The Grammaticalization of the Newari Verb töl

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with the different grammaticalized uses of the verb töl-\(^1\) 'to put/keep' in Newari, a Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal.\(^2\) This verb has developed three grammatical functions, as a benefactive/purpose marker, as a perfect, and as an evidential. As a perfect marker and evidential it contrasts with another grammaticalized verb, dhun(-k)- 'to finish'. All three uses will be shown to be consistent with the semantics encoded by the lexical uses of this verb.

2.0 PRELIMINARY NOTES ON NEWARI GRAMMAR

2.1 The Tense/Aspect System

The Newari tense/aspect system consists of a set of inflected verb forms and several auxiliaries. The most common finite verb forms are those referred to as past and non-past conjunct and disjunct (glossed as PC/PD/NPC/NPD).\(^3\) The past versus non-past distinction is probably better considered past perfective versus future. The past forms clearly contrast with the two categories of the imperfective -- the progressive and the stative/habitual. Thus all uses of this morpheme are not only past, but also perfective. However, a simple form of a verb with a non-past suffix can refer either to one event or to iteration of the event, as in the following example:

\[\text{symbol} \sigma \text{ represents the mid, back, lax vowel } [\sigma].\]

\[\text{A } - \text{ over a vowel represents nasalization.}\]

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\(^3\)There are some other stative and imperative forms, which this paper will not be concerned with.
Thus the non-past forms are neutral with respect to perfectivity, and simply code future tense.

The conjunct/disjunct pairs at first appear to be agreement with first versus non-first person:

(1) wọ ji-gu thae ch6-g wo-i.
    he I-GEN place house-LOC come-NPD.
    He will come to our house (once or often).

(2) jí-i duku syan-a.
    I-ERG goat kill-PC.
    I killed the goat.

(3) ch6-g/w6-g duku syat-9.
    you-ERG/he-ERG goat kill-PD.
    You/he killed the goat.

However, the disjunct form can occur with first person, indicating a lack of volition on the part of the agent (cf. Hale 1980):

(4) jí-i baltin tunthi-i kur-k-a.
    I-ERG bucket well-LOC drop-CAUS-PC.
    I dropped the bucket in the well (deliberately).

(5) jí-i baltin tunthi-i kur-k9l-9.
    I-ERG bucket well-LOC drop-CAUS-PD.
    I dropped the bucket in the well (accidentally).

(6) jí-i kutu won-a.
    I-ERG fall go-PC.
    I fell (deliberately).

(7) j1 kutu won-9.
    I fall go-PD.
    I fell (accidentally).

The conjunct also occurs with non-first persons in various circumstances, including second person direct questions, and indirect quotes (Hale 1980).

Therefore a simple explanation of person agreement is insufficient. Similar systems have been reported for some dialects of Tibetan (Schottelndreyer 1980, DeLancey 1985a). In Lhasa Tibetan the conjunct/disjunct distinction is meshed with a system of obligatory evidential marking which codes whether the speaker's evidence of the event reported was direct perception, indirect inference or hearsay. The conjunct form fits nicely into this schema as a further extension
on the end of direct perception, since it codes direct evidence of volition, the ultimate cause of an event (DeLancey 1985a).

The Newari system outlined above is not nearly as complex as that found in Lhasa, and thus does not furnish the same direct evidence for the fundamentally evidential nature of the conjunct/disjunct contrast. However, considering the close cultural and geographic ties between the two language groups, and the fact that such a distinction is exceedingly rare cross-linguistically, one would like to propose the same account for both of them. Thus it is intriguing to find, as we will in section 3.4, an evidential contrast in Newari which parallels the Lhasa system.

2.2 The Aspectual Auxiliaries cwon- and dhun(-k)-

The other parts of the tense aspect system which will be of concern in the following discussion are the auxiliaries cwon-, which marks the progressive, and dhun(-k)-, which is a perfect marker. Both of these are lexical verbs in their own right. cwon- means 'sit' or 'stay', dhun-k- is formed from the verb dhun- 'to finish', and -k-, the causative suffix. The non-suffixed form of the verb is only found with first person agents, and only with the disjunct form. It contrasts semantically with the causative form, indicating less volition on the part of the agent:

(8) ji-I pholphul no-e dhun-o.
    I-ERG fruit eat-INF finish-PD.
I finished eating the fruit.

(9) ji-I pholphul no-e dhun-k-a.
    I-ERG fruit eat-INF finish-CAUS-PC.
I finished eating the fruit.

My informant says that the second sentence implies that the fruit was eaten rapidly, in order to be finished by a particular point of time, for a particular purpose. The difference in volition is mirrored by the inability of the non-causative alternant to co-occur with the conjunct suffixes.

When cwon- and dhun(-k)- function grammatically as auxiliaries, they follow a non-finite form of the verb, and primarily mark the grammatical categories of progressive and perfect, although they can be roughly translated with their lexical meanings. Thus the following sentences are translated by my informant in two ways:
(10) Ṣ-Ṣ sōphu bwon-a cwon-ṣ.
    he-ERG book read-PART stay-PD.
    He was reading a book. OR He stayed reading a book.

(11) Ṣ-Ṣ sōphu bwon-e dhun-kpē-ṣ
    he-ERG book read-INF finish-CAUS-PD.
    He has read the book. OR He finished reading the book.

That both translations are possible shows that the grammatical function has not diverged significantly from the lexical sense. This suggests that the process of grammaticalization is in the beginning stages, compared to, for example, the causative morpheme, which no longer carries its own lexical meaning. These are thus the Newari analogue of 'versatile verbs' as defined by Matisoff (1969).

2.3 Clause Chaining and Grammaticalization

Newari is a clause chaining language. Clause chains can be identified by final verbs with finite marking, and non-final verbs in a participle form with a lengthened final vowel (here glossed NF for non-final): ⁴

(12) jī-I psoł-e won-a-a sōphu miy-a.
    I-ERG store-LOC go-PART NF book buy-PC.
    I went to the store and bought a book.

This construction is often functionally equivalent to English conjunction with sequential ordering of events, as the translation of the above sentence indicates. Thus in texts, there occur sentences such as the following:

(13) Ṣthe juy-a-a  Ṣ-yagu lha tuti nṣ than-a-a
    thus happen-PART-NF he-GEN hand leg also stick-PART-NF
    This happening, his hands and legs also stuck,
    Ṣ-Ṣ chūye ya-e Ṣ-phuy-a-a Ṣōskēhe
    he-ERG nothing do-INF NEG-able-PART-NF very
    he could do nothing, and cried out very

  ⁴Clause chains are often more complicated than this, since they can contain a number of types of nominalized, subordinate or complement clauses which are not directly relevant here.