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## On the Grammaticalization of Partitives into Degree Adverbs: The Case of Polish *odrobina* ‘Crumb; a Little’ and Swedish *Smula* ‘Crumb; a Little’

### ABSTRACT

Apart from degree adverbs derived from adjectives, such as *wysoco* ‘highly’ or *starkt* ‘strongly,’ both Polish and Swedish possess a set of grammaticalized partitive nominals which perform the function of degree modification, e.g. *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ and *smula* ‘crumb; a little,’ as used in *odrobinę lepszy* ‘a little better’ and *vänta en smula* ‘wait a little,’ respectively. Analysing English data, Traugott (2008) observes that in order for such an item to grammaticalize into a degree adverb, it must first acquire the status of an indefinite quantifier, in which case it still co-occurs with nominal collocates, yet solely encodes the abstract notion of quantity. Accordingly, this process can be schematized as follows: partitive (‘a part/unit of’) > quantifier (‘a small/large quantity of’) > degree modifier (‘to a small/large degree/extent’). On the basis of linguistic material extracted from a number of lexicographic sources, it is argued here that the validity of the above-described grammaticalization path can likewise be extended to the history of the two aforementioned nouns, viz. the Polish lexeme *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ and its Swedish counterpart *smula* ‘crumb; a little,’ both of which developed the adverbial sense only after having established themselves as vague quantifiers.

### KEY WORDS

grammaticalization, partitive, quantifier, degree adverb, Polish, Swedish

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Aside from degree adverbs derived from adjectives, both Polish and Swedish possess a group of nominals which, in addition to their basic senses, have come to perform the function of indefinite quantification and degree modification, such as *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ and *smula* ‘crumb; a little.’ In the former case, such items co-occur with nominal collocates, whereas in the latter, they modify verbs (1), adjectives (2), as well as other adverbs (3):

<i>Polish</i>	<i>Swedish</i>
(1) Chcielibyśmy <b>odrobinię</b> <b>pospacerować</b> . ‘We would like to stroll a bit.’	Du måste <b>vänta en smula</b> . ‘You have to wait a bit.’
(2) Są <b>odrobinię</b> <b>zmęczeni</b> . ‘They are a bit tired.’	Den nya modellen är <b>en smula bättre</b> . ‘The new model is a bit better.’
(3) Idź <b>odrobinię</b> <b>szybciej!</b> ‘Go a bit faster!’	De betedde sig <b>en smula oartigt</b> . ‘They behaved a bit rudely.’

Drawing on linguistic material derived from a number of lexicographic sources, this paper argues that the development of degree modifier polysemy in the Polish lexeme *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ and its Swedish equivalent *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ follows the grammaticalization path argued for by Traugott in relation to English data.<sup>2</sup> According to this developmental scheme, in order for a given item of this kind to develop adverbial uses, it must first undergo meaning generalization and establish itself as an indefinite quantifier, in which case it serves to convey imprecise quantitative assessments pertaining to what the accompanying nominal stands for. The reason for including just the above-mentioned pair of nouns in the present examination lies in their semantic closeness: both originally refer to small pieces of food. The Polish item, however, has by now lost its original sense, and thus can only be used quantificationally and adverbially.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 1 provides an account of the process of numeralization in the light of grammaticalization theory. Sec-

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<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations used for glosses in this paper are as follows: 3 – third person, NOM – nominative case, GEN – genitive case, ACC – accusative case, MASC – masculine gender, FEM – feminine gender, NEUT – neuter gender, PST – past tense, SG – singular number, PL – plural number, DIM – diminutive form.

<sup>2</sup> E. C. Traugott, *Grammaticalization, Constructions and the Incremental Development of Language: Suggestions from the Development of Degree Modifiers in English*, [in:] *Variation, Selection, Development – Probing the Evolutionary Model of Language Change*, eds. R. Eckardt, G. Jäger, T. Veenstra, Berlin–New York 2008, pp. 219–250.

tion 2, in turn, introduces basic information concerning the adverbialization of numeralized elements. Section 3 offers an analysis of empirical data from Polish and Swedish. The investigation concludes with a summary of the main observations arrived at in the study as well as a brief discussion of possible prospects for further research on the topic.

