Recent Trends in Grammaticalization Studies

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Rhee, Seongha. 2002. Recent Trends in Grammaticalization Studies. *Journal of Linguistic Science* 23, 107-128. Grammaticalization as a linguistic theory has caught remarkable attention from language analysts in recent years, since it provided a promising paradigm for linguistic explanation through a crosslinguistic and panchronic approach. However, the concept 'grammaticalization' has been interpreted and applied in diverse ways by the grammaticalization scholars and the foci of interest also changed through time. This paper provides a historical overview of the development of the grammaticalization scholarship, introduces central issues at different periods, including those that are currently in active discussion, and provides a projection as to the trends of the scholarship in the future. The focal issues in the current trends include the topics addressing unidirectionality, semantic change mechanisms, lexicalization, and usage-based approach, among others. **(Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)**

1. Introduction

In the grammaticalization scholarship which caught considerable attention of the linguists in recent years, the notion of 'grammaticalization' is typically defined as any change of a linguistic form that can be characterized as one along the cline of grammaticality, i.e., from lexical to grammatical, or from the less grammatical to the more grammatical extremes.

The defining characteristics of grammaticalization that sets this approach apart from all others are that the approach is panchronic, interdisciplinary, explanatory, and cognitive. By 'panchronic', it is meant to subsume diachrony and synchrony. By 'interdisciplinary', it is meant to include all subdisciplines of linguistics, such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and discourse as well as all disciplines that have bearings with linguistics, such as ethnography, history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, *inter alia.* By 'explanatory', it is meant to search for 'explanation' *per se* of significant linguistic phenomena, unlike alleged 'explanations' as conceived in other approaches, where explanations are typically discipline-internal, thus theory-dependent. By 'cognitive' it is meant to emphasize the role of language users, i.e., humans, in the course of language change, where humans employ various cognitive strategies in linguistic interaction, which effect language change in the long run.

This paper is designed to provide a brief historical overview of the grammaticalization approaches and bring scholastic attention to the recent trends in the framework, in order to stimulate research interests in this powerful explanatory framework.

2. Historical Review

Current trends in grammaticalization are no doubt the result of historical development. Therefore, a cursory overview of the grammaticalization studies over the historical dimension is in order.

2.1 Pre-19th Century

Scholars in all ages seem to have had their interest in the language change, and in particular, in the 'secrets' of words, which stimulated the exploration in etymology. Therefore, seeds of grammaticalization studies might date back to the time immemorial, albeit lack or absence of historical data prevents us from providing material evidence as to the fact. However, even in written records, the remarks or ideas that may

be viewed as resembling basic tenets of the modern grammaticalization studies date back to considerably old days. For example, as early as in cerca 800 Smaragdus made reference to the grammatical category 'adverb' as "a vast whirlpool" where all sorts of linguistic garbage "lie drowned" (Michael 1970). In the Orient of the 14th century, Zhou (1271-1368) remarked that all empty words were derived from the content words, which remarkably resembles statements of the modern grammaticalization scholars. Similarly in the 18th century, Condillac(1715-1780) and Rousseau(1712-1778) remarked that all grammatical complexity and abstract words were derived from concrete words. This made great influence on language scholars of the time and of the later times.

2.2 19th Century

In the 19th century historical linguistics faces a new phase with Horn Tooke(1736-1812), who is considered 'the father of grammaticalization studies'. He said that all secrets of words lie in their etymology; e.g. adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions all come from the 'necessary' words such as nouns and verbs through 'mutilation'. Inflectional and derivational forms are treated by him as fragments of earlier independent words agglutinated to the root word (Robins 1979[1967]).

Franz Bopp(1791-1867) strongly insisted that grammaticalization perspective is essential in studying linguistic change of Indo-European languages. He presented numerous examples of the development along the cline of grammaticality, i.e. from lexical to auxiliaries and affixes and further to inflections. August Wilhelm von Schlegel(1767-1845) presented a number of seminal thoughts, which are called by Heine *et al.* (1991) as 'the paper-money theory', the essence of which is that words are stripped of their semantic content in order to facilitate their circulation in a language community as if money must lose its material value to ensure wide circulation.

