

**GRAMMATICALIZATION IN THE MORPHOSYNTACTIC
STUDY OF MEITEILON - Grammaticalization of the verb *lak* ‘come’**

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Abstract

This paper aims to study the grammaticalization of motion verb */lak/* ‘come’ in Meiteilon, a Tibeto-Burman language. The grammaticalization path of the Meiteilon motion verb */lak/* ‘come’ has developed into four morphemes, namely, */-lek-*, *-lu-*, *-lθ-*, *-lθm-* indicating different grammatical functions. Verb root */lak/* in the position of V2 in a serial verb construction undergoes grammaticalization which takes the path: movement>spatial>temporal.

Key words: grammaticalization, Meiteilon, nonce-concatenation, derivational morphology, morpheme.

I. Introduction

The grammaticalization of deictic suffixes is a common phenomenon in Tibeto-Burman languages. DeLancy (1985) notes that this is a cyclic process, the directive categories being regularly invented in Tibeto-Burman languages, and almost as regularly lost again. This paper is an attempt to investigate the relevance of grammaticalization of the motion verb */lak/* ‘come’ in the morphosyntactic structure of Meiteilon from the view point of current grammaticalization theories (for example, Hopper 1987, Bolinger 1980, Heine et.al 1991, 1992, Hopper and Traugott 1993). Meiteilon, the verb final Tibeto-Burman language, is observed to be taking the agglutinative nature, that is, suffixing many units of morphemes to the verb root to accommodate the grammatical designations and semantic connotations. This phenomenon can be viewed from the angle of grammaticalization of lexical item being deducted to small morphemes to serve grammatical functions.

The structure of the paper is as follows, we will briefly give a review of grammaticalization in section II and then discuss the number of morphemes apparently developed from the lexical verb /lak/ 'come' in section III. The motion verb /lak/ which means 'come' has developed into four grammaticalized morphemes /-lək-/, /-lu-/, /-lə-/, /-ləm-/ having different functions. These grammaticalized morphemes /lək/, /lu/, /lə/, /ləm/ had developed beyond marking direction into the domain of aspect.

II. Grammaticalization:

Grammaticalization is a part of language change which involves the change from a full meaningful lexical element to a grammatical element. It is a part of the study of language change to describe the development of grammatical forms through space and time. This change also takes on semantic level where former meaning of the grammaticalized lexical element is bleached or extended to the meaning of modality or aspect.

At the end of the nineteenth century it was Antoine Meillet who coined the term "grammaticalization" (1912). He was the first to recognize the importance of grammaticalization as a central area of the theory of language change and justified the relevance of grammaticalization studies as one of the major activities in the science of language. Meillet also put forward the concept of the loss of expressivity in frequently used collocations that units undergo on their way to becoming grammatical forms. This loss of expressivity is accompanied by a weakening of phonological form and of concrete meaning (1912). This notion of grammaticalization is found in Sapir's *Language* under the label "thinning-out process." Sapir's primary interest was neither in grammaticalization as a force in historical change (he does not use the term) nor in agglutination theory or evolutive typology; but in establishing a continuum of the different kinds of linguistic concepts as a basis for his synchronic typology, does he actually contribute to both of these issues.

It was Jerzy Kurylowicz ([1965] 1975) who had given the most widely quoted classic definition of the term:

"Grammaticalization consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status, e.g. from a derivative formant to an inflectional one"

Paul Hopper has drawn attention to the incipient, less easily accessible stages of the process, and he proposes the following five principles that are said to underlie the emergence of grammatical forms Hopper, (1991):

- a). Layering: When new layers emerge within a functional domain, older layers are not necessarily discarded but may remain to coexist and interact with the new layers.
- b). Divergence: This principle refers to the fact that, when some entity undergoes grammaticalization, the result is that there are now “pairs or multiples of forms having a common etymology but diverging functionally.”
- c). Specialization: This refers to “the narrowing of choices that characterizes an emergent grammatical construction.”
- d). Persistence: When a grammaticalized meaning B develops, this does not necessarily mean that the earlier meaning A is lost; rather, B is likely to reflect A, at least as long as B has not undergone “morphologization.”
- e). Decategorilization: Grammaticalization leads to a decrease in cardinal categoriality of the entity concerned. This implies a loss of optional markers of categoriality, such as modifier, on the one hand, and of discourse autonomy on the other.

