

**“AN ENQUIRY INTO THE MODALITY OF ‘DESIRE’ AS EXPRESSED
BY THE LEXICAL VERB, ‘ve:ŋam’ i.e. “WANT” IN MALAYALAM
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GRAMMATICALIZATION THEORY”**

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ABSTRACT: *Modality or Mood in the simplest of terms is defined as a grammatical device that expresses the intent of the speaker or the degree of commitment used or expressed by him in this statement. The objective of this paper is to look closely into the evolution and development of the modality of 'Desire' as expressed by the lexical verb 've:ṇam', "want" in Malayalam from the perspective of Grammaticalization theory. Intransitive, Transitive, Ditransitive sentences were collected separately to adopt a systematic approach. It is realized that there are two forms possible for the expression of the modality of 'Desire' in Malayalam. The first is the usage of the lexical verb 've:ṇam' and the second is the use of a modal affix '-aṇam' that attaches itself to the verb root. When analyzed, it was found that the intransitive sentences always employed the use of the construction with the modal affix '-aṇam' alone. For the transitive and ditransitive sentences, both the constructions of '-aṇam' and the lexical verb 've:ṇam' were found to occur in complementary distribution. The paper proposes that the construction with the lexical verb 've:ṇam' is employed when the utterance is about and lays importance on the state of desire of the speaker towards something. On the other hand when the speaker's utterance is a proposition, the modal affix '-aṇam' is found to be attached to the verb root.*

KEYWORDS: Grammaticalization, Malayalam, Modality, Mood

INTRODUCTION

Modality or Mood in the simplest of terms is defined as a grammatical device that expresses the intent of the speaker or the degree of commitment used or expressed by him in his statement. The objective of this paper would be to look closely into the evolution and development of the modality of 'Desire' as expressed by the lexical verb 've:ṇam' "want" in Malayalam from the perspective of Grammaticalization theory.

The approaches of Heine and Kuteva (2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007) consisting of a cluster of four parameters namely 'Extension', 'Desemanticization', 'Decategorialization', and 'Erosion'; and, Paul Hopper's (1979) Layering', 'Divergence', 'Specialization', 'Persistence' and 'Decategorialization' are employed to develop a better understanding of the Grammaticalization process and the degree of Grammaticalization undergone respectively.

The paper proposes that the construction with the lexical verb 've:ṇam' is employed when the utterance is about and lays importance on the state of desire of the speaker towards something. On the other hand when the speaker's utterance is a proposition, the modal affix '-aṇam' is found to be attached to the verb root. Both these constructions are found to occur in Malayalam in complementary distribution.

MALAYALAM

The youngest of all developed languages of the Dravidian family, Malayalam is the official language of Kerala. It belongs to the Dravidian family of languages and like the speakers, the language also has become receptive to various influences through time. It is the mother-tongue of over thirty million people¹ and is one of the officially recognized languages of India ranking eighth in its number of speakers. The word 'Malayalam', a palindrome, etymologically means 'the land of mountains'. It has also been established that the earliest inscriptions of Malayalam date to the

¹ http://www.kerala.gov.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3732&Itemid=2377 (11-09-2014, 12:32)

ninth century onwards. Where on one hand some believe that Malayalam finds its origins in Tamil, others believe that both Tamil and Malayalam find their origins from the same proto language.

“The language consists of thirty seven consonants and sixteen vowels. The later script of Malayalam that was introduced in 1981, helped reduce the number of characters drastically and popularly began to be employed. The Malayalam vocabulary consists of a number of words borrowed from Sanskrit and Tamil. With five main regional dialects, though Malayalam has relatively lesser number of speakers in comparison to the other Indian languages, it is the most circulated as far as newspapers and periodicals are concerned.”²

GRAMMATICALIZATION

The question of evolution of early language, speech and grammar has indeed puzzled researchers since quite some time now. In their book *A Genesis of Grammar: A Reconstruction*, Bernd Heine and Tania Kuteva suggest that the problem now that the researchers seem to be facing is not that there seems to be no answers to this question since the studies being conducted in classical methods of historical linguistics, child language acquisition, agrammatic aphasics, the behavior of non-human primates, evolutionary biology, computer stimulation and regularities in linguistic change of both related and unrelated languages. But the question that remains is why of the above descriptions is the best or correct. These researches seemed to give us access to only a small phase in the history of human languages with internal linguistic reconstruction, though playing the most important role among them all until now, yet becoming fuzzy and speculative once dealing with a time depth exceeding ‘eight thousand years’.

