

The Grammaticalization of Rhetorical Questions in Tamil

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1. INTRODUCTION*

One of the foremost tenets in diachronic grammaticalization theory today is the notion of *unidirectionality*, according to which change in meaning from less to more grammatical is viewed as a linear and irreversible process. Defined thus in general terms, unidirectionality might appear to be a simple description of, rather than a claim regarding the nature of, the grammaticalization process. However inasmuch as the term is frequently extended to characterize other features of the grammaticalization process which might or might not hold true for all instances in all languages, the use of the label 'unidirectionality' makes a claim which must be demonstrated according to its own merits for each feature proposed.

For example, grammaticalization is widely claimed to be unidirectional with respect to increasing degree of *abstraction*; that is, language users tend to refer to abstract, less accessible concepts in terms of more familiar, concrete ones, and this tendency is one of the factors which motivates the linguistic encoding of new concepts in old forms (cf. Heine, Claudi, & Hünemeyer, This volume). Such a claim is well-motivated cognitively, and is supported by synchronic and diachronic evidence from a number of languages.

It has also been claimed that grammaticalization involves *semantic bleaching*, or weakening of lexical meaning, and that this process, too, is unidirectional. The validity of this claim is, however, far less evident than that for increasing abstraction, since not all meaning change necessarily involves bleaching, and in numerous instances, as is demonstrated by Traugott and König (This volume), the exact opposite process, that of *semantic strengthening*, may also take place. A more comprehensive view would seem

to be that weakening and strengthening are independent processes, either or both of which may potentially be a factor in grammaticalization in any given instance.

Finally, Traugott (1982: 1988) and Traugott & König (This volume) have claimed that grammaticalization is also unidirectional in the sense of increasing *subjectification* or 'speaker involvement'; that is, the extension of meanings encoded by a given lexical or grammatical item is predictably away from objective, referential meaning towards subjective, "speaker-based" attitudes and points of view. Drawing on a model proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976), Traugott (1982) identifies three functional-semantic components which she labels propositional, textual, and expressive. Her prediction is that when grammaticalization involves a meaning-shift from one functional-semantic component to the other, it will proceed from the propositional (via, optionally, the textual) to the expressive level, but not in the reverse direction. Extensions of this type are accounted for in terms of (among others) the inclusion within a form's "meaning" of some pragmatic nuance which was formerly implicated by context alone. An example cited by Traugott is the diachronic extension of English 'while' from a noun meaning 'period' or 'time' to a temporal connective on the textual level to, ultimately, a concessive conjunction (in the sense of 'although') which encodes the attitude of the speaker towards the proposition (Traugott, 1982:254).

What is not clear is that the process of grammaticalization as a whole is necessarily unidirectional with respect to this characterization, nor indeed, why we might expect that it should be. To begin, the claim that the historical trend in language change has been towards increasing grammatical expression of subjective and pragmatic meanings would seem to imply that at some remote earlier stage such meanings were not expressed, or were expressed with a far lower frequency. This would be an awkward position to maintain, it seems, even aside from the problems inherent in attempting to demonstrate it empirically. Second, the claim that grammaticalization *necessarily* has its roots in the propositional (i.e. local, or lexical) level is at odds with the findings of a growing body of researchers that point to the discourse-pragmatic origins of a number of grammatical elements. Thus Givón (1979) has argued in favor of the diachronic discourse basis of morphological relativizers, causativizers, and other types of clause subordinators in a variety of languages; Hopper (1979, 1982, for Literary Malay) and Herring (1988, for Tamil) have pointed out the possibility of discourse/pragmatic focus elements developing into markers of perfective aspect; and DuBois (1987) attributes

the grammaticalization of ergative case-marking systems to functional constraints on the rate and nature of information flow in narrative.

The implications of such claims on the unidirectionality hypothesis are clear: If grammaticalization is defined as the process whereby grammatical elements (be they morphological or syntactic) come into being, then if there is any validity at all to the claims of the proponents of grammar *ex-discourse*, the grammaticalization process cannot be unidirectional in the sense proposed by Traugott. Rather the evidence suggests that autonomous grammatical elements may arise *either* out of individual lexical or already existing grammatical elements on the propositional level, *or* they may take as their source the larger discourse/pragmatic context.¹ Indeed, it is my assertion that, as in the case of semantic bleaching mentioned above, the two processes are essentially independent, and that they are free to interact. Thus, it is theoretically possible that a single grammatical word or affix may have undergone extensions in both directions at different times over the course of its development.

If this position is correct, then important questions immediately arise regarding the nature of the two processes. Do they apply to comparable data cross-linguistically, or do certain grammatical meanings exhibit an affinity for one source component or the other? Do individual languages show a preference for one strategy over the other; that is, are some languages more 'discourse-grammaticalizing', and others more 'lexical-grammaticalizing', or do both kinds of processes operate in all languages to a similar extent? As for the specific mechanisms which drive these processes, a number of mechanisms which account for meaning change in isolated lexical items have been discussed in the literature; e.g. analogy, bleaching, strengthening, metaphor, systems of inference, and so forth. The mechanisms involved in the grammaticalization of discourse functions, however, have yet to be systematically identified and described. Will we find the same, or similar, motivating factors at work, or will it be necessary to postulate other mechanisms which derive not from considerations of meaning but rather from considerations of communicative function? If the latter turns out to be the case, we must confront a methodological issue as well: Since "hard" diachronic evidence of communicative function — especially in the very earliest stages of grammaticalization — is by the very nature of things often excluded, can the process(es) involved be inferred on the basis of synchronic evidence alone? Or should we attempt to devise other methods for getting at discourse-functional factors in language change? I do not propose to address all of these questions, or even any one of them exhaustively, in the present paper. I do hope, however, to shed some light on the nature of the specific mechanisms involved in the

grammaticalization of discourse functions. I propose to do this by examining, in depth, a particular instance of discourse/pragmatics-based grammaticalization: That of the grammaticalization of rhetorical questions as markers of clausal subordination in Tamil.

A word about the organization of the remainder of this paper may be useful here. In considering the Tamil evidence, I begin by identifying three rhetorical question types. I then trace what I hypothesize to be the diachronic evolution of these types, from their pragmatic (interactive and expressive) origins (Section 3 and Section 4), to their reanalysis as markers of textual cohesion (Section 4), and ultimately to their grammaticalization as clausal morphology (Section 5). This expository sequence is accompanied by a progressive narrowing of focus: Only two out of the original three rhetorical question types participate in the second and third stages of the above process, and within those two types, a subset of the actual linguistic forms involved have attained fully grammaticalized status. By presenting the material in a sequence iconic with its (hypothesized) historical development, I hope to illustrate the naturalness of the processes involved, and to hint at the contextual richness — and perhaps too, at a certain random element, leading to the grammaticalization of some forms but not of others — which shaped the phenomenon as a whole. For those who prefer the omniscience of hindsight, however, a more focused reading is also possible. Two forms for which clear evidence of grammaticalization will be adduced are the causal conjunction *ēṇṇā*, and the relativizer *-ē*, derived from a WH- word (*ēṇ* 'why') and a tag question marker, respectively. In the general overview of Tamil rhetorical questions presented below, the individual stories of these two forms can also be traced. The final section (Section 6) considers the implications of the Tamil evidence for the unidirectional hypothesis and grammaticalization theory.

2. RHETORICAL QUESTIONS: THE THREE TAMIL TYPES

The data on which this study is based are from Tamil, a Dravidian language with SOV word order and suffixing, agglutinative morphology. Except where indicated otherwise, all of the examples presented here are drawn from a corpus of thirty-five oral narratives which I recorded in Tamil Nadu, India, in 1986–87. These include personal narratives as well as folk tales of various types, as related by both professional storytellers and ordinary adult native speakers. Of special note are two lengthy public performances

in the *Villu Pāṭṭu* (lit. 'Bow Song') style, which provide evidence for the interactive basis of rhetorical questions in traditional narrative.

