A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "*Ləg*" In Modern Maithili

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Abstract

The present paper is a descriptive study and clearly attempting to focus on the process of grammaticalization of the verb "*ləg*" in the Maithili language. The verb "*ləg*" is semantically polysemous in nature that has more than one meaning in the sentences. The author mainly attempts to show the process of grammaticalization of the verb "*ləg*" in which the verb retains its natural and grammatical class but gives up its natural semantic meaning and shows a different new meaning in the contexts. The paper also attempts to describe not only the verb "*ləg*" that combines with other different grammatical categories (Adj, Noun & verb) to create a new kind of meaning in the sentences but also morph-syntactic information of grammaticalization. This paper also looks at the occurrence of the verb "*ləg*" at two positions: (i) V1 and (ii) V2 positions.

Key Words: Grammaticization, Grammaticalization, Grammatization, Polysemous, ləg, Desemanticization, Semantic bleaching & fading, Homophonous,

Introduction

Maithili is one of the 8th schedule languages of India and is a New Indo-Aryan (NIA) language. It is spoken mostly in the eastern and northern part of the Bihar state in India and also widely spoken in the southern region of the Tarai districts of Nepal. Maithili is officially the 2nd largest spoken language of Nepal (Pandey, 2006). It is spoken by 12% of the total population of Nepal (Yadav, 2008). It has three kinds of honorific features, classic epics and melodious songs of poet Vidyapati that are well known all over the world. After huge and long agitations, demonstrations and mass movement, Maithili language has officially achieved a dignified and prestigious status ofbeing mentioned in the 8th Schedule languages of Indian Constitution in 2003. It is now one of the 22 national and schedule languages of India. According to 2001 Census report, it is spoken widely by 12,179,122 native speakers in the state of Bihar that is, 1.18% of the total population of India. It is now being used and spoken in different contexts of life as in court, law, media, administration, education, films, advertisement, entertainment etc. Genetically the Maithili language belongs to the Magadhi Apabharamsa in the New Indo-Aryan language family (S. Jha, 1958). Maithili was officially recognized and accepted by Sahitya Academy in 1965 to promote the language. According to the International P.E.N (Poets, Essayists & Novelists) and Sahitya Academy, Maithili is the 16th largest language of India and 40th most spoken language in the world (Singh, U.N, 1979) & (Yadav, R. 1997).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili   93

The Concept of Grammaticalization

The term 'grammaticalization' has been widely observed by various scholars but there is no unanimous agreement among them over the conceptualization of the term. Some authors prefer "grammaticization" (Givon, 1975a; Bolinger, 1978: 489; Bybee & Pagliuca, 1985) or "grammatization" (Matisoff, 1991) to "grammaticalization" (Millet, 1912). It has been also observed that there is one more important disagreement among scholars regarding the perspective and phenomenon of grammaticalization; whether grammaticalization is basically a diachronic or synchronic phenomenon (Traugott & Heine 1991b: 1). Howeve, whatever be the perspective or phenomenon, I prefer to use the term grammaticalization.

Antonie Millet (1912) was the first scholar who used the term grammaticalization and observed and recognized the importance of grammaticalization as a central area of language change in the field of linguistics. He may be considered as the founder of modern grammaticalization.

He defines it as "the attribution of a grammatical character to a previously autonomous word" (1912: 131) cited in Hopper & Traugott (1993: 13). He further says "…whereas analogy may renew forms in detail, usually leaving the overall plan of the system untouched, the grammaticalization of certain words creates new forms and introduces categories which had no linguistic expression and it changes the systems as a whole" (p. 33). At the end of the article he opens up the possibility that the domain of grammaticalization might be extended to the word order of the sentences (p. 147-148). His account of grammaticalization in general is couched in terms of various kinds: loss, weakening, attrition in Hopper & Traugott (1993: 21-24).

Jerzy Kurylowicz (1965) provided the classical definition of grammaticalization as cited in Abbi (1999) that is "Grammaticalization consists of the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from less grammatical to a more grammatical status e.g. from a derivative format to an inflective one".

Lehmann (1982) in his remarkable work "Thoughts on Grammaticalization" stated clearly that "Grammaticalization is a process leading from lexemes to grammatical formatives. A number of semantic, syntactic and phonological processes interact in the grammaticalization of morphemes and of whole constructions". According to Sankoff (1988: 17), grammaticalization takes place when "the once content-words or open class morphemes of the language have become function words, or closed class morphemes" as cited in Heine, Bernd, Claudi & Hünnemeyer (1991: 03).

