

Untold grammar: Paradigm formation with extended reported speech

Reported speech constructions, utterances of direct and indirect speech, broadly conceived (Coulmas 1986), may lexicalize and grammaticalize into a remarkable range of elements.

Languages commonly attribute thoughts to others using the same or very similar constructions to those used for reported speech, and to a lesser degree for intentions/wishes (McGregor 2007), see example (1). However, meaning and functional extensions of reported speech constructions further include inchoative meanings (Nikitina 2020), see example (2), future tense (Voort 2002), modal (Reesink 1993) and causative meanings as well as complementation more generally (Klamer 2000) (also see Güldemann (2008), Matic & Pakendorf (2013)). The entry for SAY is one of the largest lemmata in Kuteva et al. (2019). Diverse but cross-linguistically regular, meaning extensions in reported speech are not restricted, unlike as is sometimes stated, to a specific subtype of reported speech, e.g. direct quotation (Spronck & Casartelli 2021).

Although the observation that reported speech constructions are commonly subject to diachronic change and the authors cited above often propose specific lexicalization and grammaticalization paths, many questions remain. Specifically, determining the exact conventional status of these constructions in diachrony is invariably problematic. Consider the examples in (1) and (2).

- (1) Ngarinyin (Worroran; Australia)
nga-iy-a-nya nya-ma-ra
1sg-FUT-go-DIST 3fsg-do-PST
'She wanted to go' (lit., "'I will go" she did/said') (Spronck 2015: 51)
- (2) Wan (Mande; Ivory Coast)
yī ē gé hā kó
water DEF say LOG boil
'The water was about to boil.' (lit., 'The water said: let me boil!') (Nikitina 2020: 88)

Impressionistically, both (1) and (2) could represent metaphorical expressions, similar to 'I said to myself p', a rhetorical trope that is popular in the languages of the world (Pascual 2014). We claim that the extended use of reported speech in (1) and (2) is much further conventionalized, however. In order to examine this claim, we contrast these examples with alternative strategies for expressing intention in Ngarinyin and aspect in Wan. By examining these alternative strategies, we provide a first detailed discussion of the morphosyntactic paradigmatic contrasts within which reported speech constructions lexicalize and grammaticalize.

We subsequently apply this approach to a genetically balanced sample of 15 languages in which reported speech either lexicalizes to constructions of intention or grammaticalizes to tense/aspect constructions. We demonstrate that these languages show considerable variation in the types of contrasts that are relevant in each domain, but also indicate cross-linguistic patterns that allow us to characterize the morphosyntactic status of extended reported speech in more detail than has been attempted so far.

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