A striking feature of Tamil oral narration (and to a lesser extent, of written narration as well) is the frequent use of rhetorical questions. A rhetorical question is defined here as any utterance which is interrogative in form, but which — as opposed to a genuine, information-seeking question — does not solicit a response. The three most common rhetorical question types in Tamil² are what I refer to as the Classical Rhetorical Question (CRQ), the Thematicizing Rhetorical Question (TRQ), and the Rhetorical Tag Question (RTag), illustrated in examples (1)–(3) below:³

- (1) *"Pāl kuṭikkāta pūnai kūṭa irukkum-ā?"*
milk drink-NEG cat even be-F3NS-Q
'Is there any cat that doesn't drink milk?!' [CRQ]
- (2) *Oru nāḷu puruṣaṅkāraṇ eṇṇa ceṇcirukkrāṇ;*
one day husband what do-PERF-PR3MS
'One day, what did the husband do?' [TRQ]
- (3) *Inta pañcāyattellām vaippāṅka illai, pakkattu ūrile.*
this panjayat&all hold-F3PL TAG next town-LOC
'They hold this panjayat (meeting) and all, right? in the next town.'
[RTag]

2.1. CRQs

The first example is typical of the rhetorical question type discussed in classical rhetoric and speech act theory; I refer to this as the Classical Rhetorical Question, or CRQ. An oft-described characteristic of this type is that the surface syntax is conventionally understood to be the opposite of that of the underlying indicative assertion to which it corresponds. That is, a positive question implies a negative assertion, and a negative question, a positive assertion.⁴ Thus, in uttering example (1), the speaker expresses the view that there is *no such thing* as a cat that doesn't drink milk. CRQs may also be WH- questions; in such cases, the usual sense of the corresponding assertion is universal (absolute) negation (e.g. 'Where will you find a cat that doesn't drink milk?!', both in Tamil and in English, normally means 'You won't find a cat that doesn't drink milk anywhere!').

2.2. TRQs

The question in example (2) establishes a theme (namely, that the husband *did something*), which the narrator must elaborate upon by answering his own question in subsequent clauses. The fact that Thematicizing Rhetorical Questions (TRQs) require further comment is reflected in Schmidt-Radefeldt's phrase "the rhetorical use of question-answer sequences" (1977:378), and in Grésillon's (1981) expression *question-réponse à un seul locuteur*, to refer to essentially the same phenomenon. Theoretically TRQs may be realized as either Yes-no or WH- questions, although as it turns out, virtually all of the TRQs in the Tamil data are WH- questions, an interesting fact in its own right, which can be attributed to pragmatic constraints (cf. Section 4.2 below). In terms of content, the two most frequently encountered TRQs in the Tamil corpus are 'And then what did X do?' and 'And then what happened?'.

There is a variant of the Tamil TRQ which involves the addition, in clause-final position, of the subordinating conjunction *nnā* (the conditional form of the quotative verb *en* 'to say/ask'); a literal translation of *nnā* is 'if (you) say/ask'.⁵ Thus, while example (2) is a syntactically independent clause, TRQs followed by *nnā* are formally subordinate to some other (finite) clause. Aside from this formal distinction, the presence or absence of *nnā* does not appear to significantly affect the meaning or function of the TRQ, although from a diachronic perspective, *nnā* will be seen to play a role in the grammaticalization of TRQs as clausal subordinators (cf. Section 5.1). The TRQ + *nnā* construction is illustrated in (4) below:⁶

- (4) *Atu vantū varuṣā varuṣam eppaṭi nnā.*
 it TOP year-as year how ask-COND
 'If (you) ask, "How (is it) year after year?"'

Nnā could also be added on to example (2) above. Indeed TRQs with and without *nnā* appear to be in free variation in oral narration in Modern Tamil.

2.3. RTags

Example (3) is a tag question, formed by the addition of the invariant tag particle *illaiyā* (lit. 'is it not?') to an otherwise declarative utterance. In addition to *illaiyā* (and its phonologically reduced variants, *illai*, *ille*, and *-le*), there are two other important tag question markers in Tamil: The so-called "emphatic" clitic *-ē*, and the imperative (or, the 2nd person past tense form) of the verb *pār* 'to see, look'. These are illustrated in examples (5) and (6):

- (5) *Inta aracaṇ kaṇṇai mūikkittiruntān-ē;*
 this king eye-ACC close-PROG-P3MS-ē
 'The king was keeping his eyes closed, right?'
 (6) *Inṇoru- anta mutallē kāmātēṇu pacu vacciruntār pārunka.*
 another that first-LOC Kamadenu cow keep-PERF-P3RS sec-IMP
 'The other — in the beginning, (he) was the one keeping the Kamadenu cow, right?'

Although there is no syntactic constraint which prohibits the use of any of the Tamil tags with a negative assertion, such uses are rare in these data; again, this can be accounted for pragmatically (cf. Section 4.3). Thus the tag questions considered here overwhelmingly presuppose an affirmative response.

These examples, while representing unrelated types syntactically, are similar in that all are rhetorical (rather than genuine information-seeking) questions, which were uttered in the context of narration. The interpretation of an utterance as a rhetorical rather than a true question is dependent on a complex of features, including the presence of characteristic or otherwise incompatible grammatical elements,⁷ intonation, context, and the shared knowledge and perspective of speaker and hearer. In my recorded data, it is generally clear, from the narrators' intonation and the presence or absence of clause-final pauses in oral delivery, which utterances were intended rhetorically and which as true questions (in the case of rhetorical questions, lack of response from the native speaker listeners further supports my assessments). Moreover, all question forms used in professional performances must be construed as serving some other, non-interrogative purpose, since in such contexts the audience is prohibited by convention from participating verbally in the discourse.

3. THE INTERACTIVE BASIS OF RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

Why, then, do narrators — and Tamil narrators more than most — use rhetorical questions when telling a story? I will first consider the most straightforward explanation, which is a pragmatic one: Rhetorical questions, not unlike genuine questions, are intended to stimulate the involvement of the listeners in the story by making a direct appeal to their attention and evaluative processes. Thus a number of scholars following in the recent German pragmatic tradition (cf. Gülich, 1970; Schmidt-Radefeldt, 1977; and Vandeweghe, 1977) characterize rhetorical questions as "appellative" in function:

Rhetorische Fragen — bei denen der Frage-Charakter mehr oder weniger deutlich ausgeprägt sein kann — lassen sich daher als Appell an die Aufmerksamkeit des Hörers interpretieren. Der Sprecher, der sie verwendet, zeigt, dass er sich ständig der Anwesenheit des Hörers bewusst ist.⁸ (Gülich, 1970:229)

Similarly:

Mit seiner Frage macht der Sprechende S einen Appell an den Hörenden H, und er stellt so eine interpersonale Beziehung her.⁹ (Vandeweghe, 1977:279)

However, rhetorical questions differ crucially from questions in general in that not only is no answer expected of the hearer, but the hearer may actually be prevented from answering, due to "particular situational, social or institutional conventions" (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 1977:378) which prescribe to him or her a passive role. One such convention is that which governs oral narration, which is, except in certain exceptional cases (cf. Section 3.1 below), essentially monologic. There are a number of reasons why it is to the advantage of the narrator to discourage extensive listener participation. As Popovici (1981:15) observes, *le rejet d'un argument ou d'une objection possible implique un dialogue entrevu et évité* ('the rejection of a possible argument or objection implies a dialogue foreseen and avoided'). Dialogue is to be avoided in that it is less predictable and less under the control of a single participant than is a monologue. More serious still, a narrator who gives up the floor to another, no matter how briefly, risks losing it altogether and never finishing his story.

At the same time, it is the task of the narrator to engage and hold the attention of his audience, a task all the more critical in oral narration, where numerous opportunities may arise for the listener to become distracted. The use of rhetorical questioning strategies allows the narrator to address simultaneously both of these conflicting concerns. He poses questions as a means of engaging the attention of the interlocutor. At the same time, rather than risk interruption or derailment by allowing the interlocutor to answer for himself, the narrator constructs a hypothetical listener with whom he "interacts", even speaking at times in this other listener's "voice". Thus a narrator may "answer" his own CRQ by explicitly stating the assertion it implies:

- (7) *Avan peyilā pōyṭṭā itai colratukku viṭṭukku*
 he fail-ADV go-COND this to-say house-DAT
varuvān-ā? Varamāṭṭān.
 come-F3MS-Q come-NEG-F3MS
 'If (a schoolboy) fails (an exam), will he come (straight) home to tell about it? He won't.'

