

Complex-predicate formation and grammaticalization in Early Modern Japanese: Relevance of lexical sources from a cognitive semantic perspective

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Grammaticalization involves an increased dependency of a lexical item on another through a formal and/or functional 'association', followed by a progressive loss of its lexical status. There are seemingly conflicting proposals on what motivates such a dependency involved in the grammaticalization of verbal elements. Some scholars have argued that the association made between two syntactically adjacent elements (V1, V2) plays a major role (Falsgraf and Park 1994), and others, in particular, Shibatani and Chung (2007) have drawn attention to semantic characteristics and argued that a certain type of semantic relationship between two elements, namely *semantic congruity* (consisting of [a] shared participants, [b] spatio-temporal overlap, [c] causal connection, [d] conventional connection by a cultural norm), conditions the formation of a juncture between two elements. For example, the verb *iku* (or *yuku*) 'to go' is likely to form a juncture with a semantically similar (*congruous*) element that precedes it, such as *sugiru* 'pass', rather than with a semantically-remote (*non-congruous*) element, such as *taberu* 'to eat'. The authors then argue that 'less congruous' combinations facilitate the grammaticalization process of V2.

Abe (2007) investigated the initial stage of the grammaticalization process of the Japanese verb *shimau* 'to put away, finish' (as V2), based on literary works from the 17th and 18th centuries, showed a result that conforms to the latter, semantic congruity. It showed that over ninety percent of the verbs in the V1 position share a sense of 'disappearance' with *shimau*, e.g. *kiete-* 'disappear', *sutete-* 'throw away', etc, suggesting that semantically-motivated predicate combining is justifiable. However, a question still remains as to other verbs, such as *miru* 'to see' and *oku* 'to put', which have also grammaticalized over time, but do not seem to have had semantic restrictions on types of V1 elements during the initial stage of its development.

The present study reexamines the idea of semantic congruity by Shibatani and Chung, through a detailed semantic analysis of the lexical origins using historical data in order to show how semantic restrictions in forming a juncture can vary across different types of verbs. I will suggest that a semantically-motivated juncture-forming is justifiable, but it is restricted to verbs that contain certain semantic properties, in particular, to those that involve temporally and spatially dynamic events.

References

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