

A Closer Look at *quizá(s)*: Grammaticalization and an Epistemic Adverb

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*Siempre que te pregunto
que cuándo, cómo y dónde,
tú siempre me respondes
quizás, quizás, quizás.*

Whenever I ask you
when? why? and where?
you always tell me
perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.

*Y así pasan los días
y yo, desesperando,
y tú, tú contestando
quizás, quizás, quizás.*

And in this way pass the days
and I, I'm hopeless,
and you, you're answering
perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.

(Lyrics from *Quizás, quizás, quizás*, Cuba, 1947)

1. Introduction

The epistemic adverb *quizá*, also seen as *quizás*, has been grouped together with *tal vez* (lit. *such time*), *acaso* (lit. *in the case*), *a lo mejor* (lit. *at the best*), and *posiblemente* (possibly) in *A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish* (Butt and Benjamin, 2004). This reference grammar gives the group of words the meaning *perhaps*. While the original meaning of the other terms is more transparent, the etymology of *quizá(s)* is perhaps a little more difficult to trace. According to Menéndez Pidal (1968), *quizá(s)* developed from the Latin interrogative *quis sapit*, or *who knows?* On the other hand, Corominas (1980) attributes the *quizá* to *qui sapit*, or *who knows*, as a relative pronoun instead of an interrogative. The latter phrase was used as late as the thirteenth century, where we find it in texts commissioned by Alfonso X:

- (1) Ca bien assi como las del ochauo cielo
las enuian alas planetas; otrossi las reciben
dellas. Et por ende *qui sabe* parar mientes
en qual sazón esta fuerça uiene de todas.

(*Libros del saber de astronomia*)

Because just as those from the eighth sky
They send them to the planets; as well they receive them
And therefore *who knows* how to be aware
In which way this force comes from all of them.¹

The first documentation of the term as a single word (*quiçab*) dates to the same time, and appears in *El poema de Mio Cid* (part three, line 2500):

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Spanish are our own.

- (2) Allá dentro en Marruecos, ó las mezquitas son,
que abrán de mí salto *quiçab* alguna noch,
ellos lo temen, ca non lo pienso yo;

In Morroco, where the mosques are to be found,
lest they suffer an attack by [*perhaps*] me one night
they live in fear, though I do not intend to make one.

(Smith, 1987: 189)

Also around this time, *quiça* appeared in *Flores de filosofía*:

- (3) Quando se ensanna el rey contra alguno es muy grand cuyta, ca le
semeja que le viene la muerte onde *quiça* le viene la vida.

When the king becomes angry with someone, it is a very great misfortune, because
he thinks death is coming to him when perhaps it is life that's coming.

Over the next centuries, the term became increasingly more frequent, with variants coming in and out of use.

- (4) E *quiça* me engaña el diablo:

And *perhaps* the devil deceives me:

(*La Celestina*, 1526)

- (5) *Quizá* con envidia de la suya la estás ahora mirando.

Perhaps with envy of his you are now watching her.

(*Quijote* I, 1605, Ch. XLIII,)

- (6) y se encontró *quizás* en una situación de espíritu apacible y hasta envidiable,

and he found himself *perhaps* in a situation of placid and even enviable spirit.

(*Pepita Jiménez*, 1874, Ch. I.)

- (7) *Quizá* sea ésta la profunda razón por la cual todo intelectual hispánico llega un momento en que tiene que hacer . . . su meditación del Quijote

Perhaps this is the profound reason for which all Hispanic intellectuals reach a moment in which they have to...meditate on the Quijote...

(Rof Carballo, *El teatro de humor en España*, twentieth century)

Through analysis of texts dating from the thirteenth century to the present, this project aims to examine how the adverb *quizá* has undergone grammaticalization, including semantic change and phonological reduction.

2. Methodology

We searched electronic databases (see *Corpus*) for works dating from the twelfth through nineteenth centuries for the segment *qui* in order to extract examples of *quis sabe*, *qui sabe*, *quiçabe*, *quiça*, *quien sabe*, *quisá*, *quisás*, *quizá*, and *quizás*. Also, we selected the surrounding context for use in analysis. We found a total of 183 tokens, divided as follows:

Century	No. of tokens
13 th	4
15 th	50
16 th	19
17 th	86
19 th	24

For each token, we coded for the mood of the verb associated with the adverb. Also, we did a semantic analysis of specific examples from each stage of grammaticalization.

3. Analysis

3.1. A brief overview of grammaticalization

According to Bybee (2003) grammaticalization is “the process by which a lexical item or a sequence of items become a grammatical morpheme, changing its distribution and function in the process” (146). In fact, this process creates an iconic relation between form and meaning because phonetic reduction parallels reduction or generalization, which is also the loss of specific semantic properties (Bybee et. al, 1994:106).

