

A Contrastive Study of Grammaticalization Patterns of the Verbs for 'Give' in Thai and Mandarin Chinese

Kingkarn Thepkanjana & Satoshi Uehara
Chulalongkorn University & Tohoku University

It is generally known that Thai and Mandarin Chinese are typologically similar in many respects. However, one important difference is that Thai has the head-modifier order whereas Mandarin Chinese has the modifier-head one. This paper investigates how these different orders bear on patterns of grammaticalization of serial verbs. It is hypothesized that patterns of grammaticalization of some serial verbs in Thai and Mandarin Chinese correlate with the constituent order of the head vis-à-vis the modifier in each language. The grammaticalized verbs for 'give', i.e. *hây* in Thai and *gěi* in Mandarin Chinese, are used as a case study. It is argued that the head-modifier order in Thai tends to be compatible with postverbal grammaticalized morphemes whereas the modifier-head order in Mandarin Chinese tends to be compatible with preverbal grammaticalized ones. This argument is supported by different patterns of grammaticalization of the verbs for 'give' in Thai and Mandarin Chinese exemplified by the dative, benefactive and causative uses of the grammaticalized verbs for 'give' in both languages.

Both *hây* and *gěi* can mark dative and benefactive uses. *Hây* appears after the main verb and is often ambiguous between the two functions. On the other hand, Mandarin Chinese has the preverbal benefactive *gěi* and the postverbal dative *gěi*. However, Li and Thompson (1981) observe that the distinction between the dative and benefactive uses of *gěi* is often blurred. This fact corresponds with the tendency for Mandarin Chinese to put the modifier preverbally and for Thai to put the modifier postverbally.

In addition, both Thai and Mandarin Chinese have the grammaticalized causative *hây* and *gěi*, which appear in the schema [NP1 *hây/gěi* NP2 VP]. The causative *gěi* in Mandarin Chinese has a much more restricted use than the causative *hây* in Thai (Iwasaki and Yap 1998). The causative *hây* and *gěi* still retain some verbal properties and are sometimes analyzed as main verbs, which appear at the leftmost position in the predicate. This fact corresponds with the tendency in Thai to put the head on the left, but is incompatible with the tendency in Mandarin Chinese to put the head on the right. Thus, it is not surprising that the causative *gěi* has a more restricted use than the causative *hây*.

Grammaticalization as viewed diachronically is hypothesized as a unidirectional phenomenon. The types of change which prototypically take place in grammaticalization include phonological loss, decategorization, increase in grammatical status, generalization of grammatical function, semantic abstraction and bleaching. This paper argues that in accounting for the grammaticalization of *hây* and *gěi*, we have to take into consideration the autonomy/dependence (A/D) asymmetry in Langacker's (1987) sense between the grammaticalized forms and their surrounding lexical items. One of the clearest cases of the A/D asymmetry is the relation between the head and modifier. It is demonstrated in this paper that the grammaticalized forms function like modifiers of the main verbs. It is found that the more grammaticalized a form is, the more dependent it is to its head.

References

- Iwasaki, Shoichi and Foong-Ha Yap. 1998. "'Give' constructions in Thai and Beyond: a cognitive and grammaticalization perspective," in Somsong Burusphat (ed.) *The International Conference on Thai Studies*. Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand, pp.371-382.
- Langacker, Ronald W. 1987. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Volume I. Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Li, Charles N. and Sandra A. Thompson. 1981. *Mandarin Chinese. A Functional Reference Grammar*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.