

Grammaticalization as it happens? A usage-based approach to morphosyntactic variation in Pana

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Contemporary usage-based approaches to language change hold that tokens of innovated and original linguistic forms occur side by side and that consequently synchrony and diachrony have to be viewed as an integrated whole (Bybee 2010:105). While it has been shown that variation in phonetic production is indeed ubiquitous and that sound change is drawn from a pool of synchronic variation (Ohala 1989) it is less clear whether the same amount of synchronic variation can be observed on the morphosyntactic or lexical-semantic layer.

Taking the hypothesis that synchronic variation is also pervasive on the morphosyntactic level and that this variation represents the origins of grammaticalization (Croft 2010: 8-10) as a starting point, the paper investigates variation in the verbalizing of the presentative function as observed in data from the retelling of a picture story by speakers of the endangered language Pana (North Volta Kongo, Gur).

References

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