Karl Vilhelm von Humboldt(1767-1835) supported Horne Tooke's claim that word classes such as prepositions and conjunctions have

their origin in real words denoting objects, and presented the widely known four-stage evolution of means employed for achieving grammatical designations as in the following (Humboldt 1825:66).

(1) Stage I: Pragmatic Stage
      Stage II: Syntactic Stage
      Stage III: Cliticization Stage
      Stage IV: Morphological Stage

This four-stage language model is known as the 'agglutination theory' or 'coalescence theory' (*a la* Jespersen 1922: 376) and is closely related to the three-stage language typology; i.e., Stages I and II for isolating languages, Stage III for agglutinating languages, and Stage IV for inflectional languages.

Franz Wüllner claimed that designations for all non-perceptible concepts are derived from perceptible concepts (Wüllner 1831), presenting examples that include instances of the development from an independent word to an inflection, e.g., from an auxiliary verb to a tense inflection, or from a self-standing pronoun to a bound personal ending. He also discussed the transition from periphrastic constructions to tense markers (Wüllner 1831, as cited in Heine *et al.* 1991: 7).

In America, William Dwight Whitney (1875) presented a semantic change theory built on the two key notions of 'transfer' and 'extension', which lead to a movement in the whole vocabulary from the designation of what is coarser, grosser, more material, to the designation of what is finer, more abstract and conceptual.

Georg von der Gabelentz in the late 19th century characterized grammaticalization as a process of *Verbleichung* (bleaching), and presented two driving forces of grammaticalization, i.e., *Bequemlichkeitstrieb* (ease) and *Deutlichkeitstrieb* (distinctness) (Gabelentz 1901[1891]).

2.3 20th Century (-1970)

The 20th century witnessed the great advancement of the grammaticalization studies, especially marked by Antoine Meillet(1866-1936), who first used the term 'grammaticalisation' in Meillet (1912:133). He insisted that there is no *a priori* grammar, a conviction that led him to using 'grammatical' only instead of 'grammar' in his book, because, he thought, the latter presupposes existence of 'grammar' as an entity. He viewed grammaticalization as a process whereby principal words (*mot principax*) change into secondary words (*mots accessoires*) by such mechanisms as *affaiblissement* (weakening) and *expression intense* (strengthened expression). He also presented the notion *renouvellement* (renewal), whereby new forms come in to replace the old weakened items.

In the middle of the 20th century two prominent grammaticalization students stood out; Jerzy Kurylowicz and Emile Benveniste. Kurylowicz's (1975[1965]) definition of grammaticalization is most widely subscribed to among the modern grammaticalization scholars. Benveniste refused to use the term 'grammaticalization' and instead used 'auxiliation'. He presented two key notions of 'innovating mutation' and 'conservative mutation', which largely correlate with Meillet's analogy and grammaticalization.

2.4 Since 1970

Grammaticalization theory changes its dimension from the 1970s. Previously the approach was largely viewed as one belonging to the linguistic subdiscipline of historical linguistics. However, from this time it was viewed from a very different perspective, as one that provides most powerful explanation for linguistic phenomena of various sorts. This period is marked by many notable conferences and symposia and prolific research as to the framework itself and various examples found in individual or across languages.

2.4.1 Notable Conferences & Symposia

There were numerous conferences and symposia during this period, some of which were solely devoted to grammaticalization research and while others were of major components of the conference or symposium. Of special importance are as follows.

(2)   a. 1988 Grammaticalization Symposium, The University of Oregon at Eugene

        b. 1988 Berkeley Linguistics Society, University of California, Berkeley

        c. 1993 Japan English Linguistic Society annual meeting

        d. 1995 Linguistics Institute, Linguistic Society of America, University of New Mexico

These conferences/symposia and institute made landmarks in the grammaticalization studies, in that the theory became more refined; more supporting and contradicting examples were presented and examined; increased the population subscribing to this framework in academia; and perhaps most importantly, produced publications that became indispensible references for grammaticalization students. For example, the 1988 Grammaticalization Symposium (2a) produced two volume conference publication *Approaches to Grammaticalization* in 1991, encompassing both theory and practice. The 1988 Berkeley Linguistics Society annual meeting (2b) produced its conference proceedings *BLS* 14. The 1993 annual meeting of Japan English Linguistic Society (2c) produced *Studies in Japanese Grammaticalization* in 1998. Summer institute organized by Linguistic Society of America held at University of New Mexico in 1995 (3d) did not produce any publication, since it was a two-month institute for lecturing, unlike conferences. However, this Institute greatly increased the number of the grammaticalization students, and thus made considerable contribution to the field.