Various scholars and authors defined the term grammaticalization in a wider sense. In a large number of current studies, it has been discussed in term of coding features (cf. Mithun) and Levinson (1983: 03), grammaticalization mainly refers to "the encoding of meaning distinctions in the lexicon, morphology, syntax and phonology of languages." According to Hopper (1987: 148) grammaticalization is like grammar or close to the grammar. He points out that "There is no grammar but only 'grammaticalization'- movements toward structure". Traugott & Konig also

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili   94

defined grammaticalization: "it refers primarily to the dynamic, unidirectional historical process whereby lexical items in the course of time acquire a new status as grammatical, morpho-syntactic forms, and in the process come to code relations that either were not coded before or were coded differently" as cited in Heine, Bernd, Claudi & Hünnemeyer (1991: 04).

Traugott & Heine (1991: 01) in their edited book entitled "*Approaches to Grammaticalization*" they defined grammaticalization as "a linguistic process, both through time and synchronically, of organization of categories and of coding. The study of grammaticalization clearly therefore highlights the tension between relatively unconstrained lexical expression and more constrained morpho-syntactic coding, and points to relative indeterminacy in language and to the basic non-discreteness of categories."

Heine & Kuteva (2002: 02) in their book "*World Lexicon of Grammaticalization*" they defined grammaticalization as "the development from lexical to grammatical forms and from grammatical to even more grammatical forms. Since the development of grammatical forms is not independent of the constructions to which they belong, the study of grammaticalization is also concerned with constructions and with even larger discourse segments".

As they have clearly suggested that four inter-related mechanisms are involved in the process of grammaticalization such as (i) Desemanticization (semantic bleaching- loss in meaning content), (ii) Extension (context generalization- use in new contexts), (iii) Decategorization (loss in morpho-syntactic properties of lexical forms) and (iv) Erosion (phonetic reduction- loss in phonetic substance) in Heine & Kuteva (2002: 02).

The basic idea about the notion of grammaticalization is found in the above definitions is that firstly it is viewed and considered as a process (Kurylowicz, 1965; Lehmann, 1982; Traugott & Heine, 1991) that can be studied from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Secondly, this term is a very significant process that is applicable to all kinds of linguistic aspects, namely phonology (Anderson, 1981; Booij, 1984), morphology or morpho-syntax because it always applies to the grammatical categories that is morphemes or words. Thirdly, it is a unidirectional process; (Kahr, 1976; Jeffers & Zwicky, 1980, Campbell, 1991; Ramat, 1992; Frajzyngier, 1996; Newmeyer, 1998 and Heine & Kuteva, 2002: 04) that is, it leads from a less grammatical to a more grammatical form and constructions but not vice versa as cited in Heine, Bernd, Claudi & Hünnemeyer (1991: 04).

Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" in Modern Maithili

The word "ləg" is an in/transitive verb and has its own natural meaning, that is '*to be attached*' or '*attach'* in Maithili language. It is a very productive lexeme in the grammar of Maithili. It has natural feature of polysemy in nature, that is, it has more than one meaning and usage in the sentences. The verb "ləg" occurs at both V1 and V2 positions in the sentences.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** **13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili   95

Desemanticization is one of the interrelated mechanisms of grammaticalization in which the concrete linguistic form loses its natural and real semantic meaning (semantic bleaching) and is reinterpreted in specific contexts with more abstract grammatical meaning (Heine & Kuteva, 2002). It is interesting to see that the verb "ləg" shows a desemanticization at a wider level in the sentences of Maithili in different specific contexts.

The verb "ləg" after undergoing the process of grammaticalization (desemanticization), loses its own natural semantic meaning and feature and shows many different meanings in accordance with the specific environments. But it does not alter or change its grammatical category and preserves its verb category. It is very productive and generative lexeme in the language. It combines with other grammatical categories (N, V & Adj) and creates a new semantic meaning.

Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. A large number of spoken and written Maithili data were collected from native speakers and literary books as well. We examined and analyzed more than 200 hundreds data. After analyzing the data closely it is found that the verb "ləg" is very generative and creative linguistic item in Maithili. It undergoes the process of grammaticalization (desemanticization) and it loses its real semantic meaning and shows several different meanings having occurred with other grammatical categories (N, V & Adj) in the contextual sentences but it retains its grammatical category that is, verb category.

