

A corpus-based diachronic study of 'SAY' verbs in Mongolian and Manchu

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Abstract

'SAY' verbs are very likely to be grammaticalized into quotation markers, complementizers, or discourse markers cross-linguistically. This paper reports some preliminary results of an ongoing study of 'SAY' verbs in Mongolian and Manchu from a diachronic perspective.

Mongolian data were drawn from the Secret History of the Mongols (1228), Mongolian monuments in Phagspa script and Uighur-Mongolian script (XIII-XVI Centuries), Manchu Veritable Records (1635), Erdeni-yin Tobčiya (1662), Mongolian Beijing Geser (1716), Mongolian Laoqida (1790), Köke Sudur (1830-1891), Manchu-Mongolian-Chinese Readers (1909, 1910) and some modern Mongolian texts such as textbooks and published field reports. Manchu data were mainly drawn from Manchu Veritable Records (1635), Manchu Laoqida (1765) and Manchu-Mongolian-Chinese Readers (1909, 1910).

Constructions containing Mongolian 'SAY' verbs including *keme-* 'to say, speak; to be named or called', *ügüle-* 'to utter words; to speak, say, tell', *öči-* 'to say', *duyulya-* 'to inform', *jarla-* 'to announce', *tayilburila-*, 'to explain, comment, interpret', *ayiladqa-* 'to speak respectfully', *jalbari-* 'to pray', *kele-* 'to utter words, express in words; to speak, say, tell, narrate', *ge-* 'to say' and their various forms were investigated. For Manchu, constructions containing verbs *hendu-* 'to say, speak', *se-* 'to say; to call; to mean', *ala-* 'to tell; to report', *boola-* 'to report', *habša-* 'to accuse; to report to', *giyangna-* 'to explain', *bolgo-* 'to clarify, explain', *getukele-* 'to explain', *ulhibu-* 'to explain to', and *elbefē-* 'to talk carelessly', *gebule-* 'to name, to call by name' and their various forms were examined.

Preliminary results show that most of the complement clauses of 'SAY' verbs in Mongolian and Manchu are quotations in optative mood. The usage as a quotation marker before the quoted speech of Mongolian *ügüle-* 'to utter words; to speak, say, tell' disappeared, and its usage as a main predicate was replaced by the later coined *kele-* 'to utter words, express in words; to speak, say, tell, narrate'. *keme-* 'to say, speak; to be named or called' played the role of a quotation verb or quotation marker, and its derived form *ge-* (< ge'e- < ke'e < keme-) further developed the function of being a complementizer. On the other hand, Manchu *se-* 'to say; to call; to mean' generated more grammatical functions than its Mongolian counterpart *ge-* did. In addition to a predicate, *se-* can be used as a quotation marker, a complementizer, a discourse marker or an adverbializer.