

SYNTACTIC-SEMANTIC CHANGE IN CHINESE:  
PROCESSES OF ANALOGY, REANALYSIS, EXTERNAL BORROWING

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses some of the most hotly debated topics over the past few years on syntactic-semantic change in a functional-cognitive perspective and proposes a new model of grammatical change in Chinese by providing more solidly-based definitions of such notions as “grammaticalization”, “lexicalization”, “degrammaticalization”, “exaptation”, “reanalysis”, and “analogy” with respect to internal processes of change as well as external ones, specifically, borrowing through language contact or contact-induced change. It will be proposed that this model is constituted by just two internal mechanisms: reanalysis and analogy. Consequently, it will be argued that grammaticalization – which has been by far the focus of most of the studies on historical grammar in recent decades – is secondary. The processes of grammaticalization, lexicalization and exaptation will thus be viewed as sub-classes of reanalysis, while some “degrammaticalization”/lexicalization processes will be more aptly viewed as a sub-class of analogy. The main motivations (if not genuine explanations) for grammatical change will also be discussed, i.e. semantic-pragmatic change, including mainly metaphorical extension, pragmatic inferencing or metonymization and (inter-) subjectification, as well as

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others, such as phonological change. Concerning the third – and external – mechanism of change, it will be shown that the several universals and principles of borrowing that have been proposed remain rather ill-defined.

#### KEYWORDS

Syntactic-Semantic change Grammaticalization Exaptation Lexicalization  
Degrammaticalization Metaphorical extension Pragmatic inferencing  
Subjectification Contact-induced change

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The two essential mechanisms said to account for the appearance of new grammatical forms remain roughly those identified by Meillet (1912) a hundred years ago: analogy and grammaticalization.<sup>1</sup> Scholars working on diachronic syntax try to find answers to the four following questions: (i) “What motivates grammaticalization in the first place? (ii) What mechanisms lead to it? (iii) What are its probable paths of progression through time? (iv) What are its end results?” (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 32). A third and external mechanism has to be necessarily added to these two internal ones: external borrowing, but it is principally the second of these two internal mechanisms, i.e. grammaticalization, that has been extensively discussed and commented on over the past thirty years.

The following issues have been much debated: (i) Does grammaticalization have any theoretical value?<sup>2</sup> (ii) Is there any unidirectionality principle in grammaticalization and, above all, is this unidirectionality of theoretical importance? (iii) Are there “degrammaticalization” cases contradicting the unidirectionality principle, a term used widely today (Norde 2002, Heine 2003)? (iv) Is it necessary to apply the notion of exaptation, borrowed from biology, to linguistics, as suggested by Lass in 1990? (v) Are pragmatic inferencing (metonymization), metaphorical extension and subjectification the only main motivations for syntactic change, and hence the major mechanisms of semantic change?

In this paper, I would like to propose a coherent model of grammatical change in Chinese by providing more solidly-based definitions of such notions as grammaticalization, “degrammaticalization”, exaptation,

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## 中文的句法语义变化：类比、再分析及外来词借用的处理 贝罗贝

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### 提要

本文从功能认知的角度讨论过去几年来争论最热烈的句法语意变化问题，并提出一个关于中文语法变化的模型。该模型为基于变化的内在处理和外部处理，尤其是语言接触导致的借用或者由接触引起的变化的语法化、词汇化、去语法化、扩展适应、再分析与类比等概念提供更具体的定义。

### 关键词

句法语义变化    类比    再分析    语法化    扩展适应    词汇化  
去语法化    隐喻扩展    语用推理    主体化    接触引起的变化