Also considering the very fact that language evolution seems to be an interdisciplinary field, a need arose to accomplish and construct a viable theory that would be supported by the various approaches. ‘Grammaticalization theory’ came as a solution to this problem that could help researchers deal with the question of evolution of grammar and thus, human language. This methodology was adopted based on the very fact that essentially the development from early to modern languages was about linguistic change with the important driving force being that of linguistic creativity. Context then was realized as a very important factor in determining grammatical change which was observed essentially to be directional in nature.

In the simplest of terms ‘Grammaticalization theory’ defines the process of grammaticalization as “a process whereby a lexical item or structure assumes a grammatical function, or, where a grammatical unit assumes a more grammatical function”. Not only do linguists propose grammaticalization to be essentially unidirectional, but also cyclic in nature with the following schema;

Free lexical word > functional word > clitic > affix > zero³.

Further reading on grammaticalization helps us realize that in fact since quite some time now, similar notions about the language evolution have been directly or indirectly attempted to be looked at from this perspective in the researches carried out by Zhou Boqi, J. Horne Tooke, Franz Bopp, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, Gillian Sankoff, Wilhelm von Humboldt, William Dwight

² <http://www.prokerala.com/malayalam/language.htm> (11-09-2014, 14:15)

³ Brown, Keith. (2005). *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. Second edition. Oxford: Elsevier.P-129.

Whitney, Antoine Meillet and many more. It is interesting to also note that all these perspectives adopted and supported the same assumptions of grammaticalization in one way or another. Antoine Meillet (1912) has been credited by many as one of the founders who marked the beginning of a perspective of grammaticalization concept that we understand of today. Meillet followed Bopp in using grammaticalization as an experimental parameter in historical linguistics.

Meillet believed that grammaticalization lead to the transformation of the entire system by introduction of new categories for which no linguistic expressions existed before⁴.

Later, Heine and Reh (1984) proposed Grammaticalization with the perspective being of the internal mechanism of the process. Observing that this process essentially affects the three levels of language structure, they distinguished and proposed grammaticalization in terms of functional, morpho-syntactic and phonetic processes, i.e. 'Functional processes' which involved desemanticization, expansion, simplification and merger; 'Morpho-syntactic processes' which included permutation, compounding, cliticization, affixation and fossilization, and, 'Phonetic processes' like adaptation, erosion, fusion and loss. Thus on the basis of various unrelated languages, Heine and Reh concluded that Grammaticalization was indeed an evolutionary continuum with characteristics of a chain-like, a cyclic process.

Paul Hopper (1979) proposed a theory that consisted of the five principles that he believed were said to underlie the emergence of grammaticalization. These were 'Layering', 'Divergence', 'Specialization', 'Persistence' and 'Decategorialization'. Lastly, it was Heine and Kuteva (2002, 2005, 2006, 2007) who proposed a theory in which they assumed that the process of grammaticalization could be characterized by a cluster of four parameters namely 'Extension' or 'Context-induced Reinterpretation'; 'Desemanticization' also known as 'Semantic Bleaching'; 'Decategorialization', and 'Erosion' also known as 'Phonetic reduction'.⁵ They proposed that with respect to the link between form and function of grammaticalizing or grammaticalized structures, grammaticalization can be viewed as a cyclic process.