## 1. Numeralization: from partitives to quantifiers

The development of nouns into quantifiers is typically referred to in the Polish literature as *numeralization*,<sup>3</sup> which itself is a kind of a larger linguistic phenomenon, namely *grammaticalization*, traditionally defined as a process whereby lexical items and constructions acquire more abstract, grammatical meanings, and grammatical elements take on novel grammatical functions.<sup>4</sup>

At the onset of numeralization, the pertinent items undergo semantic generalization.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the purely scalar inferences invited by nominals such as *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ or *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ become foregrounded to the detriment of other lexical features:<sup>6</sup>

(4)	<i>en smula bröd</i> ‘a small piece of bread’	>	<i>en smula bröd</i> ‘a small quantity of bread, regardless of whether it constitutes a single, spatially bounded entity’
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What deserves special attention here is that the emergence of a purely quantificational sense normally results in a loosening of the collocational restrictions exhibited by the relevant nominals,<sup>7</sup> which manifests itself in their co-occurrence with abstract N2-collocates as well as concrete inanimate nouns that do not satisfy their original selectional requirements. By way of illustration, note that in their basic, partitive uses, both *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ and *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ refer to tiny pieces of some dry,

<sup>3</sup> M. Schabowska, *O formalnej numeralizacji rzeczowników*, „Język Polski” 1962, nr 42 (2), pp. 116–124.

<sup>4</sup> P. J. Hopper, E. C. Traugott, *Grammaticalization*, New York 2003, pp. 1–2.

<sup>5</sup> E. C. Traugott, G. Trousdale, *Constructionalization and Constructional Changes*, Oxford 2013, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> L. Brems, *The Layering of Size Noun and Type Noun Constructions in English*, Berlin 2011, p. 231.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, *Measure Noun Constructions: An Instance of Semanticallydriven Grammaticalization*, “International Journal of Corpus Linguistics” 2003, No. 8 (2), pp. 283–312.

rather solid mass, which is why concrete N2s belonging to the semantic class of liquids are only allowed when the N1s function as vague quantifiers:

- (5) *odrobina chleba, odrobina ciasta* > *odrobina mleka, odrobina czasu...*  
 'a crumb of bread,' 'a crumb of cake' 'a little milk,' 'a little time'

Also noteworthy is that quantifying nouns (henceforth QNs) can only be modified by quantification-reinforcing adjectives, such as Polish *cały* 'whole' and Swedish *hel* 'whole' in the case of QNs expressing large quantities, and Swedish *liten* 'little' as far as QNs encoding small amounts are concerned, e.g. *en liten smula tid* 'a little bit of time'.<sup>8</sup>

The above-described semantic change likewise finds its reflection at the level of syntax, which is particularly evident in Polish, where the QN may appear in the accusative case when it occupies the subject position, with the verb in the past tense being in the third person neuter singular form,<sup>9</sup> as exemplified by (6b):<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Polish QNs referring to small quantities, by contrast, do not allow adjectival modification at all:

- (i) Mam tylko (\*małą) odrobinę czasu.  
 'I have only a (little) bit of time.'

This contrast may be hypothesized to spring from the fact that in Polish, such QNs allow synthetic diminutivization, which plays the same semantic role here as does adjectival modification in languages such as English and Swedish. The phrase *en liten smula tid* 'a little bit of time', for instance, may therefore be rendered into Polish as *odrobinka czasu* 'a bit.DIM of time'.

<sup>9</sup> See: S. Szober, *Trzy piękne córki było nas u matki: Formy podmiotu i orzeczenia w zdaniach z podmiotem logicznym, określonym przydawką liczebnikową*, „Język Polski” 1928, nr 13 (4), pp. 97–112.