The origins of phonetic reduction is linked to the “automatization of neuro-motor sequences which comes about with repetition” (Bybee, J. and P. Hopper: 2001, 11) which reduces the magnitude of articulatory gestures and the increased overlap of these. It is important to notice that there can be phonological reductions that occur during interaction that might not lead to grammaticalization. Thus, if we explain only the reduction of form, we only touch upon half of grammaticalization: we must also observe the change of meaning. Also, it is relevant to point out that this phenomenon occurs with a lexical item within a certain construction which allows the new meaning to arise.

Therefore, we will describe how the examples found of the use of *quizá* throughout the centuries also demonstrate the paths of semantic change of Traugott (1989). She proposes three tendencies:

1. Meanings based in the external situation become meanings based in the internal (evaluative/perceptual/cognitive) situation.
2. Meanings based in the external or internal situation become meanings based in textual and metalinguistic situation.
3. Meanings tend to become increasingly based in the speaker’s subjective belief state/attitude toward a proposition.

Finally, we will touch on the subjectification of the epistemic adverb. This concept is a gradual process based on the degree of involvement the speaker has over the utterance. Hence, we will see how this fact relates to the increase in use of *quizá* with subjunctive.

Thus, through phonological and semantic analysis of the tokens collected, we will show that the evolution of *quizá* illustrates processes involved in grammaticalization.

3.2. Phonological change

As we have mentioned, phonological reduction is one common element in grammaticalization, “words and phrases [...] are phonetically reduced.” (Bybee 2003: 146) We see exactly this phenomenon when examining the phonological path traveled by the adverb.

Beginning with the origin of *quizá*, which is documented in Menéndez Pidal as *quis*, 'who?', *sapit* 'taste of; understand; have sense' we will note some regular phonological changes in the evolution of Latin to Modern Spanish that affected the phrase.

Initially, the unstressed /i/ in final position from early and classical Latin became /e/ in spoken Latin and Spanish (Penny 2002: 109). Then, the phrase underwent lenition through the deletion of the final /t/ and voicing of /p/ to /b/ (Penny 2002).

The second stage of phonological change is the affrication of the [s], represented orthographically by the medieval Spanish *ç*. It is unclear what the phonological motivations for this change are (Corominas 1980: 965-6).

The third stage is a further reduction ending with the deletion of the final [b]. Such reduction is regular; apocope affects many word-final consonants in Spanish. (Penny 2002)

The fourth (optional) stage is the addition of the “s,” which is documented first in the sixteenth century.

- (8) PENOSO: Ora ver,
 si tu alcançasses a ser
quiçás Papa o Sancto Padre,
 ¿qué me havías de hazer?
 ¿Havíasme de hazer compadre?

PENOSO: Now let’s see
 if you were able to be
perhaps Pope or Holy Father
 What would you make me?
 Would you make me the godfather?

(*Comedia llamada Rosabella*, 1550, Lines 130-134)

In the final stages of reduction, the affricate ç [ts] is weakened to fricative dental [s] (Penny 2002: 102), a natural stage of lenition, which is fronted to the interdental [θ] in peninsular Spanish and manifested as the alveolar [s] in Latin American Spanish (Penny 2002: 103).

With regard to the reduction of the original phrase *quis sapit*, *who knows?* to one word, it is practically impossible to determine at what point in history this occurred. It appears as *quiçab* or *quiça* as early as the thirteenth century, in some of the earliest recorded Spanish texts. However, it is important to point out that this phenomenon is another element that occurs in grammaticalization. We see that, for instance, we don’t find anything (such as a direct object pronoun) in between the words (i.e. **qui lo zá*) which contemporarily would mean something totally different (i.e. *quien lo sabe*) from the adverb *quizá*. Thus, even though the sound changes were regular throughout the language or dialects of this (not specific to the construction), *automatization* –the process by which sequences of units that were previously independent become processed as a single chunk [Bybee 2003: 153] – occurred as a result of the highly frequent usage of the prefab *quis sapit*.

Finally, we have reconstructed the following timeline of the phonetic reduction and change underwent by what we see today as *quizá(s)*, starting with *quis sapit*, according to the forms found in the examples we extracted from the literature available. (Underlined forms were found in the texts that we analyzed.)

Century:	<Twelfth	Sixteenth	Seventeenth
[kis sapit] > [kis sabe] > [<u>kisabe</u>] > [kisab] > [<u>kitsab</u>] > [<u>kitsa</u>] >		> [<u>kisa</u>] > [ki0a]	
		> [<u>kisa</u>]	
		> [<u>kitsas</u>] > [<u>kisas</u>] > [ki0as]	
		> [<u>kisas</u>]	

3.3. Semantic change

In order to analyze the examples we have extracted, we will use Traugott’s (1989) tendencies of semantic change to illustrate the evolution of *quizá(s)* as an epistemic adverb as a way to reconstruct undocumented developments.

