Grammaticalization of time adverbials in Liko (D.201)

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1 Introduction and Research Question

Liko (Ethnologue Lika) is the name of one of the languages in the Oriental Province in the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Liko is spoken by about 68,000 people. First publication in the language in 2006.

Language Families

Adamawa-Ubangi

Bantu

Nilo-Saharan

Figure 1: Language map of the Liko language area

"One of the most conspicuous lines of grammaticalization to be observed in African languages can be seen in the constant growth of new forms for tense, aspect, and modality." (Heine, 2011:702).

In Liko, reference to past and future locations in time is encoded by distinctive prefixal tense markers, compare examples (2.1) and (2.2).

In addition to the grammar, the language has a grammatical system that is linked to but separate from the verb and expresses tense, no aspect nor other related categories. Five post-verbal time adverbials refer to different locations in time. Three of these adverbials are disyllabic, whereas two are, at least at the surface, monosyllabic and induce phonological changes.

The question this poster aims to answer is, (whether at least) the two monosyllabic time adverbials have been subject to grammaticalization.

2 Time Reference to Past and Future

(2.1) ná- kpukul-a 1SG²-rub-FV 'rubbed'
(2.2) ná-kpukul-a 1SG-rub-FV 'will rub'
(2.3) ná-ká-kpukul-a = ku 1SG-NEG-rub-FV² = NEG 'did not rub'
(2.4) ná-ká-kpukul-s = ku 1SG-NEG-rub-FV = NEG 'will not rub'

3 Time Adverbials

The time adverbials in Liko referring to the Past are ñié, ndóku and ñe, and the ones referring to the Future are bá, ndéke and ñé.

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<tr>
<td>ñá</td>
<td>ñókù</td>
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<td>ndóku</td>
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<td>bá</td>
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Figure 2: Liko time adverbials in Past and Future

(3.1a) mu-ñúyóka kámu ñ-ñókóta ndóku ñó-ñí-gì
(3.1b) mu-ñúyóka kámu ñ-ñókóta bánu ñó-ñí-gì
(3.1c) mu-ñúyóka kámu ñ-ñókóta ndéke ñó-ñí-gì
1-sister-in-law 1SG.Poss 3SG²/3SG₁.O-produce-FV P₂/P₁/P₃ 2-twin
'My sister-in-law gave/ will give birth to twins.'

(3.2a) bògúká ñ-ñókó-ô ndóku ñá-ñí-gì
(3.2b) bògúká ñ-ñókó-ô bánu ñá-ñí-gì
(3.2c) bògúká ñ-ñókó-ô ndéke ñá-ñí-gì
1SG₂/3SG build-FV P₁/P₂/P₃ 9-house 3RD-big
'His (maternal) uncle built/ will build the big house.'

(3.3a) ñ-ñókó-ag-ô ñá-ñí-gì 9-9-house na ñó-ñúvú-ú 2-bird 3PL-build-PLUR-FV=P₁ 2+9-house with 2+9:9a-moss
'Builds built houses (i.e. nests) with moss.'

(3.4b) ná-gókgw-ô-gô-ô ñá-ñí-gì 1SG²-scream-PLUR-FV=P₁ hard
'I screamed very hard.'

(3.5a) mu-kó ó-kó-zú-kú ká-gô ñá-ñí-gì 1-woman 3SG²-NEG-get-up-FV=NEG=P₁ 'The woman did not get up.'

(3.5b) mu-kó ó-kó-zú-kú ká-gô ñá-ñí-gì ['gúkó] ñá-ñí-gì 1-woman 3SG²-NEG-get-up-FV=P₁ even=P₁
'The woman did not even get up.'

(3.6) a ñá-ñí-gì ñá-ñí-gì ñá-ñí-gì ñá-ñí-gì ñá-ñí-gì ñá-ñí-gì 'It was even good to be a wild animal.'

4 Word Order

The canonical word order in Liko is S V O₁ O₂ (Xₐ). "S" is subject, "O₁" is first object, "O₂" is second object and "Xₐ" is adjunct. Temporal adverbs occur in clause positions following any objects or as external topics, left adjoined to the clause.

The five time adverbials of section 3 obligatory occur post-verbally and preceding any objects. One time adverbial, ñe, still has its lexical meaning, i.e. 'long ago'. It cannot precede an object and only occurs together with the time adverbial ñe.

5 Analysis

The five time adverbials in Liko, ñié, ndóku, ñókù, ñókù, ñókù and ñókù, occur in a position in the clause which is not accessible for temporal adverb. This marks them off as having a grammatical function. The tonal change, from L to LH, on the verbal or adverbial element preceding ñié and ñe gives evidence that these time adverbials should be analyzed as having an initial floating High tone and as being disyllabic like the other three time adverbials. The shape of the first syllable cannot yet be established. As for ñé, the form ñé, 'a long period of time' exists, with the general modifier prefix ñe. Nurse (2008:106) mentions that "D12-13-14 all have traces of ñi/ñi/... at post-FV, (...) referring to heteros and deriving from an adverb meaning 'yesterday.' In my data, there is no indication that these time adverbials had meanings like 'tomorrow', 'yesterday', 'front', 'back', 'near', 'far', etc.

Both High tone linking and [ATR] assimilation or the creation of a [ATR] domain indicate that ñié and ñe should be analysed as an enclitic to the preceding verb form or adverb. Interestingly, instead of assimilating to the [ATR] quality of the verb, they impact the phonetic-phonological structure of the verb.

Of the four parameters of grammaticalization proposed by Heine (2011:697), the last three apply: desemanticization, i.e. loss or generalization in meaning content, decategorialization, i.e. loss in morphosyntactic properties characteristic of lexical or other less grammaticalized forms, and erosion, i.e. loss of phonetic substance. If Heine's ordering reflects the diachronic sequence in Liko, then the first parameter, extension, has applied as well.

6 Conclusion

Sources of inflectional morphemes in Bantu are typically structures involving auxiliary verbs or non-inflecting particles. Bantu post-finite elements are mostly derived from pronominal enclitics. Liko shows another type of post-finite elements as sources for grammaticalization. All post-verbal time adverbials ñié, ndóku, ñé, ñókù, ñókù and ñókù have been subject to grammaticalization.