

The History and Grammaticalisation of "Doch"

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Abstract

The paper tries to answer two questions: where "doch" came from and how it grammaticalised in the way it did.

With respect to the first question two things can be ascertained with some degree of certainty. The origin is of two Indogermanic roots: one a demonstrative (that) and the other the Indogermanic clitic question marker *uh*. In Gothic it is found as a marker of indirect questions (translating the greek $\alpha\nu$) and in the older phases of German it is almost the same as in current Dutch and German sources (Elke Sommer).

For the second question, we have only the light of reason to guide us, since there are no sources for the process that intervened between the Gothic usage and the old high German. But reason can be guided by the historical evidence. We use in addition an experimental model of grammaticalisation that was developed by Zeevat.

Our main hypothesis is that the use of *doch* as a question marker was liberated from its main function of marking questions as such by the arisal of syntactic (inversion) and lexical means (wh) for asking questions and survived only for marking special questions. The surviving part of these uses are:

Du kommst DOCH?

Du kommt doch?

?? Wer hat doch den Kuchen aufgegessen?

Wie heeft er toch de taart opgegeten?

Jaap vroeg zich wat er toch gebeurd is.

?? Jaap fragte sich was doch geschehen ist?

A speculation is that the first two uses derive from one single tag question, used for confirmation. Compare the following example. The unstressed yes asks for a reconfirmation of something that is already assumed, the stress adds a threat and so allows the inference of an opposite opinion. In line with theories of contrast, the stress is due to the assumed NO in the mind of the interlocutor.

You are cleaning your room, yes?

You are cleaning your room, YES?

From these question uses the further uses as correction and others can be derived by reanalysis and paragramtic weakening.