<sup>10</sup> This syntactic pattern is characteristic of Polish higher numerals (cf., among others, A. Przepiórkowski, *O wartości przypadku podmiotów liczebnikowych*, “Bulletin de la Société Polonaise de Linguistique” 2004, No. 60, pp. 133–143):

Pięć/Trzysięści/Sto osób	five/thirty/a hundred people.FEM.PL.GEN
było/*były	was.PST.3.SG.NEUT/were.PST.3.PL.FEM
na	on
przyjęciu.	party

'Five/Thirty/A hundred people were at the party.'

- |        |   |                            |                            |
|--------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| (6) a. | Została<br>left.PST.3.SG.FEM<br>'There is a little time left.'  | odrobina<br>bit.FEM.SG.NOM | czasu.<br>time.MASC.SG.GEN |
| b.     | Zostało<br>left.PST.3.SG.NEUT<br>'There is a little time left.' | odrobinę<br>bit.FEM.SG.ACC | czasu.<br>time.MASC.SG.GEN |

Following Langacker,<sup>11</sup> the occurrence of QNs in such syntactic frames may be taken to unambiguously indicate "the shift in profile from a discrete physical object that contains or constitutes a mass [...] to the quantified mass itself."<sup>12</sup>

At its advanced stage, numeralization may lead to the pertinent elements losing their original meaning, a phenomenon known in the grammaticalization framework as *semantic attrition* or *semantic bleaching*, as has been the case with, for instance, the Polish indefinite quantifier *trochę* 'a little,'<sup>13</sup> etymologically related to Proto-Slavonic *\*troska* 'bit; chip; scrap.'<sup>14</sup> A similar tendency may be observed for the English QN *lot*, which has in fact retained its partitive sense ('a unit of,' as in *three lots of land*), yet in actual language use, its quantifier attestations substantially outnumber the partitive ones.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Adverbialization: from quantifiers to degree adverbs

In consonance with the observations arrived at by Traugott in relation to data from English,<sup>16</sup> the next step in the grammaticalization of partitive nouns consists in the expansion of numeralized elements to adverbial contexts, in

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<sup>11</sup> R. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, Vol. 2: *Descriptive Application*, Stanford 1991, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> What can be regarded as an analogous change in English is fluctuating verb concord, when the verb may display agreement with the N2, not the N1:

- (i) A lot.SG of people.PL were.PL at the meeting.
- (ii) Heaps.PL of time.SG was.SG spent on that.

Notably, however, this syntactic reflex only applies to binominal syntagms which occur in the subject position, and exclusively to those in which the first and the second nominal element differ in number (L. Brems, *The Layering of Size Noun...*, op. cit., p. 129).

<sup>13</sup> See: M. Schabowska, *Liczebnik nieokreślony trochę*, „Język Polski” 1970, nr 50 (2), pp. 110–118.

<sup>14</sup> W. Boryś, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków 2005, p. 642.

<sup>15</sup> See: L. Brems, *The Layering...*, op. cit., p. 203.

<sup>16</sup> E. C. Traugott, *Grammaticalization...*, op. cit., pp. 219–250.

which they perform the function of degree modification. This process can therefore be schematized as follows:

<b>partitive</b>	>	<b>quantifier</b>	>	<b>degree adverb</b>
'a part/unit of'		'a small/large quantity of'		'to a small degree/extent'
<i>a bit of bread</i>		<i>a bit of time</i>		<i>wait a bit</i>
<i>a lot of land</i>		<i>a lot of patience</i>		<i>a lot better</i>

Following the definition offered in Biber et al., degree adverbs “describe the extent to which a characteristic holds,” and thus “can be used to mark that the extent or degree is either greater or less than usual or than that of something else in the neighboring discourse.”<sup>17</sup> Notably, at this stage of their evolution, the items of interest here undergo clear syntactic expansion in that they no longer co-occur with nominal elements, and instead modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs (cf. examples (1)–(3)).<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Analysis of empirical data from Polish and Swedish

#### 3.1. Research hypothesis

In view of the grammaticalization path argued for by Traugott with reference to English, it is hypothesized that prior to their expansion to adverbial contexts, the Polish noun *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ and its Swedish counterpart *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ had developed quantifier uses, in which case what they refer to is not a piece of something, but a subjectively assessed small quantity of what the concomitant nominal stands for.<sup>19</sup>

#### 3.2. Sources of linguistic data

The chronology in which the analysed lexemes developed the purely quantificational and the adverbial sense was examined based on linguistic material extracted from the following lexicographic works, representative of different stages in the development of Polish and Swedish:

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<sup>17</sup> D. Biber, S. Johansson, G. Leech, S. Conrad, E. Finegan, *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, London 1999, p. 554.