Or, he may imitate a dialogue by means of a TRQ and its response:

- (8) *Āka inta poṇṇu enṇa āyirutu: karppamā*
 thus this girl what become-PFV-PR3NS pregnant
ākutu inta poṇṇu.
 become-PR3NS this girl
 'And so what happens to the girl?
 She gets pregnant, the girl (does).'

(The implication here is that the listener, unable to contain his or her curiosity, has posed the question.)¹⁰ This hypothetical listener is an idealized listener, in that at any given point in the narration, he knows all that he is supposed to know in order to appreciate the story, and is attentive and eager to receive whatever information follows.¹¹ Actual listeners are unreliable in these respects, since they may fail in comprehension and attention for a variety of reasons.

3.1. Rhetorical questions in traditional performance narrative

Compelling evidence in support of the abstract ideal listener analysis can be found in the traditional Tamil *Villu Pāṭṭu* storytelling genre.¹² In a *Villu Pāṭṭu* performance, a principal narrator ('A') is assisted by a secondary narrator ('B') and several singer/musicians (whose "narrative" duties are largely restricted to echoing and agreeing with 'A' and 'B'). Of special interest is the role of 'B' in the narrative performance. On the one hand, he may introduce new material into the narrative sequence to a limited extent, either alone or in conjunction with the main narrator (this constitutes one of the "exceptions" referred to earlier to narration as monologue). His primary role, however, is as a physical embodiment of the "ideal listener", whose duty it is to respond to the main narrator at each appropriate moment in an appropriate way. As such, he responds to rhetorical questions by making explicit the (normally unspoken) responses which they conventionally presuppose. Rhetorical questions are extremely common in *Villu Pāṭṭu* performances. Consider example (9) below, which contains four CRQs:

- (9) (The wife of the great god Shiva, cursed by her husband, despairs of accomplishing what he has ordered her to do)
 A: *"Nilaṅkaḷai cirtiruttam ceyya nammāl muṭiyum-ā?"*
 B: *Muṭiyātē!*
 A: *Pātti kaṭṭa muṭiyum-ā?*
 B: *Atuvum muṭiyātē!*

- A: *Cetiḱalai nāṭṭa muṭiyum-ā?*
 B: *Atuvum muṭiyātē!*
 A: *Nammāl enṇa ceyya muṭiyum?*
 B: *Oru kāriyamum naṭakkātē!*"
- A: "'Am I capable of domesticating the land?! [Yes-no]
 B: (I) can't!
 A: Can (I) lay out plots (for cultivation)?! [Yes-no]
 B: (I) can't (do) that, either!
 A: Can (I) plant plants?! [Yes-no]
 B: (I) can't (do) that, either!
 A: What will I be able to do?! [WH-]
 B: Not a single thing will come out right!'"

In this example, Narrator B responds negatively to affirmatively-phrased CRQs, and with a universal negative to a WH- type CRQ, confirming that this is indeed how the Tamil narrator who makes use of such constructions intends himself to be understood.

Narrator B also responds appropriately to TRQs, not by providing any information, but by encouraging Narrator A to supply the answer himself, as in examples (10) and (11):

- (10) A: *Akkā taṅkai ēḷupērum eppaṭi nīrāṭukīr?*
 B: *Eppaṭi?*
 A: [*pāṭṭu*] *Avar kuḷuttaḷavu nalla taṇṇīrē...
 kaṇṇiyarkaḷ vantu nīrāṭa...
 vāyaḷavu taṇṇīrē...
 vantu niṇṇu viḷaiyāṭa...*
- A: 'How do the seven sisters bathe?
 B: How?
 A: [*sings*] Up to their necks in the good water...
 the maidens came and bathed...
 up to their mouths in the water...
 they came and stood playing...'
- (11) A: *Aṅkē āṇṭu varukīṇṇavaṇ yār?*
 B: *Yār?*
 A: *Turiyōṭaṇaṇ.*
- A: 'Who is the one who rules there?
 B: Who?
 A: Duryodhanan.'

Observe that in the last two examples, it is not the "listener" (Narrator B) who introduces the question, as might have been expected on the basis of the preceding discussion, but rather Narrator A. This is because TRQs also serve an important organizational function, which will be described later on, and which is normally reserved for the principal narrator alone. Thus even in his role as ideal listener, Narrator B cannot be relied upon to ask the right questions at exactly the right time; the wrong question or the wrong timing could derail the flow of Narrator A's narration.

RTags are also common in the *Villu Pāṭṭu*, although they do not elicit an explicit response as frequently as the other two types. When Narrator B does respond, his responses follow the expected pattern of affirming the sentential assertion:

- (12) A: *Namma periyār paṣṭāṇṭu irukku pāruṅka, ceṇṭral paṣṭāṇṭu.*
 B: *Āmā.*
 A: *Atukku muṇṇāle piḷāṭpārattile tī peṭṭi vittukkiṭṭu iruntāṇ.*
- A: 'There's our Periyar Bus Stand, right? The central bus stand.
 B: Yes.
 A: In front of it, on the platform, he was selling matches.'
- (13) (A young god muses aloud)
 A: *"Mantirattilē ciṇṇantatu malaiyāḷam tāṇ-ē"*
 B: *Malaiyāḷa nāṭu tāṇ.*
 A: *Nāṇ malaiyāḷam pōka tāṇ vēṇṭum!"*
- A: "'(The place where they have) the best enchantments (is) Malaiyāḷam (country), right?
 B: (It's) Malaiyāḷam country, indeed.
 A: I must go to Malaiyāḷam (country)!'"

The first of these examples contains the polite imperative form *pāruṅka*; the second, the bound suffix *-ē*. Both function here as tags, as shown by the English translations.

Note that in none of these examples do the responses provided by B introduce any new information into the discourse. The impression is of a dialogue, but in fact the range of responses permitted B is quite restricted. The *Villu Pāṭṭu* data provide evidence, therefore, of the validity of the "ideal listener" concept in Tamil oral narration. The value of such a construct is that it allows the narrator to evoke an interactional dynamic, while at the same time maintaining ultimate control of the discourse. Hart (1980) claims that the stylistic device of addressing oneself to some fictional, absent, or

inanimate third person audience can be observed, not just in Tamil, but as a pan-Indian tendency dating back to the earliest recorded literary works. Thus the high RQ content in contemporary Tamil narrative may well reflect, to some extent at least, a more traditional interactive narrative strategy.

4. FROM "EXPRESSIVE" TO "TEXTUAL" FUNCTIONS

Let us now consider uses which extend the RQ phenomenon beyond the limits of the interactive domain. In this section, I discuss the expressive pragmatic 'meaning' of each of the basic RQ types, and show how, in the case of TRQs and RTags, expressivity has been largely replaced by textual — by which I intend discourse-organizational — functions. This constitutes a shift which, it will be argued, paves the way for the eventual grammaticalization of a subset of these elements as clause-linking markers.

4.1. Expressive functions of CRQs

If rhetorical questions are interactive in the qualified sense just discussed, they are also expressive, in that each RQ type is associated with a particular stylistic effect. The classical type, as is often pointed out, is a *persuasive* device which characteristically presents the point of view of the speaker as if it were obvious. From the perspective of the addressee, of course, the point may not be obvious in the least, but part of the efficacy of a CRQ is that it is more difficult to refute than an ordinary assertion, in that it *presupposes* the addressee's agreement. In the Tamil narrative corpus, CRQs are also used to scoff ('I can't do with my eyes open what you can do with your eyes closed?!'), boast ('Is there anyone greater than I?!'), express dismay ('What's the use of being a great king if I can't fulfill my mother's dying wish?!'), show amazement ('Is it possible to behold such a forest?!'), and to convey many other expressive nuances as well. These examples appear almost exclusively in *mimetic*, or quoted sections of text.¹³ The use of CRQs in quoted dialogue within narrative closely parallels their use in actual conversation. As such, the principle function of CRQs in narration is pragmatic; i.e. to represent a conversational exchange in a more persuasive or expressive fashion.

