

The Grammaticalisation of motion verbs in Mayan languages: A continuum

Nicole Hober (University of Bremen, hober@uni-bremen.de)

The envisioned talk focusses on the grammaticalisation of motion verbs in Mayan languages and thus compares the verb-framed spatial deictic systems of languages within the same language family. The research forms part of a larger project dedicated to the description of spatial interrogatives and their functionally corresponding declarative counterparts from a cross-linguistic perspective (cf. Stolz et al. 2017; Robbers & Hober 2018). This talk shall take a closer look at the grammaticalisation continuum of spatial markers where “languages make use of zero spatial morphology or of full repertoires of spatial markers with a lot of options in between” (Robbers & Hober 2018: 400). Taking into consideration theories of and research on grammaticalisation informing this research (cf. Heine, Claudi, & Hünnemeyer 1991; Croft 2003; Hancil & König 2014), the spatial deictic systems of nine Mayan languages, namely Yucatec Maya, Mopán Maya, Tabasco Chontal, Chol de Tila, Tzotzil Zinacantán, Chuj, Kaqchikel, Akateko de San Miguel Acatán, and Mam de Huehuetenango, are examined and compared. To this end, the present contribution addresses the following research questions:

- i. How is motion, especially in deictic expression, encoded in the respective Mayan languages? Are there differences between the interrogative and declarative side of the system?
- ii. Is there evidence of grammaticalised markers in the respective Mayan languages? How are the markers derived and what syntactic and semantic function do they fulfil? Are they obligatorily or optionally employed in the encodings of motion, considering both deictic and non-deictic expression?

Accordingly, it will be shown that one may identify three major categories of spatial deictic systems among the Mayan languages: (1) those using (multi-)verb constructions with verbal members of equal status, (2) those with (weakly) grammaticalised secondary motion verbs, and (3) systems with fully grammaticalised markers, which function as genuine directionals and are not restricted to physical movement. Examples of each type of the same Bible passage are given below.

[Luke 13:31] ‘Leave (and go away) from here.’

(1) Mopán Maya

Joc'u('ol)-en *wa'ye'*

leave-INTR.IMP here

(2) Tzotzil de Zinacantán

loc'-an *ech'-el* *li'-to-e*

leave-IMP.2SG **DIR:away**-NF here-LOC-ENC

(3) Mam de Huehuetenango

t-ex-a *tzalu* *ex* *txi'-ya*

A2-**DIR:out away**-A2.ENC here **DIR:out away** **go**-A2.ENC

The project as a whole and the investigation of the grammaticalisation continuum of Mayan motion verbs in particular offers interesting insights to typologists, areal linguists, Mayanists, and researchers of grammaticalisation. The overall project builds on existing work and aims towards a comprehensive understanding of spatial deixis and grammaticalization paths of motion verbs in the world languages.

Abbreviations

A = set A pronouns; DIR = directional; ENC = enclitic; IMP = imperative; INTR = intransitive; LOC = locative; NF = non-finite; SG = singular

Sources

- [MOPNT] *Le'ec Ada' U T'an A Dios A Tumulbene* (Mopán Maya) © 2012, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc.
- [TZOZNT] *Sc'op riox: ja' li' yalaj ti chac' jcuxlejaltic ta sbatel osli ti cajvaltuc Jesucristoe* (Tzotzil de Zinacantán) © 2009, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc.
- [MAMH] Mam de Huehuetenango Bible. © 1993. Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas.

References

- Croft, William. 2003. *Typology and Universals*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hancil, Sylvie & König, Ekkehard. 2014. *Grammaticalization – Theory and Data*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Heine, Bernd, Claudi, Ulrike, & Hünemeyer, Friedericke. 1991. *Grammaticalization: A Conceptual Framework*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Robbers, Maja and Nicole Hober. 2018. Verb-framed spatial deixis in Mesoamerican languages and the increasing complexity of SOURCE via Spanish *de*. *Language Typology and Universals* 71(3), 397-423.
- Stolz, Thomas, Nataliya Levkovich, Aina Urdze, Julia Nintemann, and Maja Robbers. 2017. *Spatial Interrogatives in Europe and Beyond: Where, Whither, Whence*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.