to_{goal} [*be* NP]$_{\text{state}}$ > to_{goal} $\text{VP}_{\text{eventuality}}$ > *get* + VP

During the sixteenth century, causative *get* spreads to adjectival complements, the AP in (65) and the participles in (66) and (67). This category change is addressed in section 4.5.

(65) He . . . knitting all his force, got one hand free (1590. *OED get* 29)
(66) I can get no such some [=sum] confessed. (1548. *OED get* 28)
(67) Will Sommers hee gets him gone for feare. (Armin, *Fools and Jesters: A Nest of Ninnies*. 1608)

4.4 The have got *construction*

The *have got* construction denoting stative possession is documented in the *OED* in 1849, but occurs earlier in the corpus; this sense is found in contexts which invite a resultative reading, as in (68). This example is ambiguous between the onset and the continuation of possession, based on the reasonable inference that the onset of possession implicates its continuation.

(68) but I thanke god, I have got good securitie for my mony (Knyvett, *Letters*. 1621)

By 1697, the stative sense has been established as shown in (69) below, which unambiguously expresses stative possession. As noted in section 2.2, it is the construction *have got* rather than the lexeme GET which grammaticalizes.

(69) What the Devil, have they got no Ears in this House? (Vanbrugh, *The Relapse*. 1697)

As noted above, the stative form *got* stands in opposition to *gotten*, in a clear example of polygrammaticalization or layering (cf. Hopper & Traugott, 1993: 124), meaning that these forms have, in American English at least, developed differentiated functions within the same semantic domain (Quirk et al., 1985: 113). In the perfect tense, they occur in complementary distribution: *got* is used for stative senses

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such as stative possession (70a) and obligation (70b) as its temporal reference is present (cf. 72d and 13a), while *gotten* is used for nonstative uses like the onset of possession (13b,d), causative inchoative (71a), and permission (71b).

(70) (a) I've got a witch mad at me. (*The Wizard of Oz*) (possession)
(b) I've got to eat in restaurants every night this week. (obligation)
(71) (a) They've gotten him mad at the system. (inchoative)
(b) I've gotten to eat in restaurants every night this week. (permission)

The stative use of *got* is a direct result of the advanced grammaticalization of *have*, which is both semantically and phonetically deteriorated. The perfect tense *have got* signals that the results of a previous and culminated event are relevant to the present, as shown in (72a). The ingressive component in *get* is incompatible with the continuation of the state of possession through the time of utterance and is dropped as in (72b). The next step occurs when *have,* especially the contracted, cliticized form *-ve*, but not *-'s* (in standard English at least), is phonetically dropped as in (72c), which happens easily in informal, spoken language.[12] The final step in the change is an inference on the part of the learner/listener, who must attribute the evident contextual meaning 'relevant to the present' to the formal pieces of the utterance. The present tense is thus assigned to *got*, as indicated in (72d), the only verbal element which can bear this temporal information. In this way, the aspectual difference between *have* and *get* is neutralized in the constructions with the perfect *got*.

(72) (a) *have got* = current relevance + ingressive + 'have'
(b) current relevance Ø 'have'
(c) $Ø_{phonetic}$ present 'have'
(d) *got* = [present + 'have']

The change leading to stative possession is a context-induced reanalysis of *got*, given the deterioration of *have*. The reanalysis in (72d) is a good example of what Croft (1995) calls hypo-analysis, where a contextual semantic feature (present tense) is (mis-)analyzed as inherent to a given item (*got*) thus causing change in that item. This mis-attribution of present tense to *got* explains why children overgeneralize as in *she gots* (Bybee, p.c.). Although stative possession is a possible outcome given the source meaning of *get* (for instance, had the aspectual component been lost), it is induced artificially quickly in *got* by the grammaticalization of *have*; that is, the process occurred quicker than normal processes of change would have produced this sense. The general phonetic and semantic deterioration of *have* thus functions like a drag-chain, in the Neogrammarian sense, in pulling *got* towards stative uses.

