Analogy and syntactic change: A case study of the verb ‘say’ in Mantauran Rukai

Zeitoun, Elizabeth

Academia Sinica

Abstract

Rukai, one of the 14 still extant Formosan languages, consists of six dialects (Mantauran, Tona, Maga, Budai, Labuan and Tanan) which are spoken in southern Taiwan. Mantauran Rukai has undergone major phonological and morpho-syntactic changes. In this talk, I will focus in particular on the syntactic changes that have occurred regarding the verb ‘say’.

This discussion will take place at two levels by making a synchronic investigation of Mantauran Rukai from a diachronic perspective. Such an investigation will be carried out through a comparison of Mantauran with the other Rukai dialects (Budai and Tona will be taken as representative of the two major Rukai groups). This discussion will lead to the reconstruction of a number of morphemes at the Proto-Rukai level.

In Rukai, it can be hypothesized that the verb ‘say’ means actually ‘then so’. The discussion of this verb thus requires an excursus and a short overview of Rukai coordinative constructions.

There are two phrasal and clausal coordinators/conjunctions in Rukai which can be reconstructed at the PR level: *si ‘and’ and *la ‘then’. The distribution of these two coordinators/conjunctions is depicted in (1):

(1)  a. NP si NP → Tona: takanaw si ipolo ‘Takanaw & Ipolo’
 b. V si V → Tona: wakane si ’ongolo ‘eat and drink’
 c. S si la S → Tona: si la davace si la wa-nga ‘angi-talodro. ‘They left and crossed the bridge.’

I will show that Mantauran has innovated in at least two respects:

(i) First, it has lost the coordinator *si
(ii) Second, while it still has *la ‘and’ as a coordinator for nouns and verbs, it has a new grammatical morpheme for ‘then’, cf. mani, which has thus replaced *si *la, as shown in (2).

(2)  a. NP la NP → Mt: takanao la dhipolo ‘T & D’
 b. V la V → Mt: okane la’ongolo ‘eat and drink’
 c. S mani S → Mt: mani dhaace mani oa-nga ‘ano-talodho. ‘They left and crossed the bridge.’
I will show how such a syntactic change has had for consequence an analogy, with the appearance of *omi*, which is replacing progressively the conjunction *mani* ‘then’ and the verb sequence *mani ia* ‘then so (i.e. ‘say’). I will provide a detailed account of such a syntactic change by examining in particular the distribution of these morphemes, and the repercussion it has on the morphosyntax of Mantauran Rukai.

**Selected references**


