

Grammaticalization of temporal meanings in Japanese and Spanish

With special reference to the antonymy in “EARLINESS” and “LATENESS”

Hidehiko NEGI
Toyo University
hidehiko_negi@hotmail.com

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In this paper, we attempt to investigate grammaticalization with regard to the semantic development from spatial concepts to temporal concepts in Japanese and Spanish. We deal with the lexical items in both languages, which exhibit the polysemy of spatial and temporal meanings. In particular, we focus on the fact that antonymy in temporal meanings as the time preceding or EARLINESS and the time following or LATENESS coexists with “*saki*” ‘ahead’, “*mae*” ‘before’, “*ato*” ‘after’, “*ushiro*” ‘back’ in Japanese language, respectively.

Concerning the mechanism to give rise to antonymy involving temporal meanings of EARLINESS and LATENESS, we make use of an object moving in one direction such as a train in order to account for how the spatial concepts can be held responsible for temporal concepts. In fact, the first car located in front of the train passes one point earlier than rest of the cars located in rear parts, which allows us to understand that the spatial concept of front is relevant to EARLINESS and back (rear) is relevant to LATENESS, respectively.

With reference to the opposite case, as one (a conceptualizer) goes along the path, the space left behind can be conceived of as past or EARLINESS in temporal meanings after the movement, whereas the time to reach the point ahead can be future or LATENESS from one’s current location. We exemplify the fact that spatial concepts of front and back are related to both EARLINESS and LATENESS in temporal meanings.

As to coexistence of antonymous polysemy in Japanese, the lexical item of “*saki*” typically referring to the tip of an object exhibits temporal antonymy such as “*saki ni kita*” (came earlier), “*korekara saki ni*” (in the future (later)). The mechanism of polysemy we have explained in the preceding section can be applied to the polysemy of ‘*saki*’. As the tip of a ballpoint pen can easily turn around, the spatial concept is relative to the vantage point of a conceptualizer. Thus, we postulate the relativity in space is the motivation concerning antonymous polysemy of EARLINESS and LATENESS. However, we have not found the lexical item in Spanish with coexistence of antonymous polysemy.

References

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