Since the 1970s, a view has prevailed according to which grammaticalization forms a kind of filtering device, leading to what has been referred to variously as “bleaching” (Givón 1975a; Lord 1976), “semantic depletion” (Lehmann 1982), or “weakening of semantic content” (Bybee and Pagliuca 1985). This view is also shared by Sweetser (1988), who observes that there is in fact a development toward “fleshing out” or “abstracting out” central aspects of meaning and that the only component that remains unaffected in this process is the image-schematic or topological structure of the entities concerned.

A new framework of grammaticalization has emerged in the work of Elizabeth C Traugott. Her major concern is with principles of meaning change in the process of grammaticalization (Traugott 1980). On the basis of the Hallidayan tripartite distinction of language functions, she suggest that the main change involved in the process of grammaticalization is from the propositional/ideational via the textual to the

interpersonal/expressive functional-semantic component: “If there occurs a meaning-shift which, in the process of grammaticalization, entails shifts from one functional-semantic component to another, then such a shift is more likely to be from propositional through textual to expressive than in reverse direction” (Traugott 1982). Reverse changes, she argues, that is, changes from expressive through textual to propositional functions, are “highly unlikely in the history of any one grammatical marker” (Traugott 1987). This process, which is said to lead toward greater pragmaticization of meaning, is also called “subjectification” by Traugott since, over time, “meanings tend to come to refer less to objective situations and more to subjective ones (including speaker point of view), less to the described situation and more to the discourse situation” (Traugott 1986a).

Traugott (1982) suggested that there are semantic/pragmatic factors in grammaticalization that lead to unidirectionalities of change, specifically tendencies leading from concrete meanings to more abstract ones, and in particular to ones grounded in the speaker's assessment of connections between propositions.

Among implications for cross-linguistic work on grammaticalization is the claim that grammatical morphemes or "grams" can be studied not only as language-specific phenomena, but also as "gram-types" that are substantive universal categories analogous to "voiceless dental stop" in phonetics (Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994). They tend to be polysemous in similar ways across languages, and to undergo similar paths of development as a result of human discourse and interaction: "they reflect the metaphorical processes that are based on human cognitive make-up, and they reflect the inferences that humans commonly make when they communicate"

III. Grammaticalization of Meiteilon motion verb root /lak/ ‘come’

Verb, in Meiteilon, consists of a verb root and an inflectional suffix at the minimum, derivational morphemes follows the main verb and precedes the inflectional suffixes. The existence of a productive nonce-concatenation construction obviously facilitates the development of grammaticalized verbs, since their development can result from a reanalysis on an already existing surface sequence of verbs and does not necessitate the innovation of a new surface

structure. Frequently, when a word undergoes grammaticalisation, its etymon continues its life in the language as an autonomous lexical unit. As a result, one can speak of **divergence** between the lexical form and the grammaticalising form (Hopper 1991).

Cross-linguistically, one of the most common etymological sources for grammaticalization of verbs is ‘come’ and ‘go’. We find this feature in Meiteiron as well where the verb /lak/ ‘come’ has been grammaticalized to form four different morphemes indicating different grammatical functions. The morphemes /lək/, /lu/, /lə/ /ləm/ are apparently derived from the grammaticalization of motion verb /lak/ ‘come’ because the meaning of ‘come’ still persists in these morphemes. All these morphemes indicate the correlation between the agent, action and the deictic center. This reflects the principle of **Divergence**: when some entity undergoes grammaticalization, the result is that there are now “pairs or multiples of forms having a common etymology but diverging functionally.”(Hopper,1991).

The grammaticalization path taken by the Meiteilon verb /lak/ ‘come’ is:

movement>spatial>temporal

III.a. **Morpheme /-lək-/**

The verb root /lak/ ‘come’ at the morphologized stage becomes /lək/ with the vowel /a/ shortening to /ə/. According to the principle of phonetic erosion in the process of grammaticalization, the phonetic substance of a grammaticalized form tends to become reduced and/or assimilated to its environment. There are at least two possible factors that have been responsible for erosion. One is described by Givón (1990) as the quantity principle, a principle of iconic coding according to which a larger chunk of information will be given a larger chunk of code: since lexical forms contain more information than grammatical forms, the chunk of code employed for their expression is likely to be reduced when they are grammaticalized. The second factor relates to relative frequency of use: the higher frequency of use of grammatical morphemes favors what Gabelentz ([1891] 1901) has called the *Abnutzung* (abrasion) of their phonetic substance (Heine 1990).

