

## Degrammaticalization drift in North Saami

North Saami (Uralic, Saami; Norway, Sweden, Finland) is a suffixing language, but often considered one of the most fusional representatives of the Uralic languages. Multiple sound changes and analogical restructurings have resulted in remarkable variation and irregularity in and across the inflectional paradigms and derivational processes. On the other hand, North Saami also has suffixes of more regular, sometimes purely agglutinative nature. This talk focuses on the latter type of morphemes and their position within North Saami morphology.

More precisely, the focus of the presentation is on occasional instances in which bound morphemes show morphological looseness in phrases where two representatives of the same inflectional or derivational form are coordinated. Although the most common type of coordination is seen in constructions like the non-finite clauses *bora-dettiin ja juga-dettiin* [eat-SIM.CVB and drink-SIM.CVB] ‘when eating and drinking’ and *bora-keahtá ja juga-keahtá* [eat-NEG.CVB and drink-NEG.CVB] ‘without eating and drinking’, it is also possible to encounter phrases like *bora- ja juga-dettiin* [eat and drink-SIM.CVB] and *bora- ja juga-keahtá* [eat and drink-NEG.CVB] where the first members of the phrases undergo conjunction reduction that is usually reserved only for compounded words.

I will present concrete examples of a typologically extraordinary phenomenon: North Saami has more than twenty different inflectional and derivational suffixes that are able to undergo conjunction reduction as depicted above. Nearly all of them have long suffixal roots in Saami, and the debonding phenomena can thus be regarded as counterevidence to the unidirectionality hypothesis (cf. Norde 2009, Lehmann 2015). In Sapirian terms, it is even possible to speak of a “degrammaticalization drift” in the language. The most obvious reason for this is that in a relatively fusional language like North Saami, non-fusional disyllabic morphemes like the non-finite converb markers *-keahtá* and *-dettiin* are prone to be perceived as word-like morphemes rather than as bound morphemes.

As the entire concept of degrammaticalization is still questioned by many proponents of grammaticalization theory, the multiple debonding phenomena in North Saami can be considered an *enfant terrible* of the unidirectionality hypothesis. The aim of this talk is to discuss how the unidirectionality hypothesis can cope with real language data from a language that is more consistent in breaking all the rules in than in following them.

### References

- Lehmann, Christian. 2015 [1982]. *Thoughts on grammaticalization*. 3rd edition. Berlin: Language Science Press.  
Norde, Muriel. 2009. *Degrammaticalization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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*I intend to present my paper in person.*