2.4.2 Notable Scholars

This period is marked by many notable grammaticalization scholars, including Greenberg, Antilla, Heine, Lehmann, Givón, Hopper, Bybee, Traugott, *inter alios*. The contributions made by these scholars are truly revolutionary. Due to the fact that description of their individual research and its contribution is not possible on a limited space here, the major issues addressed by these scholars are briefly discussed below (cf. their works under their names in the references).

2.4.3 Central Issues

Attracted by Givón's now axiomatic statement that today's morphology is yesterday's syntax (Givón 1971:413), people began to see beyond individual morphemes or lexemes in grammaticalization studies. They broadened their view to encompass syntax and morphology, and later syntax and discourse, etc. This led to the broadening of research scope among the subdisciplines of linguistics.

Traditionally people had misconceptions that language has its own life apart from its users, and that it proceeds to change on its own. However, functionalists persuasively argued that language cannot be separated from its users and thus all linguistic phenomena must be approached in such a way that takes into consideration human cognition operative in the language use. From this perspective, linguistic structure, or grammar, is a product of human cognitive strategies, and likewise, language change is also due to human cognitive strategies involved in human interaction.

Heine and his colleagues, and notably Heine (1997), presented claims that grammaticalization provides the best framework for explanation of linguistic phenomena. They differentiate weak explanations from strong explanations and argue that theory-internal or discipline-internal explanations are not, or not strong, explanations. They emphasized the importance of independently established proof/support for explanation of linguistic phenomena, and argued that such proof/support is best presented by research from the grammaticalization perspective.

Many scholars working in this paradigm, including Greenberg, Heine,

Bybee, and many others, made effort to establish language universals. Their large scale projects, such as Stanford Project on Language Universals under the leadership of Ferguson and Greenberg, Cologne Project on Language Universals and Typology led by Seiler, and the GRAMCATS research by Bybee and her colleagues, significantly increased the understanding of languages and language universals, and the extent of the linguistic implications of typological relatedness.

Crucial to the approach by grammaticalization is the view of grammar. Previously, notably in the Saussurean tradition, grammar is considered to be 'stasis' (*contra* change) which presupposes existence of an entity called 'grammar'. However, grammaticalization students view the grammar as something non-fixed, fluid system filled with fuzziness across categories and even within categories. An extreme position is that there is no such thing as grammar; there is only grammaticalization, as well illustrated in the following excerpt about Emergent Grammar.

> (3)　The notion of Emergent Grammar is meant to suggest that structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse as much as it shapes discourse in an on-going process. Grammar is hence not to be understood as a pre-requisite for discourse, a prior possession attributable in identical form to both speaker and hearer. Its forms are not fixed templates, but are negotiable in face-to-face interaction in ways that reflect the individual speakers' past experience of these forms, and their assessment of the present context, including especially their interlocutors, whose experiences and assessments may be quite different. Moreover, the term Emergent Grammar points to a grammar which is not abstractly formulated and abstractly represented, but always anchored in the specific concrete form of an utterance. (Hopper 1987: 142)

Another important trend in the grammaticalization studies during this period is the increased interest in defining mechanisms and characteristics of semantic change of linguistic forms, especially grammatical forms. Among the leading scholars is Elizabeth Traugott, who presented semantic-pragmatic tendencies of semantic change, where the notion 'subjectification' was invoked. This tradition was widely followed by grammaticalization scholars in later research.

3. New Trends and Status Quo

Past several years, i.e., from around the turn of the new millenium, exhibited certain notable trends in the grammaticalization studies. The trends in grammaticalization studies may be divided into following three stages of major research interests (*a la* Wischer & Diewald 2002).