4.5 Inchoative

Around 1600, *get* develops a change-of-state, or inchoative, construction with both AP and adjectival past participle complements. I focus here on the intransitive

[12] The fact that the third person singular *-'s* cannot be dropped in standard English implies that an underlying auxiliary *have* is present in the structure.

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construction as the inchoative sense is much clearer than in the transitive examples which include the additional causative component. This section gives evidence that the inchoative develops out of the locative by means of a type-coercion and subsequently a reanalysis. Before motivating this diachronic link, I shall consider and dismiss two other possible diachronic links.

One possibility is a metaphorical development from the main verb construction with a recipient subject and an abstract object denoting a state, as in (73), to an actual change-of-state construction with an adjectival complement, as in (74). From (73), the learner may infer that the subject *wine* has undergone a change of state, such that it is characterized by the property *clearness*.

(73) And another sorte is called newe Wine, which hath left his sweetnes & gotten clearenesse, but yet it is not long since it was made. (Turner, *A New Boke of the Natures and Properties of All Wines*. 1568)
(74) On the instant they got cleare of our Shippe. (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. 1602)

While (74) is not entirely isolated (Shakespeare has another *get cleere* example from 1596), this is the only adjective attested until the mid-seventeenth century, and *get clear* was probably a fixed expression. This indicates that the inchoative construction does not arise simply due to processes of metaphor. Nor can metaphor account for the change in category NP > AP. That *get clear* denotes movement as well as change-of-state supports my proposed diachronic link as will be shown below.

Another possibility is to take the source to be the locative, as I do, but to assume that metaphor is the linking mechanism. After all, a metaphorical relation exists between the source construction expressing spatial movement and the result denoting entry into a mental state, such that a structure is transferred from a concrete to a more abstract domain in accordance with the principle of concretization (Heine, 1995). This change is thus an example of the well-known metaphor STATES are CONTAINERS (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), entailing that states can be entered, left, etc. However, the actual mechanism of change cannot be metaphorical. In (54) above, we saw that the locative MC was used metaphorically in the earliest stages (c. 1425) without this giving rise to the inchoative construction.

Example (74) is an early example of *get* + AP, and extensions from this are found in a specific type of context; namely, where the AP can be interpreted directionally, as in *Having . . . gotten loose from their Enemies* (Harris, *Parival's Iron Age*. 1695. 169 (cited in Visser, §234)). Consider also the second instance of *get* in (75) and the examples in (76) and (77):

(75) but all the assistance I do expect and find is from my Brother Barrow as yet; but if I get one step in [on] the way I doubt not of getting farther (Oxinden, *Letters*. 1662)
(76) her heart was bursting within, and she was only happy when she cou'd get alone, to vent her griefs and moans with sighs and tears (Behn, *Oroonoko*. 1688)
(77) we staid so long to take our leave of your Huntsmen this morning, that the Sun is got so high, and shines so clear, that I will not undertake the catching of a Trout till evening (Walton, *The Compleat Angler*. 1676)

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Table 5 *Changes in the complement of* get *in the intransitive locative construction*

period	pre-1500	1500–1640	1640–1710
category	preposition/particle	+ adverb	+ adjective, participle
sense	spatial	spatial	spatial or mental
example	in, to, away, from, within, into	home, back, past, ashore, aboard	farther, alone, drunk, dressed

(75) shows an adverbial complement. The adjectival complement in (76) denotes the goal of a voluntary spatial movement, and the context invites the inference that the goal is even a mental state that the subject enters. The reanalysis occurs in environments where the AP complement can denote both spatial movement as well as a mental change of state. Example (77) combines a directional AP complement with a subject that can be [±agentive]; the auxiliary selection is that of an unaccusative verb, i.e. *be*, which was optional in Middle English (cf. Haegeman, 1985: 71–2), while, as an anonymous reviewer points out, it is possible to interpret *the sun* as an entity with agentive power.

