

A cognitive linguistic analysis of Khmer imperative particles *phɔɔŋ* and *coh*

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In Khmer, one of the most common ways of making imperative sentences is by placing so-called sentence final particles at the end of affirmative sentences. This paper focuses on two sentence final particles *phɔɔŋ* and *coh*. Both of these particles have been described as expressing "imperative meaning" by previous researchers, particularly Ueda(2002). However, the differences between these particles have not been explicated.

In light of this, the goal of this paper is to shed light on the subtle distinction between the particles *phɔɔŋ* and *coh* and provide a principled account for their distribution. Specifically, we will argue that the grammaticalized meaning conveyed by these particles follows naturally from their respective more concrete usages (cf. Hopper and Traugott 1993).

Let us first take a look at the grammaticalized usages of the two particles. Although the two particles are used in "imperative" sentences, there is a subtle difference. While *phɔɔŋ* is used with the connotation of "begging a favor", *coh* is used in the sense of "permission".

- (1) cuoj *phɔɔŋ*
help "Help me !"
- (2) tən sɔmraak *coh*
go rest "(You may) take a rest"

We claim that the above-mentioned grammaticalized usages (1) and (2) respectively stem from the more concrete usages (3) and (4):

- (3) kɔm nam baaj *phɔɔŋ* məəl tuurətə̀h *phɔɔŋ*
I eat dinner watch TV "I ate dinner, and watched TV, too"
- (4) mēə nuh *coh* pii ləə cɔŋ chəə
woman that from on top tree "That woman **got down** from the top of the tree"

With regard to *phɔɔŋ*, the original function arguably has been "adding something parallel to the context", and its functional shift to the imperative particle can be explained as in (5):

- (5) Functional shift from ADDITIVE to IMPERATIVE of *phɔɔŋ*
ADDITIVE [A *phɔɔŋ* B *phɔɔŋ*(‘A, B, too’):
accessible parallel element is explicitly/implicitly present in the context
parallel element becomes inaccessible
IMPERATIVE [B *phɔɔŋ*(‘B!’):
exclusively focusing on the element immediately preceding it

As for *coh*, the original usage has presumably been a directional verb meaning "go down" having undergone metaphorical extension(cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and acquired the imperative usage as a sentence final particle as in (6):

- (6) Path of Metaphorical extension of *coh*
verb: "spatial movement from upper place (generally house) to lower one (ground)"
generalized to the movement from one's own sphere to outside
particle: "relieving one's control on the addressee's act"

Based on these observations, we propose that the two particles convey different pragmatic meanings as in (7):

- (7) *phɔɔŋ* is used when the speaker wants the hearer to focus on the activity, while *coh* is used when the speaker releases the restraint on the hearer's activity.

Our analysis thus has been successful in disentangling the subtle semantic or pragmatic differences between the two sentence final "imperative" particles: *phɔɔŋ* and *coh*. This paper further suggests the importance of investigating the way of grammaticalization as it can help us distinguish the differences clearly between apparently synonymous grammaticalized words.

REFERENCES

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