Postpositions or verbs?

A grammaticalization account of “positional verbs” in Fataluku

Tyler M. Heston – Payap University
Fataluku

- Timor-Alor-Pantar (Schapper et al. 2014)

- SOV, NOM-ACC, little morphology

- No full grammar, but several shorter works (Hull 2005, van Engelenhoven 2009)
Postpositions?

• Claimed to have postpositions
  ➢ Hull 2005, van Engelenhoven 2009

aficalafur  tahi  mini  caya
crocodile  sea  near  sleep

“The crocodile slept near the sea” (LE)
A new analysis

• Postpositional analysis oversimplifies facts

• Klamer (2018) sees most postpositions as derived from verbs in TAP

• Location words in Fataluku are verbs early in the process of grammaticalizing
Two goals

• Established a more nuanced analysis of position words in Fataluku

• Contribute to larger discussion of grammaticalization in TAP (Klamer 2018)
Outline

• Verbal characteristics of “postpositions”

• Positional verbs in serial verb complexes (SVCs)

• Discussion and conclusions
The verbal characteristics of “postpositions”
Verbal morphology I

• The main verb of a clause takes the suffix -e
  ➢ neur-e ‘to chase’
  ➢ fūleh-e ‘to return’

• The same is true of position words
  ➢ na-e ‘to be at’
  ➢ mucun-e ‘to be in’

All “postpositions” can occur as main verbs
• Action verbs are deverbalized with -(n)ana
  - lauh-e  ‘to live’
  - lauh-ana  ‘something living’

• The same is true of position words
  - karun-e  ‘to be near’
  - karun-ana  ‘something near, the nearest one’
Verbal morphology III

• The first foot may be reduplicated
  - tifar-e   ‘run’
  - tifa-tifar-e   ‘jog’

• The same is true of position words
  - karun-e   ‘near’
  - karu-karun-e   ‘near-ish’
Tense and aspect

• TAM marked by independent words
  ➢ *hai fūleh-e* ‘to have returned’ (PERF)

• These occur with positional words as well
  ➢ *hai na-e* ‘to have been at’ (PERF)
Switch reference marking

- Clauses can be combined by a clitic on the main verb of the non-final clause
  - \( =n \) ‘same subj’ or \( =t \) ‘diff subj’

- These clitics occur on both verbs and “postpositions”
Switch reference on verb

\[ \text{i}=n\text{ā}l \quad ho \quad \text{i}=p\text{ā}l \quad o \quad \text{ira} \quad \text{utu}={n} \]

3=mother and 3=father also water draw=SS

\text{hai} \quad \text{fūleh}-e

PERF return-VB

‘her mother and father also drew water and returned’ (Dougherty 2013)
switch reference on positional

ira Ŧī hufur na-e=n
water his body at-VB=SS

cupucupu

dripped

‘The water dripped off his body’ (LE)
Positional verbs in serial verb complexes
SVC Criteria

- Two verbs that can each occur independently
- One value for TAM
- One value for negation
- No subordination
- Shared core argument
- One grammatical subject

(Aikhenvald 2006, Defina 2016)
SVC Criteria

- Two verbs that can each occur independently
- One value for TAM
- One value for negation
- No subordination
- Shared core argument
- One grammatical subject

(Aikhenvald 2006, Defina 2016)
Example SVC

- Fataluku makes frequent use of SVCs

\[
\text{wata}=t \quad [\text{ele} \quad \text{ā} \quad \text{rohon somon} \quad \text{ma’u}] \\
\text{coconut}=\text{REL} \quad [\text{RPRO you} \quad \text{PAST carry} \quad \text{come}]
\]

‘the coconut that you brought in’ (LE)
Aspect marked once

- One marker of aspect affects the interpretation of the entire complex

\[ \text{wani } hai \quad \text{malu } \text{wāwāh-e} \]

bees PERF out swarm-VB

‘The bees swarmed out’ (LE)
Negation marked once

- One marker of negation affects the interpretation of the entire complex

\[ akam \ a \ tali \ moh-e \]
\[ \text{NEG} \ me \ surpass \ run-VB \]
‘You will not overtake me’ (JD)
Single subordinator

• The complex is subordinated with a single relativizer

\[ ma'ar=it \ [ele \ \text{tom} \ _ \ \text{tali} \ \_ \ \text{lohai}] \]

\[ \text{person}=\text{REL} \ [\text{RPRO} \ \text{tom} \ _ \ \_ \ \text{surpass} \ \_ \ \text{tall}] \]

‘The person who Tom is bigger than’ (LE)
Discussion and conclusions
Discussion

- Fataluku’s “postpositions” have the same morphology and distribution as action verbs.
- Some words show semantic bleaching:
  - $na-e$ ‘to breathe’ > ‘to be at’
  - $aci$ ‘to see’ > ‘toward’
- Suggests they are verbs that are grammaticalizing.
Conclusions

• Analysis in terms of grammaticalization allows a more nuanced perspective

• Further supports Klamer’s (2018) claims about grammaticalization in TAP
Selected References