> (4)　　Stage 1: Sources of grammatical morphemes
> 　　　　Stage 2: Borderline phenomena
> 　　　　Stage 3: Reflections

In other words, earlier studies on grammaticalization, i.e., Stage I, heavily focused on identifying sources of grammatical morphemes. In Stage II, much research devoted to exploring borderline phenomena as to whether these should be included in the scope of grammaticalization studies, and as to how grammaticalization should be defined in the light of that. More recently, considerable focus was laid on the framework itself, evaluating it in the theoretical context.

3.1 Conferences & Symposia

Of special importance are several conferences and symposia in this period and their resultant publication[1], including the 1995 Symposium on

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1) The year 1995 set a milestone in the grammaticalization studies, with these memorable symposia in addition to the Linguistics Institute as mentioned in 2.4.1.

Grammaticalization as the 28th annual meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea in Leiden; the 6th Rice Biennial Symposium on Language held at Rice University in 1995; the 1999 New Reflections on Grammaticalization I Conference held in Potsdam; the 2002 Adpositions of Movement Conference held at Catholic University of Leuven; and the 2002 New Reflections on Grammaticalization II held at University of Amsterdam. Selected papers from these conferences/symposia were published as *The Limits of Grammaticalization,* 1998, John Benjamins; *Usage Based Models of Language,* 2000. CSLI; *New Reflections on Grammaticalization,* 2002, John Benjamins; and publications from the last two are forthcoming.

3.2 Central Issues

Central issues addressed by grammaticalization scholars at this period may come under three major areas; limits, usage, and semantic change.

3.2.1 Limits

Since its incipient stage, grammaticalization scholars paid due attention to the borderline phenomena, which are hard to categorize as either grammaticalization or something else. Especially four major issues were focused under this heading.

3.2.1.1 Grammaticalization vs. Lexicalization

It has been often pointed out that there is blurry distinction between lexical process and grammatical process. In English the following is an example *par excellence* of grammaticalization.

　　(5) a, *-dom* < condition/state/domain
　　　　b, *-hood* < kind, quality

Examples in (5) show fusion of the parts of a compound noun into

[stem+suffix], where the former nouns 'dom' and 'hood' with independent lexical meanings of 'condition/state/domain' and 'kind/quality', respectively, were compounded with more specific nouns bringing forth such meanings as, 'state of', 'condition of', 'domain of', etc. This change of function from noun to derivational suffix was accompanied by a generalization of meaning and loss of lexical autonomy. These accompanied phenomena were not different from the linguistic change from lexical item to grammatical morpheme (Giacalone Ramat & Hopper 1998).

However, a case of apparent analogical parallelism, certain Spanish adjectives ending in *-nte,* themselves derived from Latin present participles, come to be used as nouns, and sometimes the source adjective is no longer used, even though the verb of the original participle is still current. For example, *calmante* 'sedative' is from *calmar* 'to soothe'. Since the immediate origin in an adjective is no longer evident, such forms are completely autonomous nouns. This is an example of lexical items which are the outcome of a process which is unambiguously grammatical. And, therefore, the line between strictly grammatical and strictly lexical processes is a blurred one (Moreno Cabrera 1998).

Another area of uncertainty in the placement of conceptual boundaries to grammaticalization lies in collocations where use context is narrowed, instead of widened, as illustrated in some Italian examples where the verbs *venire* and *andare* are used as auxiliaries with gerundal verbs as in the following:

(6) Italian. *venire/andare* + gerundal v. (e.g., *andar dicendo; venir dicendo*)

In the above example, *andar dicendo* and *venir dicendo* both mean 'to keep on saying'. In the 14th century a larger number of verbs could be collocated with *andare* and *venire* (Brianti 1992). However, in modern Italian the combination *andare/venire* + verb is restricted to a handful of verbs, such as *dire, ripetere, aumentare, peggiorare, consolidare,*

etc. (Giacalone Ramat 1995). Changes of this kind represent an apparent counter-tendency to the general direction of grammaticalization, where the use context is typically extended, as shown in the English examples of use of *will*, which was only used with human subjects as, e.g., in *the king will....*, which later was extended to be used with non-human subjects as, e.g., in *the weather will....* The apparent counter-tendency poses a problem awaiting a proper interpretation.