Semantic change of the phrase *quis sapit* began well before the documentation of the Spanish language. In classical Latin, the verb *sapit* meant *taste of; understand; have sense* (Lewis & Short: 1879). This meaning became increasingly more internal (i.e. cognitive) and eventually came to mean *to know*. Therefore, the more externally oriented phrase *quis sapit, who has sense of?*, was transformed to mean the cognitively oriented *who knows?*

As we mentioned in the introduction, there is disagreement among scholars about the etymology of *quizás*: Menéndez Pidal suggest that it is derived from *quis sapit* (*who knows?*) whereas Corominas states that *quizás* is the contraction of *qui sapit* (*who knows*), functioning as a relative clause. However, it is difficult –if not impossible – to find an example where the relative and *quizás* are interchangeable. On the contrary, the expressive question *quién sabe (si)* and *quizás* are easily interchangeable, although not with exactly the same meaning:

- (a) -¿Vas a venir mañana?
-*Quién sabe* /**el que sabe* / *quizá(s)* si venga

Are you coming tomorrow?
Who knows?/ (the one) who knows/ perhaps

- (b) *Quién sabe si* / * *el que sabe* / *quizá(s)* la astronomía tiene la respuesta.
Who knows if/ (the one) who knows/ perhaps the astronomy has the answer.

The only use of the phrase which syntactically and semantically aligns between the two phrases is *quis sapit*, that meaning *who knows?* as a rhetorical response to a question (as in (a)), which would not have been recorded in texts because it would be part of a spoken dialogue. It is from this use of the phrase that we believe *quizá* grammaticalized. Therefore, this interpretation supports that of Menéndez Pidal, who attributes *quizá* to *quis sapit*, the interrogative form *who knows?* The form probably began as a question looking for a response (i.e. *Who knows where Italy is?*) and subsequently developed the pragmatic inference *maybe there is someone who knows the answer, but it is not me*. This change corresponds with Traugott's Tendency I in which meaning tends to change from describing the external situation (i.e. someone concrete that knows the answer) to the internal (evaluative/perceptual/ cognitive) situation (Traugott, 34-5) (i.e. the perception that there may not be an answer). This use of *quis sapit*, that of the inference that the speaker does not have enough knowledge to affirm a situation, i.e. epistemic value, is that which is maintained as the form phonologically reduced to *quiçab*, as shown in the following example from, *El Cid* and *Flores de filosofía*, both transcribed in the thirteenth century.

- (9) Allá dentro en Marruecos, ó las mezquitas son,
que abrán de mí salto *quiçab* alguna noch,
ellos lo temen, ca non lo pienso yo;

In Morroco, where the mosques are to be found,
lest they suffer an attack by me [*perhaps*] one night
they live in fear, though I do not intend to make one.

(Smith, 1987: 189)

(*El Cid*, 3rd Part Line 2500)

- (10) Quando se ensanna el rey contra alguno es muy grand cuyta, ca le
semeja que le viene la muerte onde *quiça* le viene la vida.

When the king becomes angry with someone, it is a very great misfortune, because he
thinks death is coming to him when *perhaps* it is life that's coming.

(*Flores de filosofía*)

This evolution is also illustrated in the following example from *Las siete edades del mundo* (fifteenth century). In addition to maintaining the epistemic implication inherent in the rhetorical question *quis sapit*, *quiça* also became a single adverb at some point before the thirteenth century. With the development of the construction's use as an adverb, the form's meaning became much more generalized, which naturally expanded the contexts in which the construction could occur (Bybee 2003: 158), leading to a rise in its overall use. The meaning of the adverb became increasingly abstract, which is another sign of grammaticalization (Bybee 2003: 154).

(11) el qual si no tardara como tardó
 en ver la letra qu'en su mano fue dada
 veyendo la muerte que le estaua hordenada
quiça no muriera asi como murió

which if he hadn't taken as long as he had
 in seeing the letter which his hand had written
 seeing the death that was in store for him
perhaps he wouldn't have died as he did.

The adverb *quiça* in the previous example functions to express the metalinguistic situation of the speaker's attitude regarding the statement *he wouldn't have died like he did* as it relates to *if he hadn't taken as long as he had...* Like many epistemic adverbs, it “reflect[s] aspects of the speaker's epistemic (information and belief-state) stance toward the sequencing of the discourse” (Traugott 2005: 152). This discourse function reflects the shift seen in Traugott's Tendency II: “Meanings based in the external or internal described situation > meanings based in the textual and metalinguistic situation” (Traugott 1989: 35).

Like most grammaticalizing forms, we see the development of *quizá* accompanied by variation in form (Bybee 2003: 147). For example, in the seventeenth century, we find examples of *quizá*, *quizás*, *quisabe*, and *quiça* in various works.