4.2. Expressive functions of TRQs

In order to illustrate the expressive value of TRQs, it is necessary to take into account not only the question clause but the clause or clauses which

follow it in sequence, and which serve as its response. Consider, in this context, example (8) and example (2') (an expanded version of (2) above):

- (8) *Āka inta poṇṇu eṇṇa āyirutu; karppamā*
 thus this girl what become-PFV-PR3NS pregnant
ākutu inta poṇṇu.
 become-PR3NS this girl
 'And so what happens to the girl? She gets pregnant, the girl (does).'
- (2') *Oru nāḷu puruṣaṅkāraṇ eṇṇa ceṇṇirukkṛāṇ,*
 one day husband what do-PERF-PR3MS
"Nāṇ vēṭṭaiṅku pōkaṇum" ṇṇu pōyiṭṭāṇ.
 I hunt-DAT go-be-necessary QUOT go-PFV-PR3MS
 'One day, what did the husband do?
 Saying, "I must go hunting", he went off.'

In her analysis of discourse strategies in Romance, Wehr (1984) characterizes question-answer sequences of this type as marked with respect to simple declarative word order by the addition of the pragmatic feature [+SURPRISE]; that is, the information which follows the question is evaluated, by means of this device, as being in some sense unexpected or reaction-worthy. In this schema, the use of a question form functions to create drama by placing the audience in suspense, arousing their curiosity about what is to follow.

These observations would seem to apply to English as well, in that the most straightforward English translations of Tamil TRQ-response sequences tend to convey the impression that the narrator is attempting to interject a suspenseful tone, as in the examples above. Here Tamil differs from English, however, in that (i) the overall frequency of TRQ-response sequences is notably higher in Tamil; (ii) they may be employed even when the events they introduce are in no way dramatic or unexpected; and (iii) their use does not necessarily imply that the speaker evaluates said events as dramatic or unexpected. That is, while the analysis advanced by Wehr may well have been true for Tamil TRQs at an earlier stage in their development, the suspenseful function, possibly through pragmatic unmarking based on frequency of use, has largely given way to a function on the textual level: That of introducing new information¹⁴ into the text in a pragmatically "focused" way. WH-words are especially effective in focusing interest on a particular constituent, a fact which may tie in with the overwhelming predominance of WH-TRQs (rather than the Yes-no type) in Tamil. Thus a more idiomatic translation of

(8) above might be, 'So what happens is, the girl gets pregnant', where a pseudo-cleft construction, rather than a question, translates the Tamil TRQ. As such, the construction serves as an alternative to syntactically more complex *focus constructions*, which in Tamil typically take the form of nominalizations. Viewed in this light, the TRQ and the clause which follows, although syntactically independent, function in the discourse as a single structural unity,¹⁵ an observation supported by prosodic and intonational evidence as well. They resemble topic-comment structures in which the "theme" or "topic" introduced by the TRQ is commented upon in the response; e.g. 'What happens to the girl is, she gets pregnant'; 'One day what the husband did was, he said he had to go hunting, and went off'.

The strategy serves a broader organizational function within the story as a whole by relating entire sequences of short, syntactically independent clauses to a single focus or theme, thereby creating loose structural unities reminiscent of paragraphs in written discourse. In the continuation of (4), given as (4') below, the narrator goes on to add ten more finite clauses, all of which contribute in some way to the "answer" to the TRQ 'If you ask "How is it year after year?"':

- (4') *Atu vantu varuṣā varuṣam eppaṭi nṇā.*
Kiḷattuvalle paṣṭ ārampikkum caṇṭai.
Kiḷattuval nṇiratu oru ūr.
Kiḷattuvalle tāṇ paṣṭ ārampikkum.
Campanṭillāma..paṣṭ caṇṭai anta hariccaṇṣ pōṭavē māṭṭāṇka.
Inta tēvaruṇka tāṇ pōṭuvāṇka.
Avaṇka eṇṇamāvatu colluvāṇka.
Ivaṇka uṭaṇē pōy, avaṇka itule..aṇcu āru pēr pōy veṭṭiuvāṇka.
Veṭṭiṇa uṭaṇē, avaṇka vantu koṇca pēṭtai veṭṭuvāṇka.
Ivaṇka vantu koṇca koṇca kūṭa pēṭtai veṭṭuvāṇka.
Ippaṭi tāṇ varuṣā varuṣam, aprīl mācam, karekṭṭā inta caṇṭai
naṭanturum.

'If (you) ask, "How (is it) year after year?"' (= How it is year after year is,) the fighting starts in Kiḷattuval.

Kiḷattuval's a town.

It starts first in Kiḷattuval.

For no reason...the Harijans never start fighting first.

It's the Devars who start (it).

They (the Harijans) say something or the other.

And then they (the Devars) immediately go over...five or six people go and cut (them) up.

As soon as they do that, (the Harijans), they cut a few people.

They only cut a few people.

The fighting takes place like this, year after year, exactly in the month of April.'

Here the repetition of the adverbial *varuṣā varuṣam* 'year after year' in the last clause effectively brackets off the TRQ and the ten clauses which follow as a single cohesive unit within the discourse.

TRQs, as mentioned above, are more frequent in oral than in written narration, and we are now in a position to account for this distribution. As a device which may be employed to create structural cohesion while at the same time preserving a straightforward paratactic "one clause at a time" (Pawley and Syder, 1977) mode of presentation, TRQ-response sequences are well suited to the demands of on-line oral narrative production, which tends to prefer loose sequences of finite clauses to more complex embedded constructions. Formulaic expressions such as 'And then what happened?', 'And then what did he do?' presumably require a minimum of processing in the narrator's consciousness, allowing more time in which to organize his thoughts and plan what he is going to say next (Chafe, 1980). At the same time, because of their open-endedness as question forms, they help to insure that the audience will remain attentive until the speaker has succeeded in formulating his next utterances.

The extent to which this strategy is productive can be seen in the following example, an excerpt from an informal oral retelling of a mythological tale. Note the narrator's heavy use of TRQs in organizing (and reorganizing) the linear presentation of his ideas:

- (14) *Āṇā anta ūrile, payaṇkara paṇcam.*
Cāppīṭuratukku kūṭa oṇṇum kiṭaiyātu makkaḷukku.
Āṇā rājavukku veṭṭi viḷā koṇṭāṭurāṇka.
Koṇṭāṭuratu nṇā...cāppāṭu maṭṭilum rājavukku eppaṭi varutu nṇā,
oru iṭattil iruntu oru muṇivar vantu cāppāṭu kuṭuttu viṭuvāru rājā-
vukkāka.
Oru arai vayiṭu cāppāṭu ille; arici ille.
Avvaḷavu paṇcam.
Eṇ nā caṇṭai pōṭṭatuṇāle, irukkīṭa...paṇamellām celavaḷiccu pōccu.
Appa muṇivar kuṭuttuviṭum pōtu, iṭaiyilē anta cāppāṭa...inta...
rājavōṭa āḷuṇka koṇṭu varṇāka.

*Varum pōtu..itaiyile enna paṇṇāṅka tiruṇāṅka;
 anta cāppāṭellām piṭuṅki cāppiṇṇāṅka.
 Avaṅka en piṭuṅki cāppiṇṇāṅka nṇā,
 avaṅkaḷukku cāppiṇṇatukku oṇṇum ille.
 Ataṇṇale avaṅka piṭuṅki cāppiṇṇāṅka.*

'But in that town, (there's) a terrible famine.
 There isn't anything at all for the people to eat.
 But they're holding a victory celebration for the king.
 (How they're) celebrating is... **how** does a serving of food come
 for the king?
 A sage comes from someplace and donates food for the king.
 (There's) not even half a belly-full of food; (there's) no rice.
 (That's) how much famine.
Why? The money they had all got spent in waging war.
 Then when that sage donates (the food), in the meantime the food
 (was)...
 the kings' men bring it back.
 As they're bringing (it back)...in the meantime **what** do (some)
 thieves do?
 They snatch up the food and eat it.
Why do they snatch it up and eat it?
 They don't have anything to eat.
 So they snatch it up and eat it.