The grammatical function of the morpheme /lək/ denotes a meaning of moving towards the speaker or hearer. The subject/agent performs the action at some place and comes to the place of speech. So, /lək/ always indicates a motion away from the speaker or hearer in some direction.

Examples:

1.1 məhak cak ca-rək-e

3SG rice eat-LAK-RE

‘He has taken his food’

He has taken/eaten his food at some place and came to the place of speech event.

1.2 məhak cak ca-rək-kəni

3SG rice eat-LAK-IRE

‘He will take his food’

He will eat his food at some place and will come to the place of speech event.

The reading of the morpheme /lək/ in association with action main verbs indicates movement of the agent towards the deictic center after completing the action at some place.

2.1 tombi-nə ləi pu-rək-e

tombi-NOM flower carry-LAK-RE

‘Tombi brought flower.’

Bringing the flower from someplace to the deictic center is indicated here. If the sentence is with only the main verb /pu/, it will indicate the act of carrying or meaning of taken away.

2.2 tombi-nə ləi pu-rək-kəni

tombi-NOM flower carry-LAK-IRE

‘Tombi will bring flower.’

3.1 caobə-nə pəisa pi-rək-e

chaoba-NOM money give-LAK-RE

‘Chaoba gave money (to me).’

In the above sentence, a person called Chaoba gave money to the speaker (the patient in the sentence, which is optional in Meiteilon) somewhere else; the speaker is at some other place now.

However, it is important to observe that /lək/ does not give the same reading when suffixed to stative verbs or verbs which are similar to English adjectives. This is being illustrated in the examples below:

4.1 əŋaŋ-si nuŋsi-rək-e
 child-DET love-LAK-RE
 ‘I (PRO dropped) started loving the child.’

4.2 əŋaŋ-si cao-rək-e
 child-DET big-LAK-RE
 ‘The child started growing.’

In the examples 4.1 and 4.2 /lək/ gives an inchoative reading where the stative main verbs imply a change of state. The presence of /lək/ indicates that a process has started or something becoming indicating a progression towards the completion of state.

4.1.1 əŋaŋ-si nuŋsi-rək-(l)əni
 child-DET love-LAK-IRE

The intended meaning is that the child will become more cute as the child grows. But it does not really mean a plan in future or an emotion to be developed in future. Rather it is an inference of probability that being with the child you will come to love the child. When we talk of human emotions, we cannot conceptualize the idea of definite realization in the future time. What we feel at present can never be guaranteed to remain the same. The stative verb /cao/ ‘big’ implies change of state and the state of the child will definitely change in the future. The reading of /lək/ also depends on the pragmatic factor.

However, with mental verbs like /k^hən/ ‘think’ /həŋ/ ‘question’ that do not refer purely to concrete action, the meaning of /lək/ has been extended to express a state of affair where there is perception of something or some idea which is difficult to express or bring solution or about a matter which is embarrassing to bring up at that moment. When somebody expresses something (may be solution or question), the idea or the question which is expressed comes to the agent of the sentence. This is illustrated in the examples below.

5.1 əi it^həntə k^hən-lək-pəni

1SG alone think-LAK-RE

‘I only thought it.’ (It was only an idea which I only thought it)

5.2 əi it^həntə həŋ-lək-pəni

1SG alone ask-LAK-RE

‘I only asked it.’ (It was an idea or a question which only came to my mine).

However, an important observation to be noted here is that there is no spatial movement. The directional meaning towards or away indicated by /lək/ is extended to non-spatial that is psychological states of the speakers. There are many such examples of metaphorical extension ‘going to sleep’, ‘going into depression’, ‘falling in love’ etc. DeLancey (1991) notes that cognitive states allow themselves to be conceptualized as locations.

III.b Morpheme /-lu-/~/-ru-/~/-u-/

The second morpheme derived from /lak/ ‘come’ is /lu/. It is possible that in the morphophonemic process final consonant /k/ has been dropped and the vowel /a/ has changed to /u/. The morpheme /lu/ indicates the meaning of the subject of the sentence going from the place of speech to perform an act and has to come back to the original place after having performed the act. The movement towards the deictic centre is seen from the subject having to come back from the place of action to the original place of speech. Morpheme /lu/ explicitly expresses the meaning of ‘go’ and ‘come’, something like the meaning by English word ‘fetch’. According to the understanding of the person pragmatically the person has to come back or some channels of communication are open after performing the action. The following examples are illustrative of it.