MOOD AND MODALITY

Modality or Mood in the simplest of terms is defined as a grammatical device that expresses the intent of the speaker or the degree of commitment used or expressed by him in this statement. Though within typology it hadn't gained as much importance, since the last twenty to forty years, indeed a lot of work has been carried out as far as Mood and Modality are concerned. Palmer, Givón, Timberlake are some of the pioneers who have indeed carried out very substantial work on the topic and that have been considered to be the foundations of essential work on the very same. In fact Palmer in 1986 was among the first to carry out an in-depth analysis of the same until 2001, when he standardized his approach to the very same. Later on the work was carried out and dealt with by Chung, Timberlake and Givón and till today their works are looked upon with great interest across languages.

⁴ Heine, Bernd. Ulrike Claudi & Friederike Hünemeyer. (1991). *Grammaticalization: A Conceptual Framework*. New York: University of Chicago Press. P-9.

⁵ Heine, Bernd. & Tania Kuteva. (2007). *A Genesis of Grammar: A Reconstruction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P- 34.

Many languages of the world employ or rather express modal categories by verbal morphology and these verbal markers of modality are obligatory in the language, while, others employ modal auxiliary verbs like the case in English, for example: ought, can, shall, need, would and should. However in most languages verbs such as "want" can be used to express modality lexically. Lastly, some other languages view and use mood to refer to contrastive grammatical expressions of different modalities while modality is assumed to be the meaning so expressed. In fact modality is also used to refer to meanings that are expressed by lexical and grammatical sources.

DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS FROM THE PRILIMINARY ANALYSIS

The enquiry began by collecting data for the lexical word that was used to express the modality of desire "want" and its usage in Malayalam. It was realized that the lexical verb so employed to meet this purpose was 've:ŋam' in Malayalam.

enikkə i: puʃakkam ve:ŋam. (1)
 I-DAT this book.N want.V
 "I want this book"

ravikkə ka:ʃ ve:ŋam. (2)
 Ravi-DAT cash want.V
 "Ravi wants money"

It was soon realized that for all the modalities of desire like 'to need' and 'to want'; 'should', 'have' and 'must' the same lexical verb ve:ŋam was employed in use.

enikkə kuraččə pa:l ve:ŋam. (3)
 I-DAT little milk want.V
 "I need some milk"

However when data was further collected it was realized that there seemed to exist two possible constructions that could be employed to signify the modality of desire. One was similar to that in the above construction where the lexical verb ve:ŋam was employed to indicate the Mood. The other construction that seemed to perform the same function, was that of an affix '-aŋam' that was added to the verb root.

enikkə kurač čor-um nuđils-um kaʃikkam ve:ŋam. (4)
 I-DAT some rice-CONJ noodles-CONJ eat.INF MOD
 "I need some rice and noodles to eat"

enikkə oru kaʃipa:ttam uŋḍakk-aŋam. (5)
 I-DAT one toy make - MOD
 "I want to make a toy"

In an attempt to realize the morpho-syntactic properties of these constructions and also to find out the details of their occurrences, a systematic approach was adopted whereby sentences with intransitive, transitive and ditransitive verbs were used. As far as the intransitive verb constructions were concerned, only the construction with the affixation of -aŋam was employed by the native speakers of Malayalam.

enikkə t̪umm-aŋam. (6)
 I-DAT sneeze – MOD
 "I want to sneeze"

enikkə irikk-aŋam. (7)
 I-DAT sit – MOD
 "I need to sit"

“...it is from ‘ve:ṇam’ that aṇam, eṇam or e:ṇam is formed”⁶

If we try and understand the occurrences of these constructions, we realise that as far as the ve:ṇam construction is concerned, it occurs when there exists a kind of nominalisation of the object. Also it is important to note that the lexical verb ve:ṇam is always found to follow the infinitival form of the verb. In all the other cases, the affixation of the verb root with -aṇam to the verb root takes place. From what it seems like, the construction with the lexical verb ‘ve:ṇam’ is employed when the utterance is about and lays importance on the state of desire of the speaker towards something. On the other hand when the speaker’s utterance is a proposition, the modal affix ‘-aṇam’ is found to be attached to the verb root.