<sup>18</sup> L. Brems, *The Layering...*, op. cit., pp. 114–115.

<sup>19</sup> E. C. Traugott, *Grammaticalization...*, op. cit., pp. 219–250.

- (i) Słownik staropolski, Tom V: N-Ó [Old Polish Dictionary, henceforth SSP],
- (ii) Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku, Tom XX: Ociaple–Odżywotny [Dictionary of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Polish, henceforth SP16],
- (iii) Kartoteka Słownika języka polskiego XVII i 1. połowy XVIII wieku: Odpór–Odrzucony [Card Index of the Dictionary of the Polish Language Spoken in the 17<sup>th</sup> and the Former Half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, henceforth KSJP17i18 <http://rcin.org.pl/publication/20029>],
- (iv) Słownik Lindego, Tom III: M–O (1807–1814) [Linde’s Dictionary of Polish, henceforth SL],
- (v) Słownik Doroszewskiego (1958–1969) [Doroszewski’s Dictionary of Polish, henceforth SD; [sjp.pwn.pl/doroszewski](http://sjp.pwn.pl/doroszewski)],
- (vi) Słownik języka polskiego PWN [PWN Dictionary of Polish, henceforth SJP PWN; [sjp.pwn.pl](http://sjp.pwn.pl)],
- (vii) Svenska Akademiens Ordbok [Swedish Academy Dictionary, henceforth SAOB; [saob.se](http://saob.se)].

What ought to be underlined here is that the conspicuous discrepancy in the number of Polish and Swedish sources springs from the fact that while SAOB is a comprehensive historical dictionary, such an extensive diachronic work has not (yet) been compiled for the Polish language, hence the necessity to rely on a set of distinct dictionaries documenting particular periods in the history of Polish lexis.

### 3.3. Results

Discussed below is the emergence of the quantifier and the adverbial sense in the Polish noun *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ (section 3.3.1.) and its Swedish equivalent *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ (section 3.3.2.)<sup>20</sup>

#### 3.3.1. Polish *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’

##### a) SSP (pp. 495–496)

In Old Polish, as demonstrated by the definition cited below, *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little,’ like the diminutive form *odrobinka* ‘crumb; a little,’ was conventionally used only in its partitive sense, i.e. that of a small piece of a foodstuff:

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<sup>20</sup> Importantly, the present analysis focuses only on the chronology of emergence of the two above-listed abstract senses, and therefore disregards any conventionalized metaphorical extensions of the scrutinized items. For instance, at a certain point of its semantic history, *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ established itself as a label for tiny creatures, especially infants, yet this additional meaning does not have any bearing on the grammaticalization path of interest here.

**odrobina**

1. mały odkruszony kawałek, okruszyna, okruch  
 'a small piece broken off something; a crumb'

(7) **odrobryn** szyedm koschow pełnych  
 'seven baskets full of crumbs'

**odrobinka**

1. mały odkruszony kawałeczek, okruszynka  
 'a tiny piece broken off something, a little crumb'

**b) SP16 (pp. 438–439)**

In 16<sup>th</sup>-century Polish, *odrobina* 'crumb; a little' developed the additional, purely quantificational sense, so that it started to express solely an insignificant amount of what the accompanying noun refers to. Notably, this semantic change resulted in a collocational broadening of the lexeme under scrutiny, as illustrated by examples (8–9), in which *odrobina* 'crumb; a little' co-occurs with abstract nominals:

**odrobina**

1. mały kawałeczek czegoś  
 'a small piece of something'