6.1 əy cak ca-ru-re

1SG rice eat-LU-RE

‘I had my food’/ ‘After having had my food I came back’ (literally, I went and had my food and came back).

The sentence indicates that I have gone from the place of speech and have taken my food and then came back again to my original place, i.e., the place of speech. Some meaning of reporting by the subject himself of the action being completed is conveyed after reaching the place of speech.

6.2 əi cak ca-ru-gəni

ISG rice eat-LU-IRE

‘I will have my food’

The sentence indicates that I will be going to another place to have my food and will come back again at the deictic centre.

7.1 caobə-nə pəisa pi-ru-re

chaoba-NOM money give-LU-RE

‘Chaoba had given the money.’ (Literally Chaoba went and gave money and came back.)

He had gone from the deictic centre to the person or place where he had given the money and returned back to the original place.

7.2 caobə-nə pəisa pi-ru-gəni

chaoba-NOM money give-LU-IRE

‘Chaoba will go to give money’.

The implication of coming back to the deictic centre after completing the work is provided by /ru/.

This coming back to the deictic centre is clearly seen in the sentence,

8.1 əi məp^həm-du cət-lu-re

1SG place-DET go-LU-RE

‘I went to that place and came back’

I have been to that place. The main verb /cət/ ‘go’ indicates movement away from the deictic centre. But the report of reaching the place is known from the speaker himself at the deictic centre. The report is given only after coming back from the place is marked by the perfective marker /re/.

8.2 əi məp^həm-du cət-lu-gəni

1SG place-DET go-LU-IRE

‘I will go to that place and come back’.

However, when /lu/ occurs with non-motional verbs, they do not literally indicate movement or direction in a physical sense. For example, when it occurs with verbal verbs like

/ŋaŋ/ ‘speak’, */lao/* ‘shout’ or mental verbs like */k^hən/* ‘think’, */niŋsiŋ/* ‘recall’ etc they express the meaning of a goal the agent has experienced. But it is important to note that the spatial meaning of */lu/* can still be traced.

Morpheme */lu/* in the perfective sense, denotes a meaning of going through or experiencing the instantaneous moment of emotion of the stative verbs.

- 9.1 p^hurit əŋaŋbə-du pam-ru-re
Shirt red-DET like-LU-RE
‘I (came to) like the red shirt (only after I saw it).’
However, the sentence with irrealis marker,

- 9.2 *p^hurit əŋaŋbə-du pam-ru-gəni
Shirt red-NOM like-LU-IRE
‘I will like the red shirt (after I saw it).’

/ It is an unacceptable sentence because the feeling that the main verb states, is instantaneous which is realized only at the spur of the moment and cannot have a mental planning to be performed in a future time, like one cannot plan to ‘like, feel, desire’ etc can be felt only when contacted with the object.

An observation to be made with morpheme */lu/* is that it cannot be attached to stative verbs with adjectival meaning. The meaning of */lu/* as ‘go and come back’ is very clear as we can observe an interesting phenomenon that when it is attached to stative verbs like */waŋ/* ‘tall’ and */k^həŋ/* ‘know’ the sentences become ill-formed and therefore ungrammatical. This is illustrated in the examples below:

10. *əŋaŋ-du waŋ-lu-re
child-DET tall-LU-RE

There is no contiguity between the main stative verb */waŋ/* and the morpheme */lu/*. The child, after becoming taller or changing his size cannot come back to the original height. The stative verb cannot change its state to and fro, which the function of */lu/* denotes.

11.1a əi məhak-ki mə-yum k^həŋ-lu-re

1SG 3SG-GEN 3PRO-home know-LU-RE

'I know his home.' (The subject had gone to find where the person lives.)

11.2a əi məhak-ki mə-yum k^həŋ-lu-gəni

1SG 3SG-GEN 3PRO-home know-LU-IRE

'I will find out his home'

But

11.1b *əy pəra-si k^həŋ-lu-re

1SG lesson-DET know-LU-RE

11.2b *əy pəra k^həŋ-lu-gəni

1SG lesson know-LU-IRE

There is no physical movement when we try to know or learn a lesson. So the morpheme /lu/ is not used with the main stative verb /k^həŋ/ 'know' in the context. The attachment of the suffix not only depends on the type of verbs but also to the types of the subject.

