

On contact-induced grammaticalization in South Asia

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Abstract

Since Emeneau's seminal 1956 paper and subsequent work by Masica (1976), the subcontinent of South Asia has been recognized as a linguistic area in which particular linguistic features have diffused across the genetic boundaries of unrelated languages as a consequence of longstanding multilingualism. Heine & Kuteva (2005) recognize three types of linguistic area: (1) those established by the presence of a shared set of linguistic features; (2) those in which the languages share a high degree of mutual intertranslatability; and (3), those that share the same processes of grammaticalization (and thus form a grammaticalization area). As they note, these are not mutually exclusive, and the features of all three types may be present in the one linguistic area.

While it has been clearly demonstrated that South Asian languages in sustained contact can undergo a remarkable convergence in structure, as amply illustrated by the celebrated example of multilingual Kupwar village (Gumperz & Wilson 1971), the possibility of grammaticalization patterns being replicated in genetically unrelated South Asian languages is yet to be investigated in sufficient detail. This paper considers the evidence for the diffusion of conceptual schemas in Austroasiatic, Dravidian, Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman languages in contact. Topics to be addressed include the grammaticalization of conative modality markers, causative markers and relative-correlative constructions, and the extent to which recurring patterns may have been replicated as a result of linguistic convergence.

References

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