The repeated use of rhetorical questions in this section of discourse may sound odd or even incoherent to native speakers of English, since it is difficult to ascribe an expressive interpretation to what is not a particularly dramatic sequence of events (nor is the sequence of central importance for the story as a whole). If, however, we change the TRQs in the English translation to pseudo-cleft constructions, as in (14'), it is possible to appreciate something of the cohesive function which they serve in the original Tamil:

- (14') 'But in that town, (there's) a terrible famine.
 There isn't anything at all for the people to eat.
 But they're holding a victory celebration for the king.
 (How they're) celebrating is...
 how a serving of food comes for the king is,
 a sage comes from someplace and donates food for the king.
 (There's) not even half a belly-full of food; (there's) no rice.

(That's) how much famine.
 (The reason) why is (because) the money they had all got spent in waging war.
 Then when that sage donates (the food), in the meantime the food...
 the kings' men bring it back.
 As they're bringing (it back)...in the meantime what (some) thieves do is,
 they snatch up the food and eat it.
 (The reason) why they snatch it up and eat it is,
 they don't have anything to eat.
 So they snatch it up and eat it.

Clearly we have moved here beyond the realm of expressivity to the organization and presentation of the discourse itself; or, to employ Traugott's terminology in a somewhat broader sense, from the "expressive" to the "textual" level.

4.3. Expressive functions of RTags

In the same way that CRQs are persuasive, and TRQs (in some languages at least, and probably originally in Tamil as well) suspenseful, a narrator's use of rhetorical tag questions evokes solidarity with the listener by presupposing the listener's knowledge of the information thus tagged, thereby including both listener and speaker within the informed sphere of those capable of fully appreciating the significance of the narrated information.¹⁶ As in the case of CRQs, the listener need not in actual fact be familiar with the information thus evaluated, or he may not have the particular information in mind at the time, such that the RTag serves as well to bring it to the foreground of his consciousness.

RTags draw on two types of "common" knowledge: That which is external, and that which is internal to the narrative. The former typically includes (i) shared cultural knowledge, as reflected in the use of the term 'panjayat' (the popular form of village government in India) in the RTag in example (3); (ii) shared point of view (especially if there is a close social or interpersonal relationship between speaker and listener); and (iii) knowledge, both general and specific, that the speaker has reason to believe — or chooses to represent as though he believed — is shared by the listener. Narrative-internal knowledge is information that was either specifically mentioned in,

or can be inferred from, the previous discourse; this is reflected in examples (5) and (6).

Beyond this use, which is essentially pragmatic, RTags have a textual function in Tamil, which is again one of clause-linking. An important characteristic of RTags is that they are anaphoric; that is, they refer back, either to the discourse, or to previous experience of a more general nature. As such, they are frequently used to specify and retrieve referents which are old information, i.e. in cases where the narrator wishes to predicate something new of these referents. Such referents are typically positive and definite; hence the absence in the data of RTags with negative propositions. The "retrieval and predication" function of RTags becomes clear once we examine the examples given in isolation above along with the clauses which follow them immediately in the discourse:

- (3') *Inta pañcāyattellām vaippānka illai, pakkattu ūrile.*
 this panjayat&all hold-F3PL TAG next town-LOC
Eñka appā pōkāma irukkum pōtu iyaṇ pōyituvāṇ.
 our father go-NEG be time he go-PFV-F3MS
 'They hold this panjayat (meeting) and all, right? In the next town.
 When my father couldn't go, this (boy) would go (in his place).'
- (5) *Inta aracaṇ kaṇṇai mūṭikkittiruntāṇ-ē.*
 this king eye-ACC close-PROG-P3MS-TAG
ivaṇum kaṇṇai tīṇantu pākkurāṇ.
 he-also eye-ACC open see-PR3MS
 'The king was keeping his eyes closed, right?
 He too opened his eyes and saw (them).'
- (6') *Iṇṇoru- anta mutallē kāmātēṇu pacu vacciruntār, pāruṅka.*
 another that first-LOC Kamadenu cow keep-PERF-P3RS see-IMP.
Oru muṇivar,
 a sage.
Avai, viśvāmittirarai viruntukku kūppiṭuvār oru nāl.
 he Viśhvamitra-ACC feast-DAT call-F3R one day
 'The other- in the beginning [i.e. of the story], (he,) was the one
 keeping the Kamadenu cow, right? A sage,
 He, invited Viśhvamitra to dinner one day.'

In each of these examples, the situation referred to in the RTag clause is old or otherwise accessible information; the assertion in the second clause is new

information. As in the case of TRQs and the clauses which follow them, it is possible to speak of a loose structural unity between the RTag and its following predication, a unity reinforced in many cases by prosody and intonational contour. Functionally, sequences of RTag + clause may replace more complex embedded *relative clause constructions*, especially in the spoken language. Compare, for example, the loose paratactic version in (3') above with the version in (15), which contains an embedded (participial) relative clause construction modifying the nominal head 'panjayat' (note: 'FAJP' = 'Future Adjectival Participial'):

- (15) *Eñka appā pakkattu ūrile vaikkum pañcāyattukku*
 our father next town-LOC hold-FAJP panjayat-DAT
pōkāma irukkum pōtu, iyaṇ pōyituvāṇ.
 go-NEG be time he go-PFV-F3MS
 'When my father couldn't go to the panjayat (meeting) which (they)
 hold in the next town, this (boy) would go (in his place).'

There are a number of advantages which the tag strategy has over the participial strategy. By preserving the iconic order of the two clauses, the RTag version not only avoids the necessity of embedding, but it also eliminates the need to indicate case relations (in the example above, the dative indicating GOAL) on the nominal head; that is, the paratactic version is non-specific as to the thematic relationship between the arguments of the two clauses. The linking of clauses by means of RTags is a strategy, therefore, which facilitates the presentation of information with a minimum of encoding complexity.

5. THE GRAMMATICALIZED STATUS OF RQ ELEMENTS

These observations regarding the textual functions of TRQs and RTags are of interest in their own right, and merit further consideration within the realm of discourse analysis. For the purposes of the present discussion, what is to be noted is that the discourse-organizational use of RQs represents a shift in function away from the basic RQ strategy defined above. We might hesitate to claim that grammaticalization has taken place, however, since we are not left with new autonomous grammatical markers, but rather with two highly specific (albeit extremely productive) *construction types*. We might predict, nevertheless, that if the constructions were to grammaticalize further, it would be as clause-connecting elements of some type, given the evident trend towards the combining of two finite utterances into one.

In fact, this prediction turns out to be correct. The WH- elements *ēṇ* 'why', *eṇṇa* 'what', and *eppai* 'how' (either alone, or in combination with the conditional conjunction *ṇṇā*), show evidence of grammaticalizing away from TRQ constructions into autonomous conjunctions. As for RTags, while all three of the Tamil tags presented here can function as informal relativizers, as examples (3'), (5'), and (6') demonstrate, the particle *-ē* has taken on many of the features of a formal relativizing particle as well. These developments are considered in greater detail below.

5.1. From TRQ to conjunction

There is a qualitative shift from the discourse-organizational use of TRQs described above to the use of the conjunction *ēṇṇā* (*ēṇ* 'why' + *ṇṇā*) in the following sentence:

- (16) *Avaṇ inṅē illai ēṇṇā avaṇ ūrukku pōṇāṇ.*
 he here NEG CONJ he town-DAT go-P3MS
 'He is not here because he went to his village'.