The natural process of somebody who has grown tall cannot come back to his shorter height. Likewise somebody who has learnt something cannot come back to his original state of not learning or knowing what has been learnt. As it becomes contradictory with the natural process growing or learning the sentences are rendered unacceptable. However, what is interesting in the use of the verb /k^həŋ/ 'know' in the sentence 11.1.a. seems a perfect sentence which occurs in the natural speech of the speakers. What we should be aware in this context is when we talk of Actionsart of a verb, it is, in fact, very difficult to really specify the basic meaning of any Actionsart verb. It is quite often the case that a verb has developed into two different shades of meanings when it occurs with noun phrases. How the sentence 11.1.a. is acceptable while the sentence 11.1.b. is unacceptable is because of the two different noun phrases which occur in the two sentences. Knowing somebody's home's location obviously implies that the speaker has been to that house (which again implies a movement). Because of the differences of two different aspectual features 11.1.a. becomes an acceptable expression. Verkuyl (1972) states that the co-occurrence features of verbs are determined not only by their inherent properties but also by the nature of their noun phrase arguments.

12.1 məhak pulis-nə p^ha-ru-re

3SG police-NOM catch-LU-RE

He had been in the police custody.

12.2 *məhak pulis-nə p^ha-ru-gəni

3SG police-NOM catch-LU-IRE

There is no guarantee that the person will be released as soon as the police caught him. He may be detained or may be punished if he is guilty. So the definite indication of going and coming back which the morpheme /lu/ indicates is not applicable here.

Morpheme /lu/ can be further tested by attaching verbs like ‘sa’ (build) which needs a longer period of time. The function cannot be completed within a short span of time; the sentence is unacceptable to the native speakers though it appears to be grammatical. The function of /lu/ becomes much clearer from this example.

13. *əi yum sa-ru-re

1SG house built-LU-RE

I have built a house somewhere going away from the deictic centre and came back again. The meaning of ‘go’ and ‘come’ performing the action taking a short duration is not applicable here.

Another interesting phenomenon which we observe with the verbs like, think, worry, ‘sleep’ etc. is that they do not necessarily indicate the displacement of place of action but it indicates two different states of mind. The subject of the sentence has been in one state and now he is in his original state. The following three examples are illustrative of it.

14. əi wak^həl əmə k^həl-lu-re

1SG thought one think-LU-RE

‘I thought something’ (Literally I have gone to think something).

It is not the case of me going somewhere to think and coming back. My mind had been engaged in some other thought while staying at same place of speech i.e., shifting from one state to another and returning to the former state.

15. nəŋ-gi p^hib^həm-dudə əi wa-ru-re
 2SG-GEN condition-DAT 1SG tired- LU – RE

‘I was worried at your condition.’

It is not the physical tiredness but the mental state of the subject.

16. əi tum-lu-re

1SG sleep-LU-RE.

‘I have gone to sleep’.

It is seen from the example that it is not necessary that I had gone somewhere to sleep and come back. But I had been in a state of sleep and now I am awake at the same place of speech.

Unlike the two different verbs, the verb /*tum*/ ‘sleep’ behaves in a different way. Depending on the context where the sentence is uttered, for example a person having slept somewhere and met a person and when enquired what he/she has been doing or where he/she has been to, then he may say *tum-mu-re* which indicates a spacial movement and the same sentence is also uttered when the speaker slept for a while at the same place and told his/her friend that he/she slept for a while. In such a context, pragmatic plays a very significant role.

In the above examples, the activities of the verbs do not necessarily involve physical displacement. The actions are only a shift from one state to another state and back to the original state. This is a case of metaphorical extension which signifies grammaticalization at the semantic level, referring to a shift in meaning or an additional use which rests on figurative usage, Schwenter and Traugott discuss the path ways as:

PERSON>OBJECT>ACTIVITY>SPACE>TIME>QUALITY with each category on the right more abstract on the left.

III. c Morpheme /lə/

The third morpheme derived from /*lak*/ ‘come’ is /*lə*/ where /*k*/ has been dropped and /*a*/ has been shortened to /*ə*/. /*lə*/ denotes a meaning of performing the action at the deictic centre, occupying spatial domain. There is a remote sense that the subject comes to the deictic centre,

i.e., there is still some relics of the spatial verbal sense of ‘come’ but the physical meaning of movement is bleached to a certain degree that the function of ‘movement’ is not indicated by the morpheme /lə/. /lə/ has developed an aspect of progression towards completions from its meaning of motion towards the deictic centre. In many examples, we can gloss it as becoming or start (eg. *sao-rə-ni* ‘he will become angry’, indicating a progression towards the completion of a state).