Just to understand and confirm this affixation as that being a type of predication to the verb root, the case of negation of the lexical verb is considered. The negative of ‘ve:ṇam’ in Malayalam is ‘veṇḍa’, which can be suggested to mean ‘don’t want’ or undesirous. Now trying to observe if the same kind of construction occurs data was collected,

enikkə breḍḍə kəṭikk-aṇḍa. (16)

I-DAT bread eat-MOD.NEG

“I don’t want to eat bread”

enikkə breḍḍə kəṭikkān veṇḍa. (17)

I-DAT bread eat-INF MOD.NEG

“I don’t want to eat bread”

Thus, we observe similar construction in ve:ṇam and veṇḍa. Both of these grammaticalize to form affixes -aṇam and -aṇḍa which exist in the grammar along with their verbal forms parallelly. Here too we observe a kind of nominalisation of the object essentially taking place where the infinitival form of the word is followed by ve:ṇḍa. In all the other cases, i.e. the affixation of the verb root with -aṇḍa, Thus affixes attach like predicates to the verb root and play an important role as far as the verb morphology is concerned.

ANALYSING THE PROCESS OF GRAMMATICALIZATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF PAUL HOPPER (1979) AND HEINE AND KUTEVA (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007)

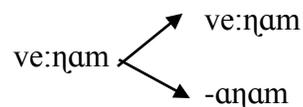
Heine and Kuteva propose in their model and theory for Grammaticalization, four parameters, that they suggest are crucial to the process of Grammaticalization. The first that they suggest is that of ‘Extension’ which in the case of grammaticalization of ve:ṇam, can be suggested to be taking place. With the Grammaticalization of ve:ṇam, we notice that there is a rise of new grammatical meaning of modal consequence and we notice that ve:ṇam is extended to newer contexts. This is perhaps why extension is also be called ‘Context-induced reinterpretation’. The second parameter is essentially that of ‘Desemanticization’ which is also called ‘Semantic Bleaching’. Desemanticization can also be said to be the loss of generalized meaning content. In this case of grammaticalization of ve:ṇam, we can say that this parameter is not met. i.e. no desemanticization takes place. The extension of meaning that takes place to the grammaticalized form remains with no kind of essential semantic bleaching taking place.

The third parameter that is very crucial is that of ‘Decategorialization’. Here in the case of grammaticalization of ve:ṇam, we observe that from being essentially a lexical verb, it evolves into an affix -aṇam that performs functions relating to modal consequence alone. Thus we observe

⁶ Ezhuthachan. K.N. (1975). *History of the Grammatical Theories in Malayalam*. Trivandrum: Dravidian Linguistic Association. P-380.

that the loss in the morpho-syntactic properties characteristic of lexical or other less grammaticalized forms takes place. The last property that is said to take place is of ‘Erosion’, which is essentially the ‘Phonetic reduction’, i.e. the loss in phonetic substance. The grammaticalization of *ve:ṇam* leads to formation of the modal affix *-aṇam* that is said to perform only modal functions and this *-aṇam* is essentially the phonetically reduced form of *ve:ṇam* from which it seems to have grammaticalized.

According to the theory proposed by Paul Hopper (1979), there were essentially five principles that are said to underlie the emergence of Grammaticalization. These are ‘Layering’, ‘Divergence’, ‘Specialization’, ‘Persistence’ and ‘Decategorialization’. Trying to look at the grammaticalization of *ve:ṇam* from this perspective we observe that in this case ‘Layering’ does seem to occur. Essentially layering means that new layers emerge within a functional domain with older layers not necessarily being discarded, thus both layers co-existing if necessary. Thus *ve:ṇam* and *-aṇam* can be called to be the two layers that exist to convey the modality of “desire” in Malayalam. Thus we can say that ‘Divergence’ too is observed. After *ve:ṇam* must have undergone grammaticalization, two pairs of forms must have arose that function divergently.



‘Specialization’ can also be said to occur. Here we observe the narrowing of choices that characterize an emergent grammatical construction in the case of both the *-aṇam* and *ve:ṇam* construction. The constructions for each of these and their occurrence in specialized environment for the grammaticalized meaning as mentioned in the above section, suggests those morpho-syntactic features in whose presence these forms are particularly used. The very fact that these constructions are used in complementary distribution itself says it all. The *ve:ṇam* construction occurs when there exists a kind nominalisation of the object. Also it is important to note that the lexical verb *ve:ṇam* in the construction is always preceded by an infinitival form of the verb. In all the other cases, the affixation of the verb root with *-aṇam* takes place where the affix attaches itself to the verb root in the grammatical construction.