Examples (75)–(77) show the changes that occur in the locative complement of *get*. Before 1500, the goal of movement can only be coded by a PP or particle. Between 1500 and 1640, spatial adverbs, such as *ashore, aboard, home,* and *past,* are found in addition. The period from 1640 to 1710 witnesses the spread to directional or spatial adjectives like *farther*, *alone*, and *high*, as in (75)–(77). These changes are summarized in Table 5.

The inchoative construction with adjectival past participles develops at the same time as the AP complement; see for instance (78) and (79):

(78) But then again, they begin so abominable early, a Man must rise by Candle-light to get dress'd by the Psalm (Vanbrugh, *The Relapse*. 1697)
(79) for when this Fellow of mine gets drunk, he minds nothing (Farquhar, *The Beaux Stratagem*. 1707)

This extension is not surprising, as the distribution of APs and past participles is similar to that of PPs/particles. Baron (1972: 165) notes this for the acquisition examples in (80) and (81) (her boldface):

(80) am I getting them **off** or getting them **clean**?
(81) getting her hair **washed**.

There is thus a progressive generalization of what categories can encode the goal argument of *get* in the locative, shown in (82):

(82) *get* + PP/particle > Adverb > AP/adjectival past participle = inchoative

The linking mechanism in (82) is type-coercion, in that *get* coerces the adverbial and later adjectival complements into a goal reading. While the semantics remain constant from one example to the next (i.e. the semantic selection of a goal is

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satisfied in each step), the category change allows a new interpretation to be established. Once the category AP is established, type-coercion no longer takes place, and the new complement type favors a different interpretation from the source, namely change-of-state rather than change-of-location. This evolution provides a clear example of the interaction between structure and meaning in language change: holding the semantic selection of the head constant allows the syntax to change, and then the new subcategorization frame allows the semantics to extend to a new domain.

4.6 Passive

Example (83) is the first good example of the *get*-passive, which places the appearance of the passive at the end of the seventeenth century.[13]

(83) I am resolv'd to get introduced to Mrs Annabella (Powell, *A very good wife*. 1693. II.i p. 10. from the ARCHER Corpus)
(84) so you may not only save your life, but get rewarded for your roguery (Fielding, *Letter Writers*. 1731. II.ix.20 (quoted in Jespersen, 1909–49: IV 108–9))
(85) the makers [of stereoscopes] have got so accustomed to diverging their eyes, that ... (Grubb, in *Proc. R. Dubl. Soc.* 1879. 184 (*OED s.v. diverge* v. 2))

There is something of a gap until the next attested passive in (84) and an even larger gap until unambiguously passive examples become common. For this reason, Denison (1993: 440) suggests that the *get*-passive does not grammaticalize until the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. He states that 'many of the possible early examples of the *get*-passive involve the idiom *get rid of* and other participial forms which might be adjectival rather than true passives' (1993: 433). Further evidence for this suggestion comes from examples like (85) which contains the intensifier *so*, indicating an AP rather than a passive verb. In PDE, the *get*-passive is well established, particularly in the colloquial speech of younger generations, and Weiner & Labov (1983: 43) claim that 'a shift to the *get*-passive appears to be one of the most active grammatical changes taking place in English'.

I propose that the *get*-passive evolved out of the inchoative construction when the matrix subject is reanalyzed as controlling the implicit internal argument of the participle, rather than the implicit external one as in the inchoative.

4.7 Semi-auxiliary uses

This section focuses on the three most recent and most grammaticalized constructions in *get*, expressing modality and aspect, in which the complements are verbal and *get* functions as a light verb or semi-auxiliary.[14] I claim that permission and

[13] David Denison (p.c.) suggests that (83) should replace the dubious *A certain Spanish pretending Alchymist ... got acquainted with foure rich Spanish merchants* (Gaule. 1652. *Magastrom*. 361 (*OED get* 34b)) which is standardly taken as the first *get*-passive.

