

On the Grammaticalization of the Lithuanian verb GAUTI ('get')

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It is generally agreed that the path of grammaticalization encompasses a broad range of changes which involve semantic shift and bleaching (from concrete physical concepts to abstract grammatical notions), frequency increase, reduction of syntagmatic variability and syntacticization (Heine 1993, Lehmann 2002, Bybee 2003, Traugott 2003). The latter one is regarded as the beginning of grammaticalization processes and can be associated with context-dependent polysemy of a lexical item. The purpose of the present study is to find out whether the semantic and morpho-syntactic behaviour of the Lithuanian verb GAUTI ('get') can be accounted for in terms of grammaticalization. As a main verb with the meaning of 'the onset of possession', it is found in the patterns with NP as its grammatical object, as in:

- (1) *Jis gavo tris obuolius.*
'He got three apples'

Non-epistemic modal meanings of necessity (2) and possibility (3) are expressed by the constructions with GAUTI ('get') taking an infinitival complement, e.g.:

- (2) *Visi gaus eiti namo.*
all get-3FUT go-INF home
'Everybody will have to go home'
- (3) *Gal jam pasiseks <...> ir gaus žaisti.*
maybe he-DAT succeed-FUT and get-3FUT play-INF
'Maybe he'll be lucky and he will have a chance/possibility to play'

The status of an auxiliary verb to mark the resultative phase (4) and a perfective aspect (5) is observed when complemented by a non-finite infinitive form of a full lexical verb:

- (4) *Gavau pamiegoti. (= Pamiegojau)*
get-1SG.PST sleep-INF sleep-1SG.PST
'I have slept'
- (5) *Gavau eiti operos dirigento pareigas.*
get-1PST go-INF opera-GEN conductor-GEN position-ACC
'I have got the position of an opera conductor'

As frequency is considered an important indicator of grammaticalization, the paper will look at the quantitative distribution of GAUTI ('get') in various syntactic constructions and it will be contrasted to the distribution of other movement-possessive verbs undergoing grammaticalization, like TEKTI 'have gotten'(derived from the movement verb TEK-ĖTI 'flow/run/go'). The study is synchronic and corpus-based. The data have been collected from the Corpus of Contemporary Lithuanian Language (<http://donelaitis.vdu.lt/>) and mono-lingual dictionaries.

References

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