The principle of ‘Persistence’ too is an important feature here. In the case of grammaticalization of *ve:ṇam* we see that even though phonologically *-aṇam* may seem distinct from *ve:ṇam*, the essential feature of desire is still present in it. Even though *ve:ṇam* evolves to *-aṇam* not bearing much resemblance to the prior entity, yet, it does persistently show some features of the prior entity. Since essentially no desemanticization seems to be taking place we can say that features of *ve:ṇam* are both embeded and persistent in *-aṇam* even so when considering the case of the semantics displayed.

Lastly, grammaticalization of *ve:ṇam* which is a lexical verb could be said to be leading to decrease in cardinal categoriality of the entity concerned with evolving into it being another, *-aṇam*, which persistently shows modal functions alone. In the simplest of terms we can say that *ve:ṇam* is decategorialized from essentially being a lexical verb into an affix that performs only modal functions. This is called ‘Decategorialization’, the last principle that Hopper claims is persistent in grammaticalization. Also the construction of *ve:ṇam* construction we notice that from being merely a lexical verb, it has begun to function as that denoting modal connotations as well. Thus we can conclude that the evolution of *ve:ṇam* to *-aṇam* is at the stage of development of an affix;

LEXEME → FUNCTIONAL WORD → AFFIXES

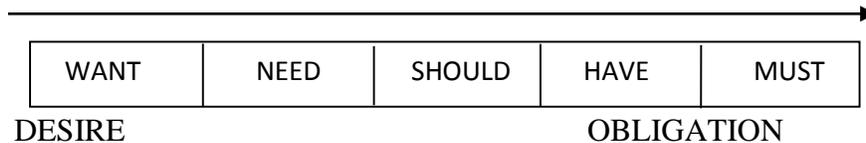
The gramaticalization to modality of desire has led two forms being realized, *ve:ṇam* and

-aṅam that have evolved and grammaticalized from the lexeme ve:ṅam in Malayalam that occur in complementary distribution with each other.

CONCLUSION

Thus finally by completing the analysis of the data collected from the native speakers of Malayalam and analyzing them from the perspectives of Paul Hopper (1979) and Heine and Kuteva (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007), it can be thus successfully established that grammatical constructions of ‘-aṅam’ and ‘ve:ṅam’ are essentially those that exist in complementary distribution in the language. Based on the evidentiary support, we can say that the direction of grammaticalization is from lexical to functional and from functional to affixes in accordance with the proposal of most linguists like Heine and Kuteva in their model of Grammaticalization theory. The paper thus proposes that the construction with the lexical verb ‘ve:ṅam’ is employed when the utterance is about and lays importance on the state of desire of the speaker towards something. On the other hand when the speaker’s utterance is a proposition, the modal affix ‘-aṅam’ is found to be attached to the verb root.

As far as the semantics of the usage of these two constructions is concerned, we notice that there is essentially two types of modalities expressed through the usage of these; i.e. of “desire” and that “of obligation”. If we try and find equivalent modals in English we can say that ve:ṅam seems to be denoting modalities of ‘want’, ‘need’, ‘should’, ‘have to’ and ‘must’. With the help of the data, if we try to decipher the semantics denoted by the particle ve:ṅam, a continuum can be achieved essentially signifying a range of meanings covered from the modality of Desire, to that of Obligation.



The process of Grammaticalization can thus be said to have taken place quite some time ago that has indeed led to the evolution and development of the modality of “desire” and “obligation” from the lexical verb ve:ṅam (‘want’) in Malayalam and that the affix -aṅam has evolved and developed from the lexical verb ve:ṅam, along, with the construction of ve:ṅam occurring in complementary distribution to the affixation in a very systematic manner denoting Modality in Malayalam.

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