[14] The *get*-passive may well be taken as a semi-auxiliary use, but I discuss it in connection with the inchoative given the overlap between these two senses.

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ingressive aspect evolve from a common source construction *get to be*, while the obligation construction develops by analogy with *have*.

4.7.1 get to be

The precursor to both the permission and ingressive constructions is first found around 1600, as in (86) and (87):

(86) By what meanes got's(t) thou to be releas'd. (Shakespeare, *Henry VI*. 1591. (*OED get* 32a))
'by what means you got released'

(87) He was once presented for perjury, but he got to be a chaplain in one of the king's ships (Burnet, *Burnet's History of my own Time. Part I: The reign of Charles the Second*. 1703)

That *get to be* is the common source is supported by two facts. The first is the ambiguity in (86) and (87) between the readings 'receive an opportunity' (what I have termed permission) and 'come to be' (what I have termed ingressive). Second, the two MCs are structurally identical with one minimal difference: embedding a dynamic predicate leads to a permission reading while embedding a stative predicate gives an ingressive reading, as shown in (88) (cf. also (33) above):

(88) (a) NP_2 *get* t_2 [*to* $V_{dynamic}]_3$ permission
(b) NP_2 *get* t_2 [*to* $V_{stative}]_3$ ingressive

The *get to be* construction is derived in its turn from the infinitival causative in the following way. Instead of three arguments as in the causative (89a), *get* has the two-place unaccusative structure in (89b), the internal argument undergoes object-to-subject raising, and V is realized as the copula *be* in (89c).

(89) (a) NP_1 *get* NP_2 [*to* $V]_3$ (causative)
(b) e *get* NP_2 [*to* $V]_3$ (two-place unaccusative)
(c) NP_2 *get* t_2 [*to be*$]_3$ (object to subject raising, with copula)

On the whole, this development can be described as a lexical excorporation, where *get* loses the verbal head 'be', which would have gone into *get* in (53 and 56), to be lexicalized first as the copula and later as a content verb, and the result of this loss of lexical material in *get* is bleaching. The remaining component of the basic entry is the ingressive aspect which straightforwardly derives the ingressive MC. For permission, however, the relationship between the ingressive feature and the modality is not obvious; these questions are not addressed in detail here, but see Gronemeyer (1998). One might object that new meanings are added through contextual regrammaticalization; but actually, these interpretations are entirely structure-dependent.

4.7.2 Permission

The *get to be* construction is extended to dynamic content verbs in the mid-seventeenth century, leading to the permission construction, as in (90) and (91):

(90) All those that shall get to read them. (Ecliston, *Behmen's Ep*. 1649 (*OED get* 32))

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(91) We . . . could never get to see it quick in the Microscope (Power, *Exp.Philos*. 1664. 21 (OED *get* 32))

The diachronic link from causation to permission is reasonable given the close conceptual relation between the concepts, which is reflected in the common cross-linguistic polysemy between lexical elements encoding causation and permission. Comrie (1981: 171) notes that affixal causative morphemes frequently express permission, and the same ambiguity is found in lexical verbs, such as Dutch *laten* 'let'. As discussed above, causation means that the object of *get* is 'forced or given an obligation', and permission means that the subject is 'allowed or given a possibility'. Although I refer to the structure in (88a) as denoting permission, it is now generally modal and is currently able to denote obligation as well; which end of the deontic scale is expressed is determined contextually. Example (92) is ambiguous between permission and obligation because the context does not specify whether the external force necessitates or permits the event, while the semantic content of the complements disambiguates the modalities in (93).

(92) in working with these patients the therapist eventually gets to do some at least private mulling over of the possible meaning of a belch (Searles, 'Schizophrenic Communication', *Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review* 48. 1961.)
(93) Why do you get to have all the fun while I get to do all the worrying?