In purely syntactic terms, this shift involves the displacement of the WH-word *ēṇ* from its usual clause-second position to the end of the clause, where it attaches to the subordinating conjunction *ṇṇā*. (Compare, for example, (16) above with the TRQ-response focus construction: *Avaṇ ēṇ inṅē illai (ṇṇā), avaṇ ūrukku pōṇāṇ* 'Why he isn't here is, he went to his village'.) A further fact regarding the compound conjunction *ēṇṇā* is that it may be analyzed as belonging exclusively to the second, but not the first clause in the sequence, as evidenced by the fact that

- **Avaṇ inṅē illai ēṇṇā.*
 *'He isn't there because.'

is not a complete grammatical utterance, while

- Eṇṇā avaṇ ūrukku pōṇāṇ.*
 *'Because he went to his village.'

is fully grammatical in Tamil. In sentence-initial position, *ēṇṇā* functions analogously with sentence-initial conjunctions such as *ataṇāle* 'therefore', *āṇē* 'but', and *iruntālum* 'nevertheless' (the latter two also deriving from conditional forms):

- Ataṇāle avaṇ ūrukku pōṇāṇ.*
 'Therefore he went to his village.'

- Āṇā avaṇ ūrukku pōṇāṇ.*
 'But he went to his village.'
Iruntālum avaṇ ūrukku pōṇāṇ.
 'Nevertheless, he went to his village.'

It also groups with this class of elements semantically; in particular, 'because' (REASON) and 'therefore' (CAUSE) express closely related logical concepts.

A further argument for the grammaticalized status of expressions such as *ēṇṇā* involves intonation and prosody. (In the case of *ēṇṇā*, phonological reduction is also involved; i.e. a sequence of three alveolar nasals is reduced to two, in keeping with the phonotactic rules of the language.) WH- words in Tamil typically exhibit a high, rising intonation with an optional drop in pitch at the end. The intonation of the subordinator *ṇṇā*, on the other hand, falls from the high to the middle range; i.e. to signal a non-final clause boundary. When, however, the two are combined as in example (16), *ēṇṇā* tends to be pronounced with a high, level intonation, leading directly into the following clause. The two strategies can be contrasted graphically as in (16a) and (16b):

- (16a) *Avaṇ ēṇ inṅē illai ṇṇā, avaṇ ūrukku pōṇāṇ.*
 he why here NEG SUBD he town-DAT go-P3MS
 'Why he isn't here is, he went to his village'.
 (16b) *Avaṇ inṅē illai ēṇṇā avaṇ ūrukku pōṇāṇ.*
 he here NEG CONJ he town-DAT go-P3MS
 'He's not here because he went to his village'.

The intonational characteristics of *ēṇṇā* are similar to those for other two-syllable sentence-initial conjunctions, such as *āṇā* 'but' and *āka* 'therefore'.

These same criteria allow us to establish the word *ēṇ* alone as a coordinating conjunction (with the same functional value as *ēṇṇā*), as in the following example:

- (17) *Tērle naṭṭu pōḷṭu ellām cariyā irukkā ṇṇu,*
 chariot-LOC nut bolt all okay be-PR3NS-Q QUOT
ēṇ aṭutta nāl tēr oṭṭaṇum-ē.
 CONJ next day chariot drive-be-necessary-TAG
ivar tāṇ pākkaṇum atellām.
 he EMPH look-be-necessary that-all
 '(He checks to see) if the nuts and bolts on the chariot are all okay,
 because the next day he has to drive the chariot, right?
 He has to take care of all that stuff himself'.

Thus *nnā* is, strictly speaking, not an essential ingredient in WH- conjunctions, although it is more often present than not.

So far, we have been dealing almost exclusively with *ēn*; however, a similar shift can be seen to have taken place with two other WH- elements, *enna* 'what' and *eppaṭi* 'how', which combine with *nnā* to produce the conjunctions *ennannā* and *eppaṭinnā*. Although they exhibit the same syntactic and prosodic properties as *ēnnā*, it is more difficult to ascribe to them distinct semantic labels. Indeed, they may sometimes be used interchangeably, or in place of *ēnnā*. This fact suggests that their lexical identity (i.e. as distinct WH- words) may be weakening, even as their grammatical meaning (as coordinating conjunctions) is strengthened.

Finally, it may be mentioned that the written language, which is generally more conservative than the spoken language, recognizes two of these conjunctions, *ēnnā* and *ennannā*, as unitary grammatical entities. In Written Tamil they appear as single words, viz. *ēnenrāl*, from *ēn* + *enrāl* (written form of *nnā*), and *ennavenrāl*, from *enna* + *enrāl*, with the glide -v- inserted according to a regular morphophonemic process. All of this evidence — syntactic, prosodic, and orthographic — argues in favor of treating these elements as fully grammaticalized conjunctions in Modern Tamil.

5.2. From RTag to relativizer

Turning now to rhetorical tag questions (RTags), recall that a sequence made up of a clause containing a tag (-ē, *illai(yā)*, or *pāruṅka*) plus the clause or clauses which follow may function as an informal relativizing construction in Tamil. Examples of this are concatenated utterances of the type: 'The king was standing there keeping his eyes closed, right? He too opened his eyes and saw them', which may be contrasted with embedded relative clause constructions, e.g. 'The king, who was standing there keeping his eyes closed, also opened his eyes and saw them'. Of the three Tamil tags described here, -ē alone has achieved the status of a full-fledged grammatical relativizer. This status is attested by a number of facts, not the least of which is that it has been classified as such by at least one native grammarian. Annamalai (1980) explicitly refers to -ē marked constructions of the sort we have been discussing as "tag relative clauses", which he notes are "almost like two consequent sentences in a discourse" (1980:291). The tag RC is one of three relative clause types which he identifies for Tamil; the other two are the "participial RC" and the "pronominal RC". The so-called "pronominal RC" (a calque from a Sanskrit construction) is not of interest here, but it may be observed

that Annamalai's examples of tag and participial RCs, which I reproduce below, correspond exactly to the distinction made here between informal paratactic and formal embedded relativizing constructions, as illustrated in examples (3') and (15) above (note: PAJP = 'Past Adjectival Participle'):

- (18a) *Nēttu oru payyaṇ vantān-ē avan inṇekkuṁ*
yesterday a boy come-P3MS-TAG he today-also
vantān.
come-P3MS
'A boy came yesterday, you know, he came today also'.
(18b) *Nēttu vanta payyaṇ inṇekkuṁ vantān.*
yesterday came-PAJP boy today-also come-P3MS
'The boy who came yesterday came today also'.

Further arguments can be made for the grammaticalized status of -ē. Syntactically speaking, its role has shifted from that of a clause-final particle to a particle which may relate an attribute to a nominal head within a clause. This is illustrated in the following example, taken from a contemporary Tamil short story:¹⁷

- (19) *Nān pōy avaḷ ninṇiruntā-ē anta iṭattil*
I go she stand-PERF-P3FS-TAG that place-LOC
atē mātiri ninṇu kaṭalai verittu pārkkiṇ.
that-EMPH way stand ocean-ACC stare look-PRIS
'I went and stood in the place **where she had stood**, and stared at the ocean in the same way'. (lit. 'I went and in the she had stood-ē place in the same way stood and stared at the ocean').

Here the finite clause 'she had stood' modifies the noun phrase 'that place', with the suffix -ē indicating the subordinate relationship of the former to the latter; i.e. -ē translates the English relative pronoun 'where'. We may further observe that the relativized clause is entirely embedded within, rather than simply preceding, the matrix clause. Behavior of this sort is associated with the participial RC type, but not with the tag type, which tends to preserve the order 'old information'-new information', and to present information one clause at a time. This fact alone indicates that -ē has undergone a qualitative shift in function in the direction of increased grammatical autonomy.

Like relative pronouns in English, -ē may also stand in for the nominal head, in the sense of 'that which', 'the one who', '(the place) where', etc. Thus

the heroine in another Tamil short story¹⁸ who, having just been robbed, responds to her husband's inquiry as to what was stolen with:

- (20) "Cañkili, mōtaram, vāṭe, paṇam, nīnka kuṭutt-iruntīnkaḷ-ē..."
 chain ring watch money you(resp) give-PERF-P2R-REL
 '(Your) chain, ring, watch, money... what you gave (me)!

is clearly not commenting on the husband's past action of giving, but rather on that which was given. A similar usage is illustrated in the oral example below:

- (21) "Nāṇ appō conñēṇ-ē uñkaḷukku puriñcatā?"
 I then say-PLS-REL YOU-DAT be-understood-P3NS-Q
 'Do you understand (now) what I said then?'