Occurrences of Verb "Ləg"

The verb "ləg" occurs at both V1 and V2 positions in the sentences of Maithili. We will clearly see and discuss the appearance of the verb "ləg" at both V1 and V2 positions one by one morphologically and syntactically as well, in the sections below.

The Verb "Ləg" at V1 Position

The verb "ləg" is very productive lexeme and syntactically occurs at V1 position in the grammar of Maithili. During the process of desemanticization it loses its inherent meaning and semantic feature and exhibits widely a new different meaning, occurring with other grammatical items in the sentences. Now here we examined and analyzed a list of examples of grammaticalization or desemanticization of the verb "ləg".

Here we clearly see that the verb "ləg" after being grammaticalized or desemanticized, it becomes "ho" (means "*to be*") auxiliary verb. The verb "ləg" loses its natural, independent meaning and semantic feature and shows a new kind of meaning that is, "ho" but it retains its grammatical category that is, Verb. Again the verb "ho" (to be) is divided and reinterpreted into three meanings i.e. *Existence, Experience* and *Become*. We will clearly discuss these three linguistic forms and constructions in detail one by one separately.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** **13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili   96

"ləg" (to attach)

Grammaticalization (desemanticization)

'ho' (to be)

Existence   Experience   Become

(1.) Existence: here the verb "ləg" is grammaticalized (or desemanticized) and leaves its own real semantic meaning and feature and provides a new interpretation, that is, *Existence*. It combines only with Noun category and creates a new kind of meaning. The structure pattern of the verb "ləg" with Noun is ***Noun + /ləg/***. For instances….

1) səʈək   pə   admi – ke   *bʰiɽ*   *ləg* – əl   cʰəi.
    road   on   people Gen   crowd   exist Perf   is-Aux
    "There is a crowd of people on the road."

2) ab   dura   pə   *gʰas*   *ləig*   ge – l   cʰəi.
    now   court   at   grass   exist   Go Pst   is-Aux
    "There has been/is grass at the court now."

3) sərək   pə   *pain*   *ləg* – əl   cʰəi.
    road   on   water   exist Perf   is-Aux3sg
    "There is water on the road."

4) gãv   me   *mela*   *ləg* – əl   cʰəi.
    village   in   fair   exist Perf   is-Aux
    "There is a fair in the village."

5) nav   dʰar – ke   *kat*   *ləg* – əl   cʰəi.
    boat   canal Gen   shore   exist Perf   is-Aux
    "There is a boat on shore of the canal."

6) park   me   *gari*   *ləg* – əl   cʰəi.
    park   in   vehicle exist Perf   is-Aux3sg
    "There is a vehicle in the park."

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili   97

7) kəpɽa   pə   *dag*   *ləig*   ge – l   cʰəi.
   cloth   on   spot   exist   Go – Pst   is-Aux3sg
   "There has been/is a spot/mark on the cloth."

(2.) Experience: In the following sentences the verb "ləg" attaches as a second constituent of the conjunctive verbs of *experiential* in nature. The lexeme "ləg" combines with other grammatical categories such as Adjective and Noun and generates and shows a new kind of meaning, that is, feeling of something and provides experiential structure. The structure pattern of the verb "ləg" with N & Adj is **_Noun/Adj + /ləg/_**. For example.

8) həm – ra   *jar*   *ləg* – əit   əicʰ.
   I   Dat   cold   feel Imprf   is-Aux1sgm
   "I feel/have a cold."

9) həm – ra   *piyas*   *ləg* – əit   əicʰ.
   I   Dat   thirsty   feel Imprf   is-Aux1sgm
   "I am/feel thirsty."

10) həm – ra   *bʰuk*   *ləig*   ge – l.
    I   Dat   hungry   feel   Go – Pst
    "I was/felt hungry."

11) həm – ra   *nind*   *ləg* – əit   əicʰ.
    I   Dat   sleepy   feel Imprf   is-Aux1sgm
    "I am/feel sleepy."

12) həm – ra   *cot*   *ləg* – əit   cʰəi.
    I   Dat   stroke   feel Imprf   is-Aux1sgm
    "I feel/have a stroke."

13) həm – ra   kam   me   *mən*   nəi   *ləg* – əit   əicʰ.
    I   Dat   work   in   interest   not   feel Imprf   is-Aux
    "I do not feel to work."

14) həm – ra   kʰel   me   *mən*   *ləg* – əit   əicʰ.
    I   Dat   play   in   interest   feel Imprf   is-Aux1sg
    "I feel to play."