The structural difference between causation and modality in *get* is whether or not an external argument is generated in addition to the two internal arguments. The relation between the three-place causative structure and the two-place modal structure (94b) is analogous to the relation between ditransitive possession and monotransitive possession with a recipient subject (94a). The subject makes the recipient have/do XP in causation, and the recipient receives/is permitted to do XP in permission.

(94) (a) NP_{ext} *get* NP_2 NP_3 : NP_2 *get* t_2 NP_3 :: (benefactive/'receive')
(b) NP_{ext} *get* NP_2 [*to* V]$_3$: NP_2 *get* t_2 [*to* V]$_3$ (causative/modal)

This analysis sees permission/modality and causation as two paradigmatic realizations of the light verb *get* followed by an eventive infinitive: when the light verb takes an external argument, the causative results; without the external argument, the modal construction results. Thus, it is not possible to have a causative variant of the modal construction 'cause NP to be allowed or forced'.

4.7.3 Ingressive aspect

The other development from *get to be* is the ingressive, which is first documented in the eighteenth century, as in (95):

(95) Probably I'll scarce get writing, the Assembly will sit so late. (*Woodrow Corr*. 1727. *OED get* 32c)

This development occurs when the copula *be* in (89c) is replaced by a stative predicate, which is the crucial difference from the infinitival causative. Due to this

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difference, a causative variant of the ingressive construction can arise as well, giving the combined meaning 'subject causes object to start V-ing'. Consider (96) and (97):

(96) She's rather a character, you know, when you get her going. (A. Bridge, *Peking Picnic*. 1932. *OED get* 32c)
(97) John's doctor got him to like decaf.

Support for the proposed diachronic link is the fact that ingressive can be understood as self-imposed causation; if you cause yourself to do something, then you start doing it. This corresponds historically to a raising structure where the object of *get* in the causative is raised to subject in the ingressive.[15] We might say that the ingressive in (98b) is analogous to the agentive main verb reading in (98a).

(98) (a) NP_{ext} *get* NP_2 NP_3 : NP_{ext} *get* NP_3 :: (benefactive/'obtain')
(b) NP_1 *get* NP_2 [*to* V_{stat}]$_3$: NP_2 *get* t_2 [*to* V_{stat}]$_3$ (ingressive: caus/intr)

Synchronically however, ingressive *get* has been reanalyzed as an unergative verb with an external argument as subject. Therefore, the relation between permission and ingressive is the same as that between passively 'receiving' and actively 'obtaining' an object, except in the domain of eventualities.

Recall that the complement in the ingressive MC may appear in two variants, the infinitive for stative predicates and the gerund for dynamic predicates. Consider the examples in (99)–(100):

(99) Instead of looking at the sun, I got thinking about the dry bed of the stream, just beneath. (Ruskin, *Fors Clav*. 1872. *OED get* 32c)
(100) 'Why do you insist that I shall believe such a cruel thing, Eva?' said her father. 'Only because it is *true*, Papa: and, if you will believe it now, perhaps you will get to feel about it as I do.' (Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. 1852)

The substitution of one nominal verb form for another (the gerund for the infinitive) is not surprising, as the categorial selection is satisfied by the gerund, a form which also (morphologically) satisfies the semantic selection of a state. Here again, a type-coercion takes place and feeds a subsequent reanalysis.[16]

4.7.4 The obligation construction

The obligation construction with *(have) got to*-infinitive is first found in the late 19th century, as in (101) and (102):

[15] Brinton (1988) discusses the grammaticalization of ingressive aspectualizers in Old and Middle English and finds that 'verbs expressing "movement into or towards" or "connection with" come to mark ingressive aspect' (Brinton, 1988: 113). Although her analysis does not include the causation MC as intermediary between movement and ingressive as I assume, it does predict that *get* develops the ingressive use in conjunction with the relator *to*.

