

On the grammaticalization of GIVE and GET verbs in West Germanic languages

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The West Germanic languages share the peculiarity that (at least some of) their transfer verbs show a special affinity towards grammaticalization. Against the background of this hypothesis, the presentation will focus on the basic GIVE and GET verbs in the West Germanic languages. The selection of these concrete physical transfer verbs is motivated by, e.g., their high frequency, their formal and semantic complexity, their high variability in intra- and cross-varietal comparisons, and (from a historical or better, panchronic perspective [Kuteva 2001: 9]) their affinity to grammaticalization.

The main focus and starting point of the presentation will be the German language area and its regional varieties. In a first step, the multifunctionality of *geben* ‘to give’ and *kriegen* ‘to get’ will be explicated by sketching the different but comparable grammaticalization paths of these verbs and their variants. Initial findings (cf. Lenz 2007) have shown the need to examine the nonstandard varieties of German (dialects and regiolects) and German enclaves in order to grasp the full semantic and formal complexity and productivity of these German verbs. There we find “anomalies” that the Standard language cannot reveal, as in the following examples from the Moselle-Franconian dialect area:

- *geben* + AdjP: *N is aal gen* ‘He has become old’
- *geben* + Part. II: *Hään äs geschloon gen* ‘He has been hit’
- *kriegen* + Part. II: ... *un dann kresch ma verhauen* ‘... and then we were beaten’

In a second step, the different grammaticalization paths followed by *geben* and *kriegen* are compared with GIVE and GET verbs in other West Germanic languages (especially, Luxembourgish, English and Dutch). The central hypothesis motivating this cross-linguistic discussion is that the grammaticalization paths of GIVE and GET verbs have sometimes developed in entirely different ways in the different languages but have also sometimes evolved in very similar directions. A synopsis of these differences and similarities can offer us a fundamental insight into the variability of semantic and grammatical change in and across related languages.

Bibliography

- Kuteva, Tania (2001): *Auxiliation. An Enquiry into the Nature of Grammaticalization*. Oxford: University Press.
- Lenz, Alexandra N. (2007): Zur Grammatikalisierung von *geben* im Deutschen und Lëtzebuergesch. In: *Zeitschrift für Germanistische Linguistik* 35.1/2, 52–82.