3.2.1.2 Irregularity on Phonological Domain

In the phonological domain certain problems also surface in the grammaticalization studies. For example, there are cases where certain non-functional phonological remnants are created as shown in the following:

(7) German. *gegessen* < *ge-gessen*

In the above, *gegessen* is the past participial form of *essen,* through a process of *ge-* attachment to *gessen,* which in turn was itself the past participial form of *essen.* With the initial consonant *g* in *gessen,* certain repair was triggered, whereby *ge-* is attracted to be attached. This type of erratic repair must be interpreted from the grammaticalization perspective as well.

3.2.1.3 Grammaticalization vs. Other Linguistic Change

It has long been argued whether grammaticalization separates itself from other types of linguistic change. For example, Hopper (1991) suggested that most lexical changes also exhibit defining characteristics of grammaticalization, i.e., grammaticalization principles, as shown in the case of English *Mistress, Mrs. Miss.* and *Ms.*

3.2.1.4 Unidirectionality

Unidirectionality has been one of the major tenets of grammaticalization studies. However, certain aspects raise serious questions as to this allegedly overarching principle as can be summarized as the following:

(8)   (i)   Is structural scope reduction viable?
      (ii)   How can the cases of functional renewal be explained?
      (iii) How can the apparently reversed metaphorization path in pidgins and creoles be explained?

In the above, the first issue has to do with Lehmann's (1995[1982]) grammaticalization parameters, where one of which states that the structural scope is reduced in the course of grammaticalization. Tabor and Traugott (1998) systematically investigate grammaticalization at the syntactic level with the aim of verifying the hypothesis of structural scope reduction and conclude that the claims of structural unidirectionality need careful reformulation. Their examples contain the following cross-linguistic phenomena:

(9)   a. Spanish & Portugese. VP > IP (reduced > non-reduced)
      b. English. VP-internal adverbial > clause-external (discourse markers) (e.g., *indeed, in fact...*)
      c. Japanese. VP-internal, clause-final > clause-external (markers of turn-taking) (e.g., *-te mo > demo*)
                                    (Tabor & Traugott 1998)

Likewise, Giacalone Ramat (1998) presents a case of 'functional renewal' which exhibits continuity in form and discontinuity in function. It calls into question Meillet's view that grammaticalization is mostly renewal of grammatical forms, by showing that function may change while form is more resistant to change. Moreover, cases of functional renewal do represent a challenge for the unidirectionality hypothesis because development goes along unexpected paths, jumping from one category to another, as e.g., from gender to number (Giacalone Ramat &

Hopper 1998). Giacalone Ramat addresses the issue resorting to the notion 'exaptation' (*a la* Lass 1990)[2].

Pidgins and creoles also represent a challenge for unidirectionality. For example, Keesing (1991) and Bruyn (1996) present cases where developments show a reversal of the metaphorical path whereby spatial meaning becomes extended to temporal meaning, and suggest that such a development was made possible by the already-existing similar connection in substrate languages.

Likewise, Rhee (2002b) presents a case in which a gram, toward the end of the grammaticalization path, survives in many lexical forms, which make the grammaticalization border on lexicalization at its exteme.

3.2.2 Usage

Another important domain that received significant scholastic attention is the usage. Functionalist paradigms always emphasized use/function rather than form *per se*. In this vein of research Bybee (1985) in her very insightful monograph, presented a model of mental lexicon where usage and frequency play a most prominent role. However, in current trends, special attention is increasingly being placed over the role of contexts and frequency. Additional attention to minor grammatical categories that play important roles in discourse, e.g., discourse markers, honorifics, classifiers, etc., was a natural outgrowth from the attention to usage.

Grammaticalization scholars, such as Heine and Diewald, *inter alios*, *contra* static approaches, placed focus on interaction of a linguistic item with its contexts. Likewise, the notion of frequency has become the inspiration of much grammaticalization research. Of special importance is a volume edited by Bybee & Hopper (2001), where patterns of use, word-level frequency effects, phrases and constructions, cognitive

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2) The concept 'exaptation' by Lass (1990) is similar to 'regrammaticalization' by Greenberg (1991). It involves the reuse of what has become totally marginal in a new grammatical context (Traugott 2001).

mechanisms, emergent grammar, etc. surface as important issues.

Since usage comprises important part of language and linguistic structure, usage based models of language have been proposed and have received considerable attention from linguistic disciplines and elsewhere. Of notable publication addressing this issue is Barlow & Kemmer (2000).

