Grammaticalization of verb 'take' in Twi and aspectual construalization: functional implications

Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) in Twi spoken in Ghana in the Niger-Congo family have long been studied (e.g., Riis 1845, Christaller 1881, and Lori 1993). The paper provides causal and aspectual representations (Croft 2012) of grammaticalization of a case marker *de* in Twi, discusses the change from a standpoint of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008), and expands functional implications involved in the change. The paper focuses on *de* constructions serving to introduce oblique NPs (e.g., instrument, accompaniment, and means) and patient that takes recipient in ditransitive constructions. The *de* constructions allows SVC readings, fit the crosslinguistic definition of SVCs offered by Haspelmath (2016), and pass three criteria for eventive complex predicates (i.e., an assertion criterion, a structure argument criterion, and a temporal dependency criterion). The evidence shows that the SVCs originate in coordinate clause constructions later with the conjunction and the pronoun in the second clause omitted. Hence, it creates the following grammaticalization path: [NP *de* CONJ NP VP] > [NP *de* ∅ NP VP] > [NP *de* ∅ ∅ VP] > a case marker *de*.

Three examples of the SVCs are analyzed to see how aspectual contours of the grammaticalization of the verb *de* 'take' and the case marker *de* are represented in integration of aspectual contours of subevents of the SVCs with causal relations between participants in the subevents, and how those representations are explained in terms of construals defined in CG. I claim that aspectual construalization in the causal and aspectual structure of the grammaticalization has occurred, motivated by pragmatic subordination and semantic redundancy of the first verb *de* 'take' in the SVCs, which has become immanent in the consequential verb in the SVCs (with aspectual construalization roughly defined as a process of construal change by which aspectual structure is reduced during grammaticalization). Figure 1 and 2, for instance, respectively represents the causal and aspectual structure of the SVC reading in example (1), and the grammaticalized structure of the same example, based on the causal chain represented in (2), which displays immanency of the subevent of the first clause in the subevent of the consequential clause structure without change in boundedness.

(1)   *o-**de***   *afoa*   *ce*   *boha-m*
         he-**de**   sword   put   scabbard-inside
         'He put the sword into the scabbard.'
          (He took the sword (and) put (it) into the scabbard.)

(2)   he ——————▶ sword ----------- scabbard
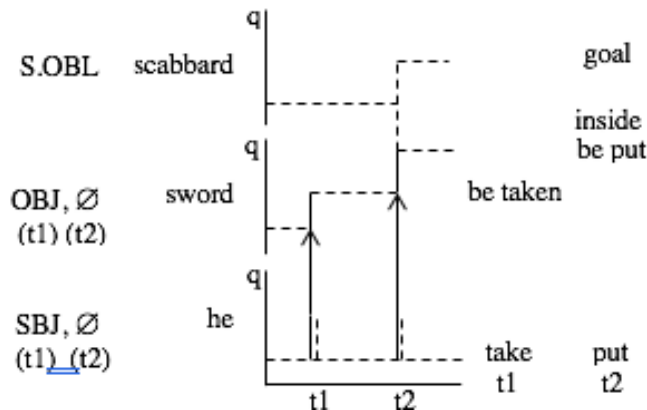   SUB   OBJ   S.OBL (subsequent oblique)

Figure 1. The causal and aspectual structure of the SVC reading in (1)

S.OBL scabbard goal
inside
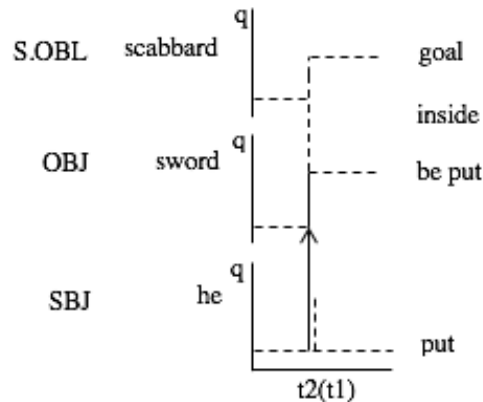OBJ sword be put
SBJ he put
t2(t1)

Figure 2. The grammaticalized structure in (1)

Figure 2 indicates that the verbal profile (indicated by the solid arrow) of t_1 delimited by the subject and object of the aspectual structure has become unprofiled, as a result of the aspectual reduction of the structure in Figure 2. That is, the verb *de* that construes core arguments in the argument structure construction has become non-discrete and non-processual, as it is no longer temporal and hence as the meaning has become off-stage. In CG perspectives, we can say in the SVC, the verb *de* used to sequentially scan the construal of the subevent of taking and the core participants in the subevent, but through gradual changes of construal in aspect, the earlier verb *de* has become to scan the whole construal holistically (summary scanning in the CG term). Hence, the summary scanning backgrounds the meaning of *de*, while foregrounding the construal of the resulting subevent of putting (into scabbard).

Pragmatic subordination of verb 'take' to the consequential verb, both in syntactic symmetry in SVCs, appears to be a major role to the aspectual construalization. This resembles the Asymmetry Assumption, which refers to a functional asymmetry of the subordinate clause to the main clause in complex clauses, except the syntactic asymmetry that bears in the SVC. This is in comparison to the coordinate clause constructions that the SVCs originate from, which take a symmetric complex figure construal, construing two coordinate clauses as equal integral figures. Hence, although the SVCs exhibit a vestigial construal of the coordinate constructions, the functional asymmetry that leads the aspectual construalization of grammaticalization of *de* constructions is non-salient in the vestigial complex figure construal, presupposing the subevent of taking, while foregrounding the profiled consequential event.

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