

Directional morphology and person marking

Ventives as speech act participant argument markers

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Spatial-directional verb morphology (e.g. ventive/cislocative and itive/translocative) is a frequent morphological phenomenon in the languages of the world. Although languages differ in regard to the particular inventory and the semantic and pragmatic details – often little understood –, the general patterns are well known and reasonably well described.

There is, however, a mostly overlooked phenomenon that seems to occur much too regularly to be ignored: in many languages, these spatial-directional morphemes develop a person-directional meaning and become part of the person marking strategies of the language. The following examples from Gorum, a Munda language of India, give a first impression:

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|----|---|----|---|
| 1) | <i>don-tu</i>
take-ACT:NPST
'he will take it' | 2) | <i>don-t-aj</i>
take-ACT:NPST-VEN
'he will bring it'/'I will take it' |
| 3) | <i>uj-tu?</i>
go-MID:NPST
'he will go' | 4) | <i>uj-t-aj</i>
go-MID:NPST-VEN
'I am going to go' |

This change in function of spatial-directional verb morphology opens an interesting perspective on the nature of dynamic spatial and person deixis and the conceptualization of event structure in general.

I will take the situation in Gorum as a starting point and describe different patterns that arise in the usage of ventives as speech act participant markers in different languages of the world. As a first step, I will propose a gross typology of these patterns. Afterwards, I will take a closer look at Gorum and suggest more detailed variables that allow for a more meaningful typological study of this phenomenon. In a final step, I will discuss the implications this evidence has on theories of event conceptualization, especially on the localist hypothesis (Gruber 1965; Jackendoff 1972, 1983)