Here what is relevant is not the fact that the speaker of the utterance said something previously, but rather what was said, which had been misunderstood by the addressee at the time.

As in the case of WH- conjunctions, prosodic cues provide additional support for the grammaticalized status of -ē. In example (21) above, there is no break between *conñēṇ-ē* and *uñkaḷukku*, whereas if we were to literally interpret the first half as a tag question, we would expect either a pause or deceleration at that juncture. Moreover, the utterance is characterized by a single, rather than a two-part, intonation contour. While normal intonation for the tag -ē is rising-falling, the intonation for (21) is mid-high and level throughout, rising only at the end of the sentence to signal the Yes-no question. On the basis of this and the other types of evidence mentioned, it is clear that the suffix -ē must be accorded the status of a full-fledged relativizer.

6. FROM MORE OR LESS PRAGMATIC: IMPLICATIONS FOR A THEORY OF GRAMMATICALIZATION

These observations on the grammaticalization of TRQs and RTags in Tamil lend support to Givón's claim (1979) that "[subordinated] constructions ar[ise] diachronically, via the process of syntacticization, from looser, conjoined, paratactic constructions" (p.222). The RQ strategies examined here can be characterized as moving from what Givón calls a 'pragmatic' towards a more 'syntactic' mode of communication (cf. Table 1).

Table 1 *The pragmatic vs. the syntactic mode of communication (adapted from Givón 1979:223)*

Pragmatic Mode	Syntactic Mode
• loose conjunction	• tight subordination
• topic-comment structure	• subject-predicate structure
• slow rate of delivery under several intonation contours	• fast rate of delivery under a single intonation contour
• no use of grammatical morphology	• elaborate use of grammatical morphology

The 'pragmatic mode' roughly characterizes the discourse-organizational use of RQs described in Section 4, which relies, as we have seen, on loose topic-comment structures delivered under separate intonation contours and conjoined primarily by virtue of their juxtaposition in the narrative sequence. In contrast, elements such as *ēṇṇā* and -ē subordinate one clause to another, unite pairs of clauses under a single intonation contour, and have themselves evolved into grammatical morphology — in short, display features of the 'syntactic mode'. As Givón himself cautions, these labels represent but two poles at the extremes of a continuum; there exist numerous intermediate possibilities (particularly with regard to intonation), and more than one 'stage' may be attested simultaneously at any given point in the history of a language. Thus the Tamil data provide evidence for the view that grammatical elements develop as means of encoding basic discourse-pragmatic functions, such as focus, topic-comment, anaphora, and attribution. Given the primacy of these concerns in oral communication, it indeed seems to be the case, as DuBois (1987) claims, that "grammar codes best what speakers do most".

To summarize, the direction of development which best accounts for the Tamil data described here takes as its point of departure the interactive use of rhetorical questions in narration, i.e. to evoke listener involvement in the events of the story. I have suggested that the narrator's desire to maintain control of the discourse results in the constraining of the listener's right to respond, a fact which appears to have contributed critically to the conventionalization of the strategy at the expense of its interactive value. At the same time, each RQ type has its own expressive character: The persuasive force of the CRQ, the suspenseful nature of the TRQ, the use of RTags to create an aura of complicity. As the latter two types begin to develop textual functions based on their cataphoric and anaphoric natures, respectively, increased usage inevitably results in *pragmatic unmarking*, or the gradual diminishing of their

expressive impact. Via a reanalysis on the textual level, TRQs and RTags develop as cohesive devices in tandem with the clauses which they introduce. This, in turn, leads to their ever-increasing specialization as grammatical markers of conjunction and subordination. By the time they arrive at the final stage, the question forms have lost their marked, stylistic value; they are no longer interpreted as questions on any level. The process is gradual, however, and it is less appropriate to speak of discrete "stages" than it is of points along a continuum which allow for considerable synchronic overlap of function.

Thus we may speak of an overall extension of the function of TRQs and RTags, from the pragmatic (interactive/expressive) level to the textual (organizational) level to autonomous clause-level grammar. If this analysis is correct, it is evidence that the process of grammaticalization, defined in general terms as the means by which new grammatical elements come into being, is not 'unidirectional' in the sense proposed by Traugott. That is, subjective, pragmatic-based meanings are not always late concomitants of grammaticalization; rather, as we have seen, they may constitute the very roots of grammar.

In concluding, I return to the questions raised at the outset of this paper. While a great deal more research is clearly necessary before we can venture any conclusions as to the relative importance of discourse-grammaticalizing, as opposed to lexical-grammaticalizing, strategies in the languages of the world, or even within a particular language, it is likely that discourse-based grammaticalization will be found to play a more important role than has been suspected up until now. Given the level of sophistication achieved in the field of historical semantics as opposed to the relative newness and lack of a consistent methodology which, unfortunately, has characterized most studies of discourse-related phenomena to date, it is only natural that we, as linguists, should have focused most on what we can talk about most easily: e.g. the study of change in meaning of individual words. Yet the fact that natural language use is necessarily situated in the context of some larger discourse means that it is subject to manipulation for discourse-pragmatic ends. In some cases, such usage may facilitate a shift in meaning and/or function of the form or forms involved, as in the example given here of the grammaticalization of rhetorical questions. Unfortunately, concrete indications of context are typically lacking in the written records which constitute the basis for historical reconstruction, with the result that factors which might have been crucially influential may not figure in our analyses at all.

Given this limitation, I believe that we are justified, to a limited extent at least, in applying diachronic methods to synchronic data. What makes this

approach feasible is the fact (supported by a growing body of evidence) that language change is not discrete, but rather progresses along a continuum, with old usages co-existing alongside of new ones. It is for this reason that we are able to observe, or at least infer, the progression of stages from the evidence in Modern Tamil: RQ forms may still function (to some degree, at least) interactively, and varying degrees of syntacticization are evidenced in the narrative data base examined here. An obvious advantage of the method of "synchronic reconstruction" is that it enables us to study phenomena to which we might not have access otherwise. As I have noted, there is reason to believe that most discourse-based grammaticalization falls into this category.

What of the mechanisms which drive discourse-based grammaticalization? On the basis of observations made for Tamil, we may cite the following three processes: *Pragmatic unmarking*, or the process whereby a stylistically or expressively-marked usage loses its marked value as a result of frequent use; *reanalysis* of function, e.g. from one functional/semantic component to the other; and, in the sense employed by Givón, *syntacticization* of loosely conjoined structures into syntactically unified ones. Although further research will no doubt expand and refine this list, there is good reason to believe that each of these processes represents a general, underlying force in language change.

Processes traditionally associated with semantic change are also involved in the grammaticalization of Tamil rhetorical questions: *Bleaching* of lexical meaning (i.e. of WH- words), and corresponding *strengthening* of grammatical meaning, as well as increasing *abstraction* away from the immediate context of face-to-face interaction in the direction of grammatical autonomy. Finally, to return to the original point of controversy, it can be argued that the shift to rhetorical from interrogative question meaning, which presumably must have preceded the developments discussed here, is a type of *subjectification*, in the sense intended by Traugott. Thus the history of the conjunctions *ēṇṇā*, etc. and the relativizer *-ē* may be said to involve both subjectification — in the original extension of function from true to rhetorical questions — and de-subjectification, in the grammaticalization of pragmatic devices as autonomous clause-linking elements. This supports the hypothesis that subjectification is a bi-directional process.