[16] There is another possible analysis which may have aided the establishment of the *-ing* complement. It has often been noted that progressive verb forms are historically derived from a verb and an adjoined locative element (e.g. Bybee et al., 1994: 133–7). This reanalysis fits well with the internal structure of the basic entry in (54); the *-ing* complement can be derived by lexicalizing and then adjoining the light verbal head *be* to the abstract preposition giving V-locative and then incorporating a lexical head to yield a content verb, as in (i).

(i) ingressive + [[be + lexical head] + P_{LOC}] > ingressive + verb-*ing*

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(101) The first thing I've got to do is grow to my right size again. (Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*. 1865)
(102) This has got to be learned. (Twain in *Atlantic Monthly*. March 1875)

The obligation sense in *get* could have developed along the normal paths, as described by Fischer (1994) for *have to*-infinitive. (104) below would develop from the stative possession construction *(have) got* NP *to*-infinitive in (103) by a change in word order.

(103) 'Grab another drink if you want it. We've got one other call to make before I meet Alvarez.' (Halliday, *The Careless Corpse*. 1961)
(104) I've got to make a call.

This change is accompanied by the inference that if you have something to do, then you are obliged to do it (cf. Bybee et al., 1994: 181–7). If the subject is associated with a potential eventuality in the infinitive, then it is interpreted as unrealized and remaining for the future.

Fischer (1994) has shown that the development of the obligation *have to*-infinitive is dependent on the general change in word order from SOV to SVO which took place at the beginning of Middle English. The transition began when the object of *have* in *I have a call to make* could also be interpreted as an argument of the lower infinitive, and it became a shared object. This situation results in a thematic struggle between *have* and the infinitive which is won by the more lexically contentful infinitive, so that in an SVO language, the object would now have to follow the infinitive causing *have* and the *to*-infinitive to be adjacent. When this change in word order reached nonroot clauses, the reanalysis of the object as belonging only to the infinitive was fixed, and the construction became able to express modal meanings. However, *have to*-infinitive is not fixed as expressing strong obligation until the nineteenth century (Myhill, 1995), and other modalities such as *can* and *should* were also possible (Fischer, 1994). When the other modal verbs in English lost their past tense forms, a gap was left in the modal system which was filled by *have to*-infinitive, referred to by Myhill as its syntactic use. This syntactic use refers to constructions where *got to* or *must* are ungrammatical, such as the lack of obligation: *you don't have to*; following a modal: *he may have to*; in the past tense: *I had to*; and participial: *having to* (Myhill, 1995: 165–6).

Myhill (1995) examines the appearance of *have to* and *got to* as markers of strong obligation in American plays from 1824 to 1947. Syntactic *have to* is found between 1824 and 1855, nonsyntactic *have to* is documented in 1889, and *got to* in 1896.[17] Nonsyntactic *have to* refers to uses that are not required by the gap in the modal system. So, *have to* does fill the gap in the modal paradigm but doesn't generalize (become nonsyntactic) until the end of the nineteenth century.

[17] Myhill finds that, before the Second World War, the two obligation markers occurred in complementary distribution: *got to* is associated with urgent emotional necessity (e.g. *I've got to talk with you*) or with procedures, jobs, and schedules, while *have to* is associated with habitual obligation (e.g. *I have to go to work every day*).

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However, the development of obligation *got to* is not parallel to that of *have to*. This is evident given that the obligation sense is expressed by the form *got* (not the lexeme GET), which cannot occur in any tense but the present or after modals. Rather, *got to* is the result of an analogy with *have to*. This very fast development is aided by the fact that the stative use of *got* is already well established at this time. The use of *got to* in the same sense as *have to* is a clear case of what Croft (1995) has called 'intraference' – a language-internal analog of interlingual interference (cf. Weinreich, 1953/1968). Intraference occurs when two linguistic units are similar enough (especially in meaning) to be used interchangeably to express the same content. This development is thus the result of an analogy with *have*.