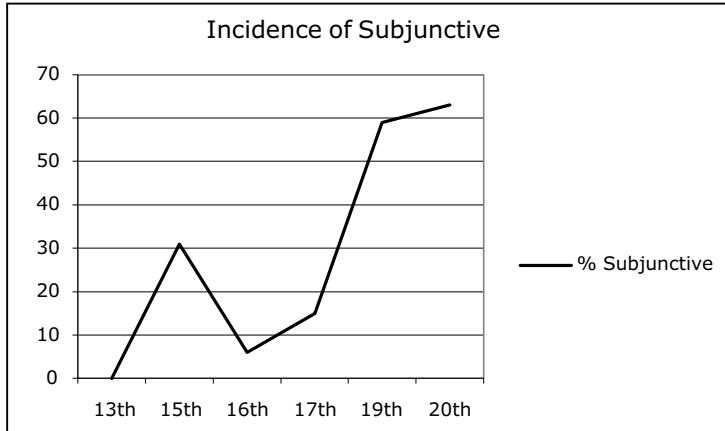
In order to accurately trace the evolution based on Traugott's Tendency III (Meanings tend to become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition [Traugott 1989: 36]) we must turn now to a discussion of Spanish mood and modality and how they reflect subjectivity.

Quizá(s) is defined as an *epistemic adverb*, and therefore encodes epistemic modality. In their overview of the evolution of grammar, Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca (1994: 179) state, “epistemic modality applies to assertions and indicates the extent to which the speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition.” Epistemic modality inherently encodes a certain degree of subjectivity; the speaker is making a subjective judgment on his/her statement. The adverb's use within epistemic modality was present since its initial use, that of *quis sapit?* as a response. However, its incidence with the subjunctive—a mood associated with epistemic modality—has changed over the centuries, as indicated by the following table.

Table 1: Incidence of Indicative and Subjunctive in Verbs associated with *Quizá(s)*

Century	Indicative, %, N	Subjunctive, %, N	Exclusions, N	Total number of tokens
thirteenth	100%, 3	0%, 0	1	4
fifteenth	69%, 29	31%, 13	8	50
sixteenth	94%, 16	6%, 1	2	19
seventeenth	85%, 69	15%, 12	5	86
nineteenth	41%, 7	59%, 10	7	24
twentieth (Woehr 1972)	37%, 66	63%, 110	n/a	176

It may be difficult to envision a more subjective *perhaps* and a less subjective one, but that is exactly what we see when tracing its development leading up to modern usage, which predominantly takes subjunctive (63%) (Woehr: 322). The following graph illustrates the evolution:



By using the subjunctive in the statement associated with *quizá(s)*, the speaker is projecting his/her perception of the situation. The data does not suggest, as some theories conclude (see Butt & Benjamin 2004: 251), that the use of subjunctive denotes less possibility while the use of the indicative denotes greater possibility. Instead, the increase in the use of subjunctive might suggest an increase in the subjectivity cast upon the statement by the epistemic adverb *quizá(s)*. This hypothesis does not mean that *quizá(s)* is not associated at all with epistemic modality, but that the increase in its usage with subjunctive illustrate Traugott's Tendency III: meanings come to be based in the speaker's subjective belief (1989: 36). In other words, it is not that the action will be less probable with subjunctive and more probable with indicative but that the use of subjunctive points to the "speaker's appraisals, points of views and attitudes about the event", that is, subjectification (Company Company 2006: 98).

Also, it is remarkable that while we see an increase of use of subjunctive with *quizá*, in general, other researchers (Studerus 1995; De Mello 1999) point to a decrease in the use of this mood in many syntactic contexts. In other words, this increase in subjunctive does not appear to be happening in general, but only in the case of co-aparition with the adverb *quizá*.

4. Conclusion

Through applying different theories of grammaticalization, we have traced the evolution of this most poetic epistemic adverb from *quis sapit, who knows?*, to *quizá(s), perhaps*. While the word phonetically reduced, its meaning evolved according to universal principles of semantic change.

We must now return to the song with which we opened this work, and closely examine the translation we provided. At first glance, it appears to be a logical sequence of lyrics. However, upon reflection, you might note the following non sequitur: I ask you "When?" and you reply, "Perhaps." I ask you "Why?" and you reply, "Perhaps." I ask you "Where?" and you reply, "Perhaps." This series of questions and responses makes as little sense in Spanish as it does in English. If we exchange the word "Perhaps" for "Who knows?" we see the meaning of the lyrics. How, then, has the original meaning of the phrase been maintained up through 1940s Cuba? Perhaps we are witnessing a remarkable example of retention, a striking example of unconscious reference to the elaborate history of a word.

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