Examples:

17.1 məhak cak ca-rə-re
3SG rice eat-Lə-RE

He has his food here or he is in the process of having his food here, i.e., at the deictic centre.

17.2 məhak cak ca-rə-gəni
3SG rice eat-Lə-IRE

‘He will have his food here.’

18.1 məhak-nə pəisa pi-rə-re
3SG-NOM money give-Lə-RE

‘He gave money to the speaker here’ (the act of giving is performed at the deictic centre).

19.1 məhak-nə pəisa pi-rə-gəni
3SG-NOM money give-Lə-IRE

‘He will give money to the speaker here’.

But the sentence,

20.1 * tombi-nə ləi pu-rə-re
tombi-NOM flower carry-Lə-RE

However, Tombi carried flower here, is not an acceptable sentence to the native speaker as the act of carrying needs movement. And the meaning of physical movement is bleached to only ‘at the deictic centre’ in the grammaticalized morpheme /lə/ occupying the spatial domain. This is a case of Paul Hopper’s principle of specialization, where there is narrowing of choices that characterizes an emergent grammatical construction.

20.2 tombi-nə ləi pu-rə-gəni
tombi-NOM flower carry-Lə-IRE

‘Tombi will carry flower.’

The sentence with irrealis marker which indicates unrealized action is acceptable because a sense of taking away from the deictic centre is indicated (the object to be taken is at the deictic centre as of now). The inherent aspect of the verb /pu/ ‘carry’ provides the meaning of movement. Then the question arises, if the morpheme /lə/ has become redundant in the context? The meaning of the sentence does not stop at just ‘carry away or taken away’. Some kind of probability is encoded in the sentence by the presence of /lə/ that, Tombi must be the person to carry the flower when the action is performed. The reason for this conclusion may be the association which Tombi has with flowers, she usually carry flower on many occasions or any other reason. This association in serial verb construction is contiguity where the two serialized verbs cannot be intervened by any element. And in metonymy, this contiguity is the association of one entity (here word) with another entity that is contiguous in some way to the former entity. The contiguity of ‘go’ with ‘to’ in the purposive sense in fact, must have been a major factor in the development of the future meaning in ‘be going to’ as an auxiliary. The association of /pu/ with /lə/ and /gəni/ develops into the meaning of probability of epistemic modality by the inference from earlier experience. Specialization and contiguity are the factors that make the association of /lə/ with stative verbs and verbs with adjectival meaning unacceptable.

21.1 *əŋaŋ-si nuŋsi-rə-re
child-DET love-Lə-RE

21.2 əŋaŋ-si nuŋsi-rə-gəni
child-NOM love-Lə-IRE

The child will be loved by the subject (pro dropped).

22.1 *əŋaŋ-si waŋ-rə-re
child-DET tall-Lə-RE

22.2 əŋaŋ-si waŋ-rə-gəni

child-NOM tall-Lə-IRE

‘The child will be tall(his limbs are long)’.

/lə/ has lost the meaning of physical movement and its meaning of ‘at the deictic centre’ is not contiguous with these verbs (stative and adjectival).

III. d **Morpheme /ləm/**

The fourth morpheme /ləm/ indicates action performed away from the deictic centre, i.e., action is displaced from the place of speech. The sense of movement is still traceable in the meaning of the morpheme /ləm/.

23.1.a məhak cak ca-rəm-me

3SG rice eat-LAM-RE

‘He had his food already (when I went there)’.

The subject had already finished the action when the speaker went to the place of action. There is an evidence of displacement of the speaker which indicates the distance between the place of speech or deictic centre and the place of action.

23.1.b məhak jamnə p^həzə-rəm-me

3SG very beautiful-LAM-RE

‘She was very beautiful (no longer does).’

The above sentence, morpheme /ləm/ suffixed to the stative main verb, shows the change of physical appearance of the subject. As the verb is stative the change is from one state to another state.

It is noticed that a metaphorical extension takes place when used with stative verbs. With stative verbs a sense of finality is attained. This sense of finality is probably derived from its meaning of departure of motion away from the deictic centre. The deictic centre could be a location or a state. Like other grammaticalized morphemes, from its basic meaning of /lak/ ‘go’ /ləm/ has also developed an aspectual sense beyond that of a displacement from the deictic centre

into the metaphorical notion of ‘going ahead’ and ‘doing something’ which in many cases function to give permission or ask for confirmation.