Since all known human languages have strategies for forming questions, it is likely that the rhetorical question is a universal phenomenon as well. I would not be surprised if a correlation were discovered in other, unrelated languages between the use of rhetorical questioning strategies and grammati-

cal subordination; the evolution of the former into the latter is well-motivated in terms of basic communicative functions which speakers of all languages share. Clearly, there is a need to integrate discourse-functional approaches of this type with the methods and insights of those researchers whose principal concern has been with lexically-driven meaning change. Yet before this can be achieved, the existence of functional influences, and their potential importance to the study of grammaticalization, must first gain wider acceptance. I have presented an analysis which reveals the ways in which functional influences may operate, both synchronically and over time, within a particular language. At the very least, the evidence is highly suggestive of an alternative course of development, and as such merits closer consideration within the domain of grammaticalization studies.

ABBREVIATIONS

F3ns	Future 3e person neuter singular
Pr3ms	Present 3e person masculine singular
F3pl	Future 3e person plural
P3ms	Past 3e person masculine singular
P3rs	Past 3e person respectful singular
F3ms	Future 3e person masculine singular
Pr3ns	Present 3e person neuter singular
F3r	Future 3e person respectful
FAjP	Future adjectival participle
SUBD	Subordinator
PAjP	Past adjectival participle
Pls	Past 1e person singular
P3ns	Past 3e person neuter singular

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NOTES

1. In contrasting individual lexical elements with the larger discourse/pragmatic context, I do not mean to suggest that the two are isolatable in actual usage: Natural language use is always framed in a broader functional context, and discourse strategies (at least, of the type we are concerned with here) necessarily make use of individual words. The point I wish to emphasize is that grammaticalization — a process traditionally viewed as affecting the internal semantic structure of individual words — may also operate on discourse-based strategies or construction types, in which the individual identities of the words or morphemes are subordinated to the functional identity of the device as a whole.
2. This list is not intended to be exhaustive; other rhetorical question types and sub-types may be identified for Tamil, although I will not undertake to do so here.
3. The examples in this paper (with the exception of examples (19) and (20), which are transliterated directly from the written Tamil) are presented in phonemic transcription, standardized to minimize individual and dialectal variations in pronunciation, while still preserving characteristic Spoken Tamil forms. The system of transliteration is the same as that used in the *Tamil Lexicon* (University of Madras, 1982) and other modern references. Note should be made of the following diacritics: Underdashes indicate alveolar phonemes, with the exception of *j*, which is a retroflex continuant. Overdashes indicate length for vowels, and the velar nasal *ñ*. The other diacritics used — a single dot under retroflex sounds, and *ñ* for the palatal nasal — are standard.
4. That this need not necessarily be the case, however, is indicated by Pope (1976:61, n. 13) who cites J. Ross's example: 'Do we need this raise, after all?'. In this utterance both the form of the question and its corresponding assertion (e.g. 'After all, we need this raise') are positive. A similar example from the Tamil narrative corpus is the following, the response of some loyal servants to a request from their princess:

Nī etu colṛiyō ceyrōmā?

'Whatever you say (to do), will we do it?'

(='Of course. We will do whatever you say.')

The existence of 'double positive' CRQs in no way affects the present analysis.

5. Readers unfamiliar with Tamil should note that the clausal subordinator *ṇṇā*, from Written Tamil *ṇṇāl* ('say + COND'), is not related to the WH- words *ṇṇa* 'what' or *ṇṇ* 'why'. Nor should the compound conjunction *ṇṇā* (*ṇṇ* + *ṇṇā*) 'because' (discussed in Section 5) be confused with *ṇṇa* 'what'. Aside from being distinguished by vowel length, which is phonemic in Tamil, the two words have distinct derivational histories, the latter having existed in its current form since the time of the earliest written records, while the former is a relatively recent compound derived from a WH- word and an inflected form of the verb *ṇṇ* 'to say'.
6. Note that in example (4) there is no finite verb in the surface realization of the clause "embedded" by *ṇṇā*. Clauses with "deleted" or zero predicates constitute acceptable finite utterances under certain pragmatic conditions in Tamil (cf. Herring, 1989).
7. Characteristically rhetorical elements include adverbial phrases such as *varuṣā varuṣam* 'year after year' in example (4), which are pragmatically odd in genuine questions, in that they assert new information. (If such utterances are analyzed as *narrative* in function,

however, then the oddness disappears.) An example of an otherwise incompatible grammatical element is the adverb *kūṭa* 'even' in example (1), which normally would not appear in a genuine question of affirmative structure, in that it presupposes a negative response. For a discussion of similar elements in other languages, cf. Schmidt-Radefeldt (1977) for English and German; Pope (1976) for English; and Grésillon (1981) for German and French.

8. 'Rhetorical questions — the interrogative character of which may be more or less clearly marked — may be interpreted as an appeal to the attention of the hearer. The speaker who uses them demonstrates that he is continuously aware of the hearer's presence' (Gülich, 1970:229).
9. 'By means of his question, speaker S makes an appeal to hearer H, and thereby establishes an interpersonal connection' (Vandeweghe, 1977:279).
10. The implication that the listener has posed the question may also be made explicit. In place of *ṇṇā*, which has been effectively bleached of its literal meaning 'if (you) ask', the expression *ṇṇu conṇā*, lit. 'if (you) ask, saying...', appears several times in the corpus, in contexts where it can only be construed rhetorically, e.g.:

Avar eṇṇa paṇṇuvār ṇṇu conṇā.

he what do-F3RS QUOT say-COND

kaṭai ellām eṭuttu vaittiṭṭu, oru oṇṇatu maṇṭikku mēle avar varuvār.

wares all take store one nine o'clock after he come-F3RS

'What does he do, (you) ask? Taking up and storing his wares, he comes (to the temple) after nine o'clock.'

11. The notion of "ideal listener" evoked here is adapted from Fillmore's (1981) "ideal reader",
 who knows, at each point in the text, everything that the text presupposes at that point, and who does not know, but is prepared to receive and understand, what the text introduces at that point (p.253).
12. For a discussion of the *Villu Paṭṭu* genre in its cultural context, cf. Blackburn (1988).
13. In this respect, CRQs differ crucially from TRQs and RTags, which most typically occur in *diegetic*, or narrative portions of text. This distribution may well be responsible for the fact that TRQs and RTags have extended clause-linking functions, while CRQs do not. That is, unlike CRQs, TRQs and RTags are directly involved in relating the sequential events of the narrative.
14. The term 'information' is used here in a broad sense, to include both nominal reference and verbal assertion (cf. Herring, 1989).
15. Similarly, Schmidt-Radefeldt, in describing "the rhetorical use of question-answer sequences" in German and English, comments:

On the strength of textual-pragmatic coherence (that the same speaker asks a question and answers it all at once) such utterances end up by being one complex declarative sentence (1977:379).

16. A similar analysis is developed by Östman (1981) for the English tag 'you know'.
17. From "Enkō, Yārō, Yārukkākavō..." by Jeyakāntan. In *Guru Piṭam*. Madurai: Meenakshi Puttaka Nilaiyam, 1971.

18. "Ammā Mantapam" by Sujātā. In *Cirukatai Eṭuvatu Eppaṭi*. Madurai: Meenakshi Puttaka Nilaiyam, 1975.

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Some Grammaticalization Changes in Estonian and their Implications

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I am concerned with grammaticalizations in two areas of Estonian grammar, with possible explanations for some of the changes, and with their implications for theories of grammatical change in general. One is the rise of a new category of modality in verbs (*kaudne kõneviis*); the other is the development of question markers. While much work on grammaticalization is of the top-down variety — aimed at the 'big picture' with a broad brush and bold strokes —, such work has been criticized by some for what they perceive to be lack of rigor. This paper is of the bottom-up type, beginning with these concrete cases and examining their implications for theoretical claims, i.e. for what they have to say about some of the broad strokes.¹

2. MODUS OBLIQUUS

Balto-Finnic languages have a number of participial constructions for subordinate clauses of various sorts, and some of these have changed in Estonian (and Livonian, as well) to create what is traditionally called 'Modus Obliquus' forms. I begin by giving a thumbnail sketch of the change, followed by concrete examples and more specific considerations.

The change involves two alternative 'complement' structures with roughly the same meaning; it deals with the cases of speech-act (SAV) or mental-state (MSV) main verbs (*verba sentiendi et dicendi*).