Metaphor, Overtness and Word Order Routinization

This talk argues for a central role of metaphor in constraining and changing clausal syntax in two important, interconnected ways. First, functor-argument metaphors require the overt expression of arguments (Reinöhl 2016, [anonymized reference]). For example, it is possible to say *Everyone was waiting at the hotel. Finally, Kim arrived*. By contrast, people do not use the functor *arrived* metaphorically without a goal argument: *Everything had been pointing to that conclusion all along. *Finally, Kim arrived.* What they say is *Finally, Kim arrived **at it***. Second, overt arguments are required for word order routinization ([anonymized reference]): covert constituents do not need to be ordered. This means that metaphor plays a special role in the conventionalization of word order, because it ensures that in each use of the functor, a decision about the ordering of the functor and its necessarily overt argument(s) must be made.

Our talk builds on cross-linguistic as well as experimental research into metaphor-driven argument overtness, and expands this research with evidence that functor-argument metaphors also feed into word order routinization. This research is supported by Indo-Aryan historical data and framed in accounts of linguistic routinization and automatization (Bybee 2003, Haiman 1994). Hitherto discussion of linguistic routinization has focussed on processes associated with grammaticalization, and we see the effect of metaphor most clearly there.

Reinöhl (2016) shows how the New Indo-Aryan postpositional phrases grammaticalized from various parts of speech, including spatial nouns and adverbs. While these could optionally take arguments in Old and Middle Indo-Aryan, those arguments had become obligatory by New Indo-Aryan, a syntactic shift accompanying semantic reanalyses of functor-argument metaphors. Reinöhl argues that these semantic reanalyses could only occur when the functor and argument were overt, were adjacent, and stood in a particular order. This overtness condition and ordering pattern persists to this day.

Work on grammaticalization has noted the connection between the grammaticalization of lexical items and the rigidification of word order. Lehmann (2002 [1982]) views these as parallel developments. Others (Hopper 1996, Bybee 2003) describe string routinization as a facilitating mechanism for the fixing of word order. However, a crucial missing piece in this story is an explanation for why string routinization should necessarily go hand-in-hand with grammaticalization. We offer, as this missing piece, the requirement that metaphor-creating arguments need to be overt. The role of functor-argument metaphors in establishing bridging cases for grammaticalization is well-known (Svorou 1988, Meillet 1975[1912]). But in precisely these cases, the argument to the functor must be overt. When overt and adjacent, and thus a potential formal whole, functor and argument can then semantically develop greater gestalt properties (Himmelmann 1997).

Metaphor has already been shown as fundamental in how we use language. More recently it has been shown to drive argument overtness. Here we argue that it also has a central role in the routinization of word order.

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