2. mała ilość czegoś, trochę  
 'a small amount of something, a little'

(8) day mi **odrobinę łafki a miłosierdzia** fwego  
 'give me a bit of your compassion and mercy'

(9) ten co y **odrobiny rozumu** nie ma  
 'the one who does not have a bit of reason'

**odrobinka**

1. mały kawałeczek czegoś  
 'a small piece of something'

2. mała ilość czegoś, trochę  
 'a small amount of something, a little'

**c) KSJP17i18**

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and the former half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *odrobina* 'crumb; a little,' which had already established itself as an indefinite quantifier, had not yet developed regular degree modifier uses. Its attestations from that period listed in KSJP17i18 can still be divided into two main kinds, namely partitive and quantifier ones:

**odrobina, odrobinka**

1. okruszyna, kruszyna  
 'a crumb, a morsel'

- (10) czekając po wieczerzy **odrobin** ze stołu  
 'waiting for the crumbs from the table after supper'  
 2. mała ilość czegoś  
 'a small amount of something'
- (11) **odrobina politowania** nad samym sobą i nad pospolitym człowiekiem  
 'a little compassion for oneself and the common man'
- (12) jeżeli iefzcze **odrobinę wiary** mogę mieć  
 'if I still can have a little faith'

#### d) SL (p. 488)

Finally, SL, written in the former half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, offers two examples in which the diminutive forms *odrobinka* 'crumb; a little' and *odrobineczka* 'crumb; a little' are employed as degree adverbs. In both cases, they modify the concomitant verbs in terms of durativity:

##### **odrobina, odrobinka, odrobineczka**

1. okruszyna, drobny ułomek  
 'a little crumb, a tiny fragment'  
 2. trochę, troszkę, troszeczkę  
 'a bit, a little [quantifier]'  
 3. trochę, troszkę, troszeczkę  
 'a bit, a little [degree adverb]'
- (13) **Zatrzymaj się odrobinę.**  
 'Hold on a little bit.'
- (14) Czybym nie mogła z Wac Panem **odrobineczkę pomówić.**  
 'I am wondering if I could talk to you a little bit, sir.'

#### e) SD

In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the form *odrobinę* 'a bit; a little' can be observed to appear alongside inherently scalar items, such as the adverb *szybko* 'fast' in its comparative form and the verb *pokpiwać* 'to mock,' modifying them with regard to the intensity of what they lexicalize, as illustrated by *odrobinę szybciej* 'a little faster' (17) and *odrobinę pokpiwać* 'to mock slightly' (18):

##### **odrobina**

1. drobna cząsteczka, drobny ułamek; okruch, kawałeczek, ździebełko  
 'a tiny particle, a tiny fragment; a crumb, a small piece, a whit'  
 2. bardzo mała ilość czegoś  
 'a very small amount of something'
- (15) Kazał podać sobie herbatę z **odrobiną rumu.**  
 'He ordered tea with a little rum.'

- (16) Dodała jeszcze, że ją mąż z **odrobiny mienia**, jakie po ojcu wzięła, odarł.  
‘She added that her husband had deprived her of the few possessions she inherited from her father.’
3. **odrobineę** troszkę, nieco, cokolwiek  
‘a little, slightly, somewhat’
- (17) Jechałem z przepisową szybkością, no, może **odrobineę szybciej**.  
‘I was driving at a permissible speed, or well, perhaps a bit faster.’
- (18) Żartował, śmiał się, nawet **odrobineę pokpiwał** z jej ogrodniczych zajęć.  
‘He was joking, laughing, even slightly mocking her gardening activities.’

