

Grammaticalization of complex predicates

Masayoshi Shibatani (Rice University)

This paper focuses on the grammaticalization of motion verbs of coming and going found in both converb and verb serialization constructions. Based on a detailed study of converb constructions in Japanese and Korean as well as verb serialization in the Formosan language Atayal of Taiwan, a number of theoretically challenging issues are addressed including the typological question of whether converb and serial verb constructions each constitute a coherent construction type and those pertaining to the nature and pattern of grammaticalization of motion verbs and the rise of tense and aspect meanings from them. A major portion of the presentation is devoted to the discussion of the issues of grammaticalization such as gradualness vs. instantaneous grammaticalization, factors facilitating grammaticalization, and the rise of grammatical meanings from lexical items. Our investigation casts doubt on widely-received assumptions and analyses. In particular, neither metaphorical transfer nor frequency was found to be a factor propelling grammaticalization, and the scenarios proposed by Heine, Traugott, Bybee, and others on the rise of tense and aspectual meanings were also found not to accord well with the facts in the languages studied here.