COMPLEX GRAMMATICALIZATION AND LEXICALIZATION IN ISOLATING LANGUAGES OF EAST ASIA

Matthias Gerner
City University of Hong Kong

Under the label of *complex grammaticalization / lexicalization* I subsume any of the following phenomena:

- *Multigrammaticalization*: grammaticalization of all or most members of a closed or semi-closed word class along the same path
- *Multilexicalization*: lexicalization of all or most members of a closed or semi-closed word class along the same path
- *Polygrammaticalization* (Craig 1991) whereby a single item develops more than one grammatical functions (typically lying in the nominal and verbal paradigms)

In the first part of this presentation, I will present a collection of quite rare phenomena of complex grammaticalization / lexicalization that I encountered in my field research in the P.R. of China in the past 13 years and that were partly published in an array of journals including *Journal of Pragmatics* (2x), *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, *Folia Linguistica Historica*, *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*. Amid an extensive list of examples, the following chart provides an overview of the most spectacular cases.

Type		*Phenomena*	*Attested Language Family*
Multigrammaticalization	1)	Demonstrative Pronouns → Definite Articles → Topic Markers	Tibeto-Burman
	2)	Nominal Classifiers → Singular / Plural Classifiers	Kam-Tai
	3)	Nominal Classifiers → Inflected Classifiers (each classifier develops 12 forms)	Miao-Yao
Multilexicalization	4)	Causal verbprefix becomes lexicalized as voiced-uncausative vs. voiceless-causative distinction	Tibeto-Burman
Polygrammaticalization	5)	Verb 'touch' → (a) Passive marker (b) Modal Marker	Kam-Tai
	6)	Verb 'take' → (a) PATIENT marker (b) BENEFICIARY marker	Sinitic
	7)	Verb 'put' → (a) Perfect marker (b) SOURCE-Preposition (c) LOCATION-Preposition	Tibeto-Burman
	8)	Verb 'cross' → (a) Experiential marker (b) SOURCE-Preposition (c) COMPARATIVE-Preposition	Kam-Tai
	9)	Verb 'say' → (a) Quotative marker (b) Epistemic modality marker	Tibeto-Burman
	10)	Locative 'on' → (a) PATIENT marker (b) BENEFICIARY marker (c) COMPARATIVE marker (d) CAUSEE marker (e) COMPANION marker	Tibeto-Burman

One morphosyntactic feature of isolating languages is the high degree of polysemy in grammatical marking, which in turn is the outcome of the processes of *complex grammaticalization*. I will argue that the relatively high frequency of phenomena of complex grammaticalization in isolating languages is due to the constructional make-up of these languages. East Asian languages exhibit a strong tendency toward serialization at various levels: serial verb constructions, serial nouns, serial TAM marking, and (in some cases even) serial demonstratives. As items in serial constructions may easily undergo alternative constructional rebracketing, serialization can be viewed as the most important factor behind complex grammaticalization.