### f) SJP PWN

Particularly noteworthy about the semantics of *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ in contemporary Polish is that similarly to the lexeme *trochę* ‘a little,’ the discussed item has lost its original, partitive meaning, and hence can only be employed either purely quantificationally or adverbially,<sup>21</sup> as corroborated by the definition provided below:

#### **odrobina**

1. bardzo mała ilość czegoś; mały stopień intensywności czegoś  
‘a very small amount of something; a low degree of intensity of something’
2. **odrobineę** zaimek nieokreślony komunikujący o niedużej ilości rzeczy lub o niewielkim stopniu natężenia cechy lub stanu  
‘an indefinite pronoun<sup>22</sup> expressing a low quantity of stuff or a low degree of intensity of a feature or a state’
3. **odrobineę** troszkę, nieco  
‘a little, slightly’

#### 3.3.2. Swedish *smula* ‘crumb; a little’

In what follows, the attestations of *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ recorded in SAOB are grouped into partitive, quantifier, and adverbial ones. Crucially, each example is accompanied by information as to the time when the pertinent text was produced.

<sup>21</sup> The two items differ, however, in that *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ has retained its nominal status, and hence still inflects for case, whereas the numeralization of *trochę* ‘a little’ has come to completion in that the latter has lost its nominal properties altogether.

<sup>22</sup> The term *indefinite pronoun* is another name which may be used with reference to the class of items labelled in this paper as indefinite/vague quantifiers. For a convenient discussion of the pertinent nomenclature-related issues, see: J. Kozioł, *Liczebniki nieokreślone w opisie językoznawczym i praktyce leksykograficznej – zarys problematyki*, „Prace językoznawcze” 2016, nr 18 (1), pp. 93–102.

### a) partitive stage

Following SAOB, the basic meaning of the scrutinized Swedish noun can be described in the following way:

liten partikel lösgjord från föremål l. torr sammanhängande massa (i sht från födoämne, särsk. bröd), liten bit l. litet stycke; företrädesvis i pl., i sht om rester av bröd o. d. från måltid l. om småbitar av ngt som krossats l. gått l. brutits sönder o. d.

‘a little particle of an object or some dry, solid mass (especially of some foodstuff, in particular bread), a little bit, a little piece, especially in the plural, in particular about crumbs of bread and the like; little bits of something that has been crushed and the like’

(19) sleckia sin hwngcr vthaff **the smolor** som föllo vthaff then rike mandzens boordh (1526)

‘satisfy his hunger with those crumbs that fell off the rich man’s table’

As can be noted, analogously to *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little,’ *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ originally refers to pieces of food, particularly bread. This lexical specificity makes it possible to omit the potential N2-element: *smulor* (*av bröd*) ‘crumbs (of bread).’

### b) quantifier stage

Again, as was also the case with *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little,’ *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ acquired the purely quantificational sense prior to the development of degree modifier meaning. According to SAOB, the first example in which the Swedish item may be assigned the quantifier interpretation dates back to 1555:

liten kvantitet av massa l. ämne [...]; lite grann  
‘a small quantity of a mass or substance; a little’

(20) Then rijke frätzaren .. lät liggia then arma Lazarum för sijn dör, och gaff honom icke **een smolo bröd** (1555)

‘The rich glutton let the poor Lazarus lie in front of his door, and gave him not a bit of bread’

(21) En Hoop Antichrister .., vthi hwilkom icke wore **then ringeste Smola aff een rättsinnigh och Christeligh Redelighet** (1635)

‘A heap of Antichrists in whom there was not the littlest bit of some upright and Christian honesty.’

(22) **Den smula grannlåt**, som bruden torde hafva på sig (1821)  
‘The little brazenry that the bride was wearing’

(23) Riksdagsmannen .. hade .. lyckats spara **en smula pengar** (1882)  
‘The member of parliament had managed to save a little money.’

(24) Skulle jag kunna få **en smula hjälp** av er? (1933)  
‘Could I get a bit of help from you?’