The etymological meaning of ‘come’ has been bleached in this morpheme and contains only the grammatical meaning of displacement indicating spacial distance between deictic centre and the place of action. The domain of SPACE provides the lexical source of the grammatical domain of TIME (Bybee et al. 1994). Therefore the domain of space develops into the domain of time. This is an obvious extension from more lexical to more grammatical categorization which speakers create by a change from one domain to another and it is therefore a metaphorical extension. In this metaphorical transfer the domain of SPACE provides a model for the domain of TIME. This grammaticalization by metaphorical transfer reduces the speakers’ reference from reference to spatial and temporal direction to reference to temporal direction. The semantic reduction strengthens the informativity and relevance of the temporal meaning (Hopper and Traugott 1993). The following example is illustrative of it.

23.2 məhak cak ca-rəm-mi

3SG rice eat-LAM-RE(IMP)

‘He was having food (when I went there)’.

This imperfective sentence functions like the Romance Imperfective which conveys the aspectual value ‘imperfectivity’ and the temporal value ‘past’, i.e. it conveys both aspectual and temporal information. Morpheme /ləm/ indicates this past aspect for without /ləm/, we get the present imperfect sentence as illustrated below:

23.3 məhak cak ca-ri

3SG rice eat-RE (IMP)

He is having food.

The meaning of /ləm/ which has been discussed can be further substantiated with the help of data from Meiteilon folktales. In every folktale in Meiteiron, the beginning sentence of the stories mandatorily has the morpheme /ləm/ suffixed to the main verb. The following examples illustrate this.

24. t^hainə məmaŋ ŋeidə pɛbed əmə-k^hək əpikpa məca təret-k^hək-kə
 long ago time bird one-only small child seven-only-CONJ
 loinənə uməŋ əmə-də lei-rəm-mi
 together forest one-LOC stay-TEM-RE(IMPF)

‘Once upon a time there lived a bird with her seven small children in a forest.’

(Pebedki wari)

25. t^hainə məmaŋ ŋeidə k^hul əmə-də hənubə hənubi mətei
 long ago time village one-LOC old man old woman husband
 mənəo lei-rəm-mi
 wife stay-TEM-RE(IMPF)

‘Once upon a time there lived an old couple in a village.’

(HanubaHanubiPanThaba)

23. t^hainə məmaŋ ŋəidə ləibak əmə-də niŋt^həu əmə
 long ago time country one LOC king one
 pal-ləm-bo-re [pal-ləm-bə-oi-re]
 rule-TEM-exist-RE(IMPF)

‘Once upon a time a king ruled in a kingdom.’

(Sana Thaba)

The presence of the morpheme /ləm/ with the imperfective aspect suffixed to the main verbs indicates past imperfective. And we understand from the sentence that a beginning of the span of the story during which the events would take place is indicated.

24. məhak cak ca - rəm - gəni
 3SG rice eat - EVI – IRE
 ‘He may be having his food’.

Though the sentence has the irrealis marker, it does not indicate an action to be fulfilled in the future time. Rather, distance in time is exploited as a vehicle to conceptualize distance in more abstract domains, the speaker is restraining himself from asserting the statement. The other interpretation is the assumption that the subject must be having his food now. It is inferred from

his usual routine during this time. Example 24 indicates the inferred information which is one of the parameters of evidentiality.

Conclusion:

The investigation of the grammaticalization path of Meiteilon /lak/ 'come' has shown the development of four different morphemes indicating different grammatical functions. In addition to having developed into grammaticalized morphemes showing movement>spatial-these morphemes have, in course of time acquired aspectual features. Morphemes /lək/ and /lu/ indicate movement in the grammaticalization cline of /lak/ while morpheme /lə/ stands for spatial. Morpheme /ləm/ develops into a temporal marker which is further grammaticalized into an evidential marker.

Abbreviations:

RE-Realis

IRE-Irrealis

3SG-Third person singular

NOM-Nominative

DET-Determiner

1SG- First person singular

2SG- Second person singular

GEN- Genetive

DAT- Dative

TEM- Temporal

IMP- Imperfective

LOC - Locative

EVI- Evidential marker

CONJ- Conjunctive

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