15) kʰəbər   sun – kə   əhã   ke   *dʰəkka*   *ləg* – əl.
    news   hear CP   you   Dat   shock   feel Pst
    "You felt/got a shock having heard the news."

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili   98

(3) Take/Become: Here the verb "lǝg" is interpreted as a *becoming* or *taking* something. It is restricted only to the years, months, weeks, days (calendar terms) and time terms as well. The lexeme "lǝg" occurs with Noun class (calendar or time terms) in the sentences and forms a new kind of semantic interpretation in specific contexts. For examples

16) i   kam   me   kǝte   *mǝhina*   *lǝg* – ǝt?
    this   work   in   how many   month   take Fut
    "How many months it will take in this work?"

17) i   kam   me   kǝte   *hǝfta*   *lǝg* – ǝt?
    this   work   in   how many   week   take Fut
    "How many weeks it will take in this work?"

18) i   kam   me   kǝte   *din*   *lǝg* – ǝt?
    this   work   in   how many   day   take Fut
    "How many days it will take in this work?"

19) i   kam   me   kǝte   *sal*   *lǝg* – ǝt?
    this   work   in   how many   year   take Fut
    "How many years it will take in this work?"

20) gʰǝr   ja – ǝ   me   *kǝte*   *sǝmæ*   lǝg – ǝt?
    home   go Inf   in   how much   time   take Fut
    "How much time it will take to go home?"

21) i   kam   me   kǝte   *gʰǝnʈa*   *lǝg* – ǝt?
    this   work   in   how many   hour   take Fut
    "How many hours it will take in this work?"

22) i   kam   me   2   sal   aur   2   *mǝhina*   *lǝg* – ǝt.
    this   work   in   two   year   and   two   month   take Fut.
    "It will take two years and two months in this work."

23) hǝm – ra   i   kǝm   kʰǝtǝm   kǝr – ǝ   me   2   *din*   lǝig ge – l.
    i   Dat   this work   complete   do- Inf   in   two   day   take Go – Pst.
    "I took two days to complete this work."

24) hǝm – ra   i   citʈi   likʰ – ǝ   me   1   *gʰǝnʈa*   *lǝg* – ǝt.
    i   Dat   this   letter   write Inf   in   one   hour   take Fut
    "I will take one hour to write this letter."

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Lǝg" In Modern Maithili   99

25) bihar　　　ja –ə　　　　me　　3　　*din*　　*ləg* – əit　　əic^h
　　Bihar　　　go Inf　　　in　　three　day　　take Imprf　　is-Aux
　　"It takes three days to go to Bihar."

Here now we will see that the verb "ləg" after undergoing the process of grammaticalization (or desemanticization) loses its own semantic meaning and feature and provides new kind of different meanings, which are *Appear, Make*, and *Apply*. It does not change its grammatical category but remains verb category in the following sentences.

(4) Appear: The linguistic item "ləg" loses its own natural semantic meaning and reinterpreted as a meaning of *appearance*. It means after being grammaticalized it exhibits appearance of something and maintains its grammatical class that is, verb category. The structure patter of the verb "ləg" and other grammatical categories is **_Noun/Adjective + /ləg/_**.

26) o　　　*imam*　　　*ləg* – əit　　　　əic^h.
　　he　　　imam　　　　appear Impf　　　is-Aux3sgm (NH)
　　"He appears an Imam (Islamic priest)."

27) ena　　　ləg – əit　　əic^h　　ki　　p^huhĩ　ho – ət.
　　like　　　appear Impf　is　　that　　rain　　be　Fut
　　"It appears that it will rain."

28) əsman　　me　　*badəl*　　　*ləig*　　　ge – l.
　　sky　　　in　　cloud　　　　appear　　　Go – Pst
　　"The cloud appeared in the sky / there was a cloud in the sky."

29) i　　　kəpra　　　*gənda*　　　*ləg* – əit　　　əic^h.
　　this　　cloth　　　dirty　　　　appear Impf　　is-Aux3sgm
　　"This cloth appears dirty."

30) ai　　　o　　bəḍ　nik　　　　ləg – əit　　　əic^h.
　　today　she　very　beautiful　　appear Impf　　is-Aux
　　"Today she appears very beautiful."

31) o　　　ənḍ^ha　　admi　　　ləg – əit　　　əic^h.
　　he　　　blind　　　man　　　appear Impf　　is-Aux
　　"He appears a blind man."