5 Conclusions

This study has focused on the polysemy in one lexical item, *get*, and in doing so, has examined questions of how to account for polysemy in both synchronic and diachronic terms. Synchronically, the factors contributing to the complex polysemy in *get* are i) its basic lexical entry, or underspecified skeletal meaning, in combination with ii) its syntactic context of occurrence. The diachronic part gave an analysis of how the polysemy in *get* arose in terms of various reanalyses and the mechanisms driving them. Although this paper has been very *get*-centric, it has some wider implications: the approach presents a model of lexical storage and accessing which can be applied to other polysemous items and offers insights for the theory of grammaticalization and mechanisms of language change.

The analysis of *get* that I have proposed is summarized in figure 1. Note that causative represents only the infinitival causative; the other causative variants are included under the other MCs. Each sense in figure 1 represents a construction which is associated with a syntactic (de)composition of *get* together with its complement, and each arrow linking the different MCs is associated with a mechanism of change. The senses which are connected by arrows are conceptually and structurally closer to each other than those not connected by arrows. Synchronic shifts in meaning take place from the basic lexical entry due to the dynamic composition of the basic entry for *get* with its syntactic and semantic environment.

Figure 1 can be seen as a synchronic lexical model, such that the mental lexicon contains only one entry for *get*, and all the other MCs are accessed via this entry. The basic lexical entry for *get* is crucial to my analysis as it provides the structural flexibility for all the MCs to be derived from the basic entry or one of its offspring, and this derivation is predictable within a given configuration. This paper makes an important contribution to the analysis of *get* in motivating the connection between the two dominating uses of *get* – possession and movement – in terms of Kayne's analysis of possession constructions, rather than writing it off as random accident, as previous studies have done. The inherent meaning and argument structure associated with the basic lexical entry allow *get* to be constructed in a number of

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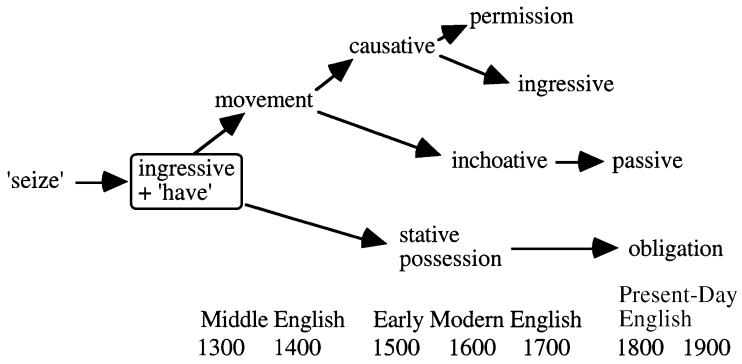


Figure 1 *The senses of* get *and their development*

different ways, causatively, unaccusatively, and with four different complement types, and these configurations affect the meaning of *get* in a significant way. NP complements lead to a possession interpretation, AP complements to inchoative senses, PP complements to change-of-location uses, and VP complements to eventive readings, with modal and aspectual uses. Within each complement type, further distinctions are made according to specific features like transitivity and stativity. Not only does the syntactic context disambiguate the meaning of functional items like *get*, but it can also crucially contribute to building up grammatical meaning, as in the modal and aspectual uses. It is thus both possible and more economic to assume one cognitive meaning for the lexeme GET, no matter what its function in a given construction.

The decomposition in the basic lexical entry also explains why items with similar lexical meanings show a similar polysemy (compare the polysemy in *have,* as well as that in other Germanic languages in the verb meaning *get*). The comparison with *have* supports the source determination hypothesis as long as the whole construction is taken as the relevant input. The evolution of *get* provides strong evidence that grammaticalization affects constructions and not isolated items, so that a less lexical feature set results from a reanalysis of the item in a given context rather than of the stem alone.

