

GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE

There can be no doubt that, traditionally, the most thorough and most reliable results in the research on Uralic languages have been provided by historical descriptions. These languages, despite the changes they underwent in the course of their history, have basically retained their agglutinative character. Their morphological categories invariably exhibit rich paradigms, even if they do so in diverse ways from one language to another, not to mention their extensive systems of derivational suffixes. The analyses that were aimed at revealing how those morphological categories had taken shape and what changes had resulted in their assuming their present character pinpointed a number of historical events that have been referred to in recent decades as processes of grammaticalisation, ranging from the development of rich systems of postpositions to the emergence of local case suffixes and that of verbal personal suffixes or possessive suffixes, to mention just the most well-known examples. Since these changes have their phonological, syntactic, and semantic aspects, past research on them has accumulated a valuable body of knowledge that now makes it possible for us to reflect upon them in terms of processes of grammaticalisation and gives us clues, on the side of Uralistics, that may contribute to what is cross-linguistically known about such changes. This insight underlay the idea that the 2003 session of the Budapest Uralic Workshop that is organised every second year by the Department of Finno-Ugristics of the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences be devoted to that topic, under the title 'Uralic Grammaticaliser'. That session was organised in the hope that its participants would exchange their ideas concerning the results of their research in the past few years. Thus, the aim of the 2003 workshop was not to discuss the status of grammaticalisation among the various historical changes that languages may undergo or to find out whether the principle of unidirectionality is in general valid with respect to grammaticalisation, etc., but rather to see if it makes sense to discuss and interpret the emergence of certain elements or rules realised in the various grammatical categories of Uralic languages in terms of grammaticalisation. Given that, as far as we know, no scholarly conference had previously been organised on that

Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest

particular topic within Uralistics, we were also hoping that ours would have a fertilising effect on further research in that area.

The present issue of *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* (as well as one of its forthcoming issues) includes (mainly extended and revised versions of) some of the papers that were delivered at the workshop specified above. Since there are practically no Uralic languages that had not been mentioned during the workshop, it can be said that all members of that family of languages are discussed in the papers in this collection (and its sequel), even if they are seen from the most diverse perspectives in the particular papers. The diversity of languages and aspects would have made it difficult and perhaps also superfluous for us to try and arrange the papers of this issue in some thematic order. Therefore, they are presented in an alphabetic order of their authors' names and their topics will also be briefly indicated below in that order.

László Fejes in his paper entitled "*Compound verbs*" in *Komi: Grammaticalisation without a grammatical morpheme?* attempts to clarify the nature and emergence of Komi-Zyryan compound verbs in terms of constructional grammar. The paper also deserves attention because it tries to take a clear stand on the issue of what a "compound word" really is. In particular, it explores compounds that end in some recognisable verb and begin with some constituent that can be identified as an instance of another part of speech but does not occur on its own. The author concludes his paper with an assessment of possible processes of grammaticalisation vs. lexicalisation.

Tamás Forgács analyses the process of emergence of some members of the rich array of Hungarian preverbs, that is, the historical change adverb > preverb in that language (*Grammaticalisation and preverbs*). There are divergent views in the literature concerning the size of the stock of Hungarian preverbs basically because it is difficult to tell exactly in which cases we "still" have to do with an adverb and when do we have a preverb "already". The paper applies the "centre vs. periphery" model of the Prague School to point out differences in degree between those two categories.

Michael Geisler's paper *Can 'nothing' be grammaticalised? Comments on Permian vowel ~ zero alternations* discusses, with respect to the Permian languages, an issue that often recurs in the grammaticalisation literature under various guises. The issue he discusses is how vowel ~ zero alternations (that can be observed in those languages rather infrequently), or rather the relationships that obtain between such alternants,

can be grammaticalised. In conclusion he points out the multi-stage nature of that development in which a process of lexicalisation is followed by one of grammaticalisation.

Ferenc Havas looks at what he calls a textbook example of grammaticalisation, the emergence of verb forms exhibiting a person/number marking morpheme, in his paper *Objective conjugation and medialisation*. Although his analyses mainly concern Hungarian, his ideas may be relevant for other languages as well. The description, embedded as it is in a typological framework, lists and refutes previous attempts at explaining the emergence of objective (definite) conjugation, and argues that third person singular definite verb forms are to be distinguished from first and second person forms in that, in the case of the latter, the verb forms now interpreted as belonging to the indefinite conjugation originally came into being in order to express mediality.

Anne Tamm in her paper *On the grammaticalization of the Estonian perfective particles* explores a case of the expression of aspectuality, that is, the emergence of the perfectivising function of the particle *ära*, analysing it in terms of lexicology, semantics, and syntax. Her description also conveys important pieces of information on aspectuality in Estonian in general, highlighting for instance the relationship between argument structure and aspect or that between other particles and aspect. In conclusion she claims that the particle *ära* emerges as a well-defined, distinct aspectual, semantic and syntactic unit.

Réka Zayzon's paper *Funktionswandel deiktischer Stämme im Nganasanischen: Grammatikalisierung, Lexikalisierung, Pragmatikalisierung* deals with Nganasan, one of the most endangered Uralic languages. On the basis of a large text corpus, she explores various changes of deictic stems in that language, pointing out types of changes that are less (or not at all) known from the relevant literature. Such an instance may be the Px3sg-inflected pronoun *siti* that eventually represents the final stage of a path of change noun > pronoun.

The papers in this volume present historical events in Komi, Hungarian, Permian, Estonian, and Nganasan in terms of grammaticalisation, whereas the forthcoming sequel to this collection will contain analyses of further phenomena in other Uralic languages, not covered here.

Marianne Bakró-Nagy

Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest