

Posture verbs in Innu

Fanny York
Université du Québec à Montréal

In this presentation I will consider posture verbs in Innu, a hitherto uninvestigated domain of this endangered language, and show how they grammaticalize into locative verbs. Innu (a.k.a. Montagnais) is an Algonquian language spoken by approximately 13,000 speakers in Quebec (Canada). It is a polysynthetic language whose verb stem has a tripartite structure (Bloomfield 1946). The first component is termed *initial* and contains a root. The last component is the *final*, which can be abstract, marking the grammatical category of the verb, or concrete, in which case it corresponds to a lexical suffix, equivalent to Talmyan satellites (Talmy 2000). *Medials* consist of a classifier or an incorporated noun. An example of the various stem components is presented in (1).

- (1) *âkûwâškušimuw*¹
 INITIAL MEDIAL FINAL INFL
 âkaw -âšku -šimu -w
 behind -long.and.rigid -lying.AI -3
 's/he is hiding behind a tree'

The function of localization that posture verbs can display across languages is a well documented phenomenon (Newman 2002; Grinevald 2006). Grinevald (2006) proposes that the following situations correspond to the different stages of grammaticalization of posture verbs in a given language: degree of systematicity of use for localization, capacity to be used in complex verbal forms to express complex events, development into systems of satellites and possibility to have metaphorical extensions and to mark aspectual values.

Based on data from native speakers of Innu, I will demonstrate that a small set of verbs formed with an *initial* (verbal root) encoding posture is used in the localization of a definite entity that can be animate or inanimate. An example of this locative construction is presented in (2).

- (2) *âkû mîcwâpît ašew têtapwâkan*
 âkaw mîcwâp-it ašte-w têtapwâkan
 behind house-LOC sit.II-0 chair
 'the chair **is** behind the house'

I present evidence that this construction with a posture verb is competing with a general locative predicate used in the localization of an indefinite entity (3).

- (3) *âkû mîcwâpît takuan têtapwâkan*
 âkaw mîcwâp-it takuan têtapwâkan
 behind house-LOC is.II-0 chair
 'there **is** a chair is behind the house'

Moreover, I show that a system of posture finals (satellites) has developed. The five posture concrete *finals* are: *-ikâpaw-* 'standing', *-api-* 'sitting', *-išimu-* 'extended, lying', *-šin/-tin-* 'lying, in contact with a surface' and *-akušî-* 'suspended, hanging'. They are combined with an *initial* that denotes a property of the entity described (its orientation; its disposition in space; its visibility; its quantity, etc.) or an action coextensive with the posture to form complex events as in (4). Three of them present a more advanced stage of grammaticalization, showing metaphorical extensions and aspectual values.

- (4) *pîtwâwkâpûw*
 INITIAL FINAL INFL
 pîtwâw -kâpû -w
 smoke -standing.AI -3
 's/he is standing, smoking'

Keywords: posture verbs, localization, Innu, grammaticalization, satellites.

References

- Bloomfield, L. (1946). Algonquian. Linguistic Structures of North America. H. Hoijer. New York, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology. 6: 85-129.
 Grinevald, C. (2006). The expression of static location in a typological perspective. Space in Languages, Linguistic Systems and Cognitive Categories. M. Hickmann and S. Robert, John Benjamins.
 Newman, J., Ed. (2002). The linguistics of sitting, standing, and lying, John Benjamins.
 Talmy, L. (2000). Towards a Cognitive Semantics. vol II. Cambridge, MIT Press.

¹ Abbreviations: 3 : third person animate ; 0 : third person inanimate; AI: intransitive animate; II: intransitive inanimate; TI2: transitive inanimate; LOC: locative.