Figure 1 also summarizes the evolution proposed in this paper and the emergence of polysemy in *get*, or its increased syntacticization. While the diachronic study stands on its own, and has important implications for which mechanisms of change are relevant during the early stages of grammaticalization, it has further significance in lending support to the synchronic description. That is, I have only proposed synchronic relations (shifts due to composition) if a similar reanalysis has occurred (is possible) diachronically. Corresponding to the arrows in figure 1 are reanalyses or mechanisms of change, and the diachronic links are summarized in table 6.

A common type of change was reanalysis made possible by type-coercion. In the development of the infinitival causative, inchoative, and passive, type-coercion

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Table 6 *Summary of the diachronic reanalyses*

	sense	complement type	linking mechanism	date of origin
(a)	ingressive + 'have'	(NP) + NP	generalization from 'seize'	pre-1300
(b)	object movement	NP + PP	lexical excorporation from benefactive (a)	late 14th c.
(c)	subject movement	PP	lexical excorporation from (a)	late 14th c.
(d)	infinitival causative	NP + *to*-infinitive	reanalysis of *to* from (b) with type-coercion	1500–1570
(e)	stative possession	*got* + NP	reanalysis from (a) due to deterioration of *have*	1570–1640
(f)	inchoative	(NP) + AP/past participle	reanalysis from (b/c) with type-coercion	1640–1710
(g)	permission	*to*-infinitive	reanalysis from (d) with lexical excorporation	17th c.
(h)	ingressive	(NP) (*to*) + V-*ing* / infinitive	reanalysis from (d) with lexical excorporation	18th c.
(i)	passive	(NP) + past participle	reanalysis from (f)	18th–19th c.
(j)	obligation	*got* + *to*-infinitive	analogy with (e)	late 19th c.

functions as a semantic condition on category change: the category of the complement may change as long as the semantic selection of the head is maintained. Once the category change is established, the semantic selection of the head shifts to the normal one for the new category, i.e. the interpretation inherent to the category. This is thus a two-step process: the category of the complement changes, while the semantics remain constant, and then the syntax of the new construction generalizes allowing for a novel interpretation. Reanalysis occurs when type-coercion no longer takes place, and the semantics of the MC are determined compositionally. Context-induced reanalysis, due solely to configuration, was seen in the development of the stative possession construction, which was motivated by the semantic and phonetic deterioration of *have*. Lexical excorporation, a type of reanalysis where an item is bleached of its structural components due to lexicalization, accounts for the development of the movement, permission, and ingressive senses. Finally, analogy was responsible for the obligation sense.

Although metaphor is often assumed as a mechanism of change, there has been no evidence that metaphor drives grammaticalization. While it may motivate conceptual shifts within one and the same MC (e.g. the main verb construction) and may also correctly characterize the relation between source and resulting constructions (e.g. movement > inchoative), metaphor cannot alter the syntactic construction of an item and consequently cannot be the driving force behind the development of new MCs. Nor is semantic inferencing a sufficient basis for the development of a new MC, as shown by the inchoative development.

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Rather, semantic changes are dependent on syntactic innovations for an MC to be established and generalize. The syntax of a given item changes through contextually ambiguous examples which allow the language learner to make a novel analysis of the semantic-syntactic correspondences, resulting in a novel feature set. This novel feature set then allows a shift in meaning. Syntactic construction thus functions as a strong constraint on meaning changes in grammaticalization, while semantic selection constrains the development of novel syntactic environments. In answer to the actuation problem posed in section 3, this study suggests that the syntax shifts in such a way that the context of use changes, and changed context of use triggers a reanalysis. Although meaning is malleable to contextual factors, conceptual shift does not necessarily lead to the structural changes that characterize grammaticalization. This study suggests that the establishment of a new semantic domain (i.e. not a contextually determined variant of the same meaning, such as metaphorical extensions) is contingent upon structural changes; that is, semantic change follows syntactic change.

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