The Grammaticalization of Modal Particles in Shanghainese

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This paper depicts the grammaticalization path of ɦi23 kǎ34 ‘he says’ in Shanghainese. It is proposed that, from the original quotative use, a reportive use of ɦi23 kǎ34 was developed in the sentence final position with an obscured source of information indicative of speaker’s doubt about the proposition (Han & Shi 2012). The reportive clause was then integrated with its preceding propositional clause and evolved itself into a modal particle expressing the counter-expecting meaning of denial (Yap et al. 2010), based on which ɦi23 kǎ34 was further grammaticalized into the new sole-purpose topic marking particle of counter-expectation through ‘position lowering’ (Qiang 2010). The emergence of ɦi23 kǎ34 as a topic particle, as well as a modal particle, is driven by intralinguistic needs for functional variety and form specialization. Such a path (see Figure1) is claimed to be elegant and practical since not only the stages involved gracefully follow the five principles of grammaticalization by Hopper (1991; 1996), the novel evolution (or revolution) of ɦi23 kǎ34 as a topic marking particle is also helpful for the analysis of similar patterns across languages.

Stage1: ɦi23 kǎ34 + clause

right dislocation

clause + ɦi23 kǎ34 (quotative clause: ‘he says’)

semantic obscuring

Stage2: clause + ɦi21 kǎ34 (reportive clause: ‘it is said’)

clausal integration

Stage3: clause + ɦi21 kǎ34 (modal particle: ‘unexpected’)

position lowering

Stage4: topic_ɦi23 kǎ34 + comment (topic marking particle: ‘unbelievable’)

Figure 1: The grammaticalization of ɦi23 kǎ34

Key words: ɦi23 kǎ34, Shanghainese, modal particle, topic marking particle, grammaticalization

References