Interestingly, in the early examples of its quantificational uses, *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ functions as a negative polarity item,<sup>23</sup> comparable to English *scrap* and *shred* (cf. also Polish *krzta* ‘scrap; shred’).<sup>24</sup>

### c) adverbial stage

The first adverbial use of *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ attested in SAOB comes from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century:

i adverbial [...] anv. (oftast liktydigt med: (nagot) litet, lite grann, nagot, en aning o.d.)  
‘in adverbial use (most often synonymous with: a little, a little bit, slightly, and the like)’

(25) (Döden) **ansar ingen smula** (1709)

‘Death does not care a bit’

(26) jag tror intet at verlden blifvit hvarken **en smula bättre eller sämre** nu (1797)  
‘I do not think that the world has become a bit better or worse now’

(27) (En viss berättelse) är ytterst komisk, men tillika **någon smula anstötlig** (1899)  
‘A certain story is immensely hilarious, but also a bit offensive’

As can be seen in the above examples, at the early stage of its adverbialization, *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ exhibited a preference for negative contexts, as was the case with the initial phase of its numeralization (cf. examples (20) and (21)).

## Conclusion

The results of the foregoing analysis of empirical data from Polish and Swedish point to the validity of the grammaticalization path originally proposed in relation to English, since both *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ and *smula* ‘crumb; a little’ underwent numeralization prior to their expansion to adverbial contexts. Both items started to appear in quantifier constructions in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the adverbial sense may be assumed to have emerged at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the case of Swedish *smula* ‘crumb; a little’, and either in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> or in the former half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the case of Polish *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little.’

<sup>23</sup> Following Israel (*The Pragmatics of Polarity*, [in:] *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, eds. L. R. Horn, G. Ward, Oxford 2004, pp. 701–702), polarity sensitive items participate in “a class of constructions which do not themselves express negation or affirmation, but which are restricted to sentences of one or the other polarity.”

<sup>24</sup> See: L. Brems, *The Grammaticalization of Small Size Nouns*, “Journal of English Linguistics” 2007, No. 35 (4), pp. 293–324.

It should be emphasized here, however, that despite having developed degree modifier uses later than its Swedish counterpart, the Polish element synchronically displays a higher degree of grammaticalization in that it has by now lost its original, partitive sense, and hence can only be employed either quantificationally or adverbially. Moreover, this semantic change practically precludes the possibility of pluralization of *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ in contemporary Polish, although the discussed item can still be inflected for case, which differentiates it from the lexeme *trochę* ‘a little,’ whose grammaticalization has reached an even more advanced stage, as it is only the fossilized accusative form of the now non-existent noun *trocha* ‘small quantity’ that has become specialized in the quantifying and adverbial function. Another discrepancy between *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little’ and *smuła* ‘crumb; a little’ manifests itself in the unavailability of adjectival modification of the former. The latter, on the other hand, when employed in the quantifying or degree modifying function, may be premodified solely by adjectives which reinforce its inherent scalar implications, especially *liten* ‘little’ (cf. English *a little bit of time, a little bit better.*) The reason for this disparity presumably resides in the fact that *odrobina* ‘crumb; a little,’ in contrast to *smuła* ‘crumb; a little,’ may be diminutivized synthetically, and thus diminutive morphology in Polish essentially makes a semantic contribution equivalent to that of quantification-reinforcing adjectival modifiers in Swedish.

Even though the dictionary-based study clearly demonstrates certain tendencies in the semantic and constructional evolution of the items at issue and as such offers sufficient material to verify the research assumption, a more fine-grained, quantitative investigation into the mechanisms of numeralization and adverbialization would obviously require the employment of language corpora. Future research on the topic should likewise incorporate a larger number of partitive nouns affected by numeralization, such as Polish *kapka* ‘drop’ or *kupa* ‘heap,’ and Swedish *nypa* ‘pinch’ or *hög* ‘pile.’ What seems quite interesting in this context is the question of whether there exists a correlation between the synchronic level of a particular item’s numeralization, operationalized mainly as the frequency of use in the purely quantifying function in relation to semantically varied N2-collocates, and the extent to which it is employed adverbially. More specifically, a preliminary analysis of English data suggests that the more numeralized a given element, the more likely it is to acquire the status of a degree adverb,<sup>25</sup> yet this hypothesis calls for cross-linguistic verification.

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<sup>25</sup> See: L. Brems, B. De Clerck, *Size Nouns Matter: A Closer Look at Mass(es) of and Extended Uses of SNs*, “Language Sciences” 2016, No. 53, pp. 160–176.

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