In line with the interest in minor grammatical categories, many scholars have paid special attention to such cases as those that had received limited attention, e.g., adpositions of movement *contra* major adpositions such as locatives. This line of research was pursued by grammaticalization students across languages, and their interest was collectively shown in the Adpositions of Movement Conference in Leuven, Belgium, in January 2002.

3.2.3 Semantic Changes

Semantic changes have been one of the major research interests since the beginning of grammaticalization studies. Of particular importance is the line of research led by Traugott. A recently published monograph by Traugott and Dasher (2002) presents a special framework where invited inference[3] is conceived as primary in semantic change. In line with her previous research, Traugott places special emphasis on subjectification and intersubjectification[4], where the notions 'objective', 'subjective', and 'intersubjective' play a very important role, which can be presented as follows:

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3) The term 'invited inference' was introduced by Geis & Zwicky (1971). Invited inferences are conclusions that are (only) conventionally suggested, but not necessarily (logically) implied or presupposed, and that are, nevertheless, taken as if they were implied or presupposed. In this respect, an invited inference is similar to context-induced reinterpretation by Heine *et al.* (1991).

4) Subjectification relates to the claim: "meanings tend to come to refer less to objective situations and more to subjective ones (including speaker point of view), less to the described situation and more to the discourse situation." (Traugott 1986). Intersubjectification, on the other hand, is a similar process that involves the viewpoints of both the speaker and the addressee.

(10)   a. Speaker/Writer selects content and expression of the
            content (e.g., syntactic subject, topicalization, tense...)
        cf. "Objective" language: typically an active, declarative
            assertion without speaker's viewpoint
            "Subjective" language: particularly prominent with
            evidentials
        b. Speaker's/Writer's viewpoints: typically encoded by deixis,
            modality, marking of discourse strategies, etc.
        c. Speaker/Writer-Adressee/Reader Intersubjectivity: typically
            encoded by honorification, etc.

As can be seen in (10), Speaker or Writer first selects content, then encodes the message either in objective or subjective linguistic forms, the latter being marked by his or her viewpoints, and the Speaker or Writer may use intersubjective forms, such as honorification forms. Traugott and Dasher (2002) explain that there are variations depending on languages, as e.g., messages like *I will take you to school* in English do not reveal very much about the Speaker/Writer and Addressee/Reader as encoded by personal deixis, i.e., *I* and *you*, while corresponding examples in French, Spanish, or German may show the intersubjectivity by using such pronouns as *tu, vous, du, Sie,* etc., since these forms, unlike English pronouns, are inherently marked by presence/absence of honorification feature determined by the relationship between the Speaker/Writer and Addressee/Reader.

   Similarly, Rhee (2002a), in his discussion of subjectification phenomena displayed by English preposition *against* presents two types of subjectification, i.e., anthropocentricity and egocentricity. Drawing on the examples of historical data from OED, Rhee (2002) provides the following anthropocentric subjectification.

(13)   Source   Subjectified Into
        REPETITION   OPPOSITION/DIRECTION
        DIRECTION   RECEPTIVITY
        OPPOSITION   COUNTERING

Likewise, egocentric subjectification phenomena displayed by *against* is presented as in the following.

(14) Source   Subjectified Into
      STATIC OPPOSITION   ALIGNMENT ALONG HUMAN
                                     VISUAL FIELD

4. Prospectus

From the preceding description of the recent trends in grammaticalization studies, following topics are expected to surface (continuously) in future grammaticalization research:

(15) a. Active research on under-represented languages
      b. Use-oriented research
      c. Research on (de-)grammaticalization & unidirectionality

Since grammaticalization approaches often seek validity of explanations from crosslinguistic applicability, supporting or contradicting examples attested in underrepresented languages shall be continuously looked for. Also, in line with recent trends of increased attention to use-oriented frameworks, application of use-based approaches largely drawing on corpora is expected to continue in the grammaticalization scholarship. Finally, since grammaticalization and degrammaticalization have been an important issue that bears tremendous impact on the grammaticalization theory itself, and since the properties of grammaticalization often put forward in the forms of principles should be put to vigorous tests, the unidirectionality issue is expected to be continuously a point of research and often of controversy.

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