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili　　　　　　100

(5) Make: Here the verb "ləg" loses its real meaning and is being reinterpreted as a *making*. It provides completely a different meaning that is, making of something. We can see in the following examples that how the verb "ləg" has lost its semantic meaning and feature as well and exhibits new meaning. The structure pattern of the verb "ləg" and other grammatical categories is ___Noun + /ləg/___.

32) jar   me   əhã g^hura   ləge – l – i.
cold   in   you (H)   fire   make – Pst – H
"You made a fire in a cold."

33) əhməd   pan   ləga – rəhəl   əic^h.
Ahmad   betel   make   Prog   is-Aux3sgm
"Ahmad is making a betel."

34) o   həmər   bic^{h}an   ləga   de – l – ək.
he (MH)   my   bed   make   Give – Pst - MH
"He made my bed."

35) həm   kail   jafri   ləga – eb
I   tomorrow   fence   make   Fut
"I will make fence tomorrow."

36) o   k^{h}əini   ləga – rəhəl   əic^h
he   tobacco   make   Prog   is-Aux3sgm
"He is making tobacco."

(6) Apply: Here the verb "ləg" having lost its natural and real semantic meaning and feature after undergoing the process of grammaticalization (desemanticization) is reinterpreted as a *applying* something (use of something). In the following sentences we can see that the verb "ləg" combines with Noun class and creates a new kind of meaning that is, apply something. The structure pattern of the word /ləg/ with other grammatical category (Noun) is ___Noun + /ləg/___.

37) o   əpən   deh   pə   crim   ləge – ne   c^{h}əi
he   his   body   on   cream   apply Perf   is-Aux3sgm (H)
"He has applied the cream/ ointment on his body."

38) ok - ra   mãŋ   me   sindur   ləga – u
she Dat   head   in   vermilion   apply   Imp
"Apply vermilion to her head."

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili   101

39) o   əpən   deh   pə   mərhəm   ləge – ne   cʰəi
    he   his   body   on   ointment   apply Perf   is-Aux3sgm (H)
    "He has applied the cream/ ointment on his body."

40) o   kes   me   tel   ləga – le – l - ək
    he   hair   in   oil   apply-Take- Pst- 3H
    "He applied oil in hair."

41) o   dəwa   ləga – rəhəl   əicʰ
    he   medicine   apply Prog   is-Aux
    "He is applying medicine."

42) o   əpən   matʰa   pə   bam   ləge – ne   cʰəi
    he   his   head   on   drug   apply Perf   is-Aux
    "He has applied drug on his head."

The Verb "Ləg" at V2 Position

The verb "ləg" is a very productive lexeme and syntactically occurs at V2 position as well in the grammar of Maithili. After undergoing the process of desemanticization it gives up its inherent meaning and semantic feature and exhibits widely a new different meaning, occurring with other grammatical categories in the sentences. We clearly examine and analyze a list of sentences of grammaticalization or desemanticization of the verb "ləg". It is interesting to see that the verb "ləg" also occurs with homophonous verb at V2 position. Let us see examples

43) o   kʰana   *kʰa* – e   *ləg* – əl
    he   food   eat Inf   begin Pst
    "He began to eat the food."

44) həm   ra   *ləg* – e   *ləg* – əl   ki   o   nəi   ae – t – ah
    I   Dat   feel Inf   begin Pst   that   he   not   come –Fut-3H
    "I began to feel that he will not come."

45) əhã – ke   bat   səməjʰ   ləig   ge-l – əinh
    you(H) Dat   matter   understand   attach   Go-Pst- 2H
    "You came to understand a matter."

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013**
Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili   102

Here in above examples (43-45) the verb "ləg" occurs at V2 positions. In example (44) the verb "ləg" appears with homophonous verb (/ləg/) and they have their own independent and natural meanings.

Conclusion

We conclude this paper by saying that the verb "ləg" is very productive lexeme in the grammar of Maithili. In the process of grammaticalization, the verb "ləg" widely combines with other grammatical categories (N, V & Adj) and provides a new kind of semantic meaning while it loses its natural semantic meaning that is, desemanticization but it maintains and retains its grammatical category that is, verb. It appears at both positions V1 and V2. It is interesting to see that it also occurs with the homophonous verbs.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 13:10 October 2013**
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Asad, Md., Ph.D.
A Study of Grammaticalization of Verb "Ləg" In Modern Maithili   104

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