

Report Verbs, Complementation, and Serial Verb Constructions

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The nature of V to C grammaticalisation has been the object of much research in diachronic studies. Of particular interest in this paper is the reanalysis of a report verb into a complementiser. Klamer (2000), examining the complementisers in *Tukang Besi* and *Buru*, has argued that they are developed from corresponding verbs of saying triggered by a process of “semantic bleaching”. The option for subject drop in these languages leads to the report verb being a category neutral entity with no arguments. This element is then reanalyzed as a complementiser and another verb now carries the functions of report, saying etc.

One of the main critiques against this model proposed by Klamer has been by Roberts and Roussou (2003). Raising a number of counter arguments to the processes expounded by Klamer, they give an alternate analysis where the V to C grammaticalisation can be seen as arising from Serial Verb constructions. They give the following steps for the reanalysis:

- a. [CP C [TP T [VP₁ V₁ [VP₂ V₂]]]]
- b. [CP C [TP [T V₁ [VP₂ V₂]]]]
- c. [CP C [C V₁ [TP T [VP₂ V₂]]]]

It is argued in this paper, drawing examples from Malayalam belonging to the Dravidian family and spoken in South India, that the process may not be as straight forward as explained above. Malayalam employs the conjunctive participle form of a report verb, namely, *ennu* in instances of complementation (e.g. 1). The interesting fact here is that the same conjunctive participle form is used to produce Serial Verb Constructions (SVC) as well (e.g.3). These examples may, *prima facie*, give the impression of a report verb used in a Serial Verb construction turning into a complementiser. However, such a suggestion runs into trouble at a closer examination of the general behaviour of *ennu* as well as that of SVCs in general.

Malayalam exhibits SVCs where any number of verbs appearing in what is traditionally known as Conjunctive Participle (ConjPrt) form can precede a final finite verb. An SVC can either denote a single event or multiple events. When denoting a single event, the verbs in ConjPrt form are interpreted as modifying the finite verb (cf 3) whereas in the multiple event interpretation the verbs constitute a temporal sequence (cf. 2). Three facts are shown in this paper vis-à-vis SVCs in the language which are of importance in the scrutiny of the properties of *ennu*:

1. There are two different forms corresponding to the single/multiple event interpretations. The single event reading structures make use of the bare ConjPrt form while the multiple event reading structures are of the form ConjPrt+ittu where *ittu* itself is a ConjPrt Verb.
2. SVCs of the kind described in (i) are clearly distinguishable in the language from the V₁-V₂ sequences where V₂ functions more as a light verb (cf. 4,5).
3. It is possible for the same verb to retain its lexical meaning, and function fully as any lexical verb, while also functioning like a light verb in a V₁-V₂ sequence displaying a partial loss of arguments (cf. 4,5,6).

Keeping these properties of SVCs in mind, examining constructions involving *ennu* brings the following interesting facts into light:

1. While an *ennu* clause can be used in the context of verbs denoting speech acts and mental perception, the quotative character of the verb seems to be fully retained at least in certain constructions where it is possible for *ennu* to take nominal complements (cf. 7)
2. *Ennu* appears in ALL forms that a ConjPrt verb can appear (cf.8). Interestingly, these possible forms have been reinterpreted as subordinating conjunctions (cf.9,10).

Thus, it is of crucial importance that a careful distinction be maintained between lexical and grammaticalised forms of the verbs in languages like Malayalam where both uses can co-exist. Also of importance is establishing whether the reanalysis of the report verb has taken place following its use in a V₁-V₂ light verb construction or from a lexical SV construction. Analysing the facts given above, this paper tries to tease apart the different functions of *ennu* in an attempt to capture the process whereby the ConjPrt form of a report verb in an SV construction is reanalyzed as a Complementiser and other forms of the same verb are reanalyzed as different subordinating conjunctions while the report function – i.e. part of the lexical meaning – is still fully maintained in yet other constructions. In order to do this, it is shown that the single versus multiple event SVCs involve different structures. It is further shown that in some cases the ConjPrt form is modifying the finite verb (Jayaseelan 2004) and involves a biclausal structure. These biclausal constructions of the ConjPrt makes the reanalysis of *ennu* more amenable than the other forms.

Examples:

1. Karambi wanneru ennu Paily paranju
Karambi came comp Paily said
Paily said that Karambi came
2. Paily kuLicciTTu wi:TTil po:yi.
Paily bathe_{ConjPrt}-ittu home-Loc went
Paily went home, having bathed
3. Paily kaLiccu ciriccu wi:TTil po:yi
Paily play_{ConjPrt} laugh_{ConjPrt} home-Loc went
Paily went home playing and laughing
4. Paily wi:TTil wanniTTu paisa tannu
Paily home-Loc come_{ConjPrt}-ittu money gave
Having come home, Paily gave money
5. Paily enikku oru katha paranju-tannu
Paily to me one story say_{ConjPrt}-gave
Paily told me a story
6. Paily enikku oru pasuvine tannu
Paily to me one cow-Acc gave
7. Paily enne paTTiennu wiLiccu
Paily medog comp called
Paily called me a dog.
8. wann-a:l (if come) wann-iTTu (after coming) wann-iTT-o: (what happened after coming?)
come_{ConjPrt}-if come_{ConjPrt}-ittu come_{ConjPrt}-iTT-QuestionParticle
enn-a:l (but) enn-iTTu (Then, after that) enn-iTT-o: (what happened after that?)
9. Paily wanna:l ninakku nja:n paisa tarum
Paily come_{ConjPrt}-if you-Dative I money will give
If Paily comes, I will give you money
10. Paily wi:TTil wanneru; enna:l enikku paisa kiTTiy-illa
Paily home-Loc came but me-Dative money gave-not
Paily came home, but I did not get money.

References:

- Jayaseelan, K.A. (2004), 'The Serial Verb Constructions in Malayalam', in V. Dayal and A. Mahajan (eds.), *Clause Structure in South Asian Languages*, Springer: Netherlands.
- Klamer, Marian (2000), 'How report verbs become quote markers and complementisers', *Lingua*, 110:69-98.
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