

1. Overview

1.0 Introduction

The central focus of this thesis is an investigation of the phenomenon of grammaticalization and its manifestation in the development and the synchronic status of a number of functional categories in Chinese. A primary aim of the thesis is therefore to see how a study of various functional paradigms in Chinese may perhaps shed further light on the mechanisms of language change and grammaticalization that are generally available cross-linguistically, and also to examine how the use of diachronic information may usefully allow for insightful analyses of certain otherwise problematic synchronic phenomena in Chinese.

The thesis is divided into six chapters, each of which attempts to address the above-stated dual aims of: (a) providing a synchronic analysis of a certain functional paradigm in Chinese assisted by considerations of how functional categories may develop over time, and (b) investigating the nature of general processes of grammaticalization. Concerning the latter goal, each chapter argues for and attempts to illustrate a different process of grammaticalization at work in Chinese, and shows how grammaticalization may have important effects on aspects of surface linear word-order, frequently causing significant distortions of the underlying syntactic structure.

General conclusions of the thesis are provided chapter by chapter and outlined in brief below where an overview of the various chapters is set out. The

basic background framework and the set of assumptions adopted for the thesis is simply a broad Minimalist/Chomskyeian approach with a transformational component (i.e., movement) and two interface levels, PF and LF. As in Chomsky (1993/1995a/1995b), the combination of lexical items via Merge into initial syntactic structures is assumed to lead first to a point of Spell-Out feeding PF and phonetic interpretation, and then derivationally continue on to a level of LF and semantic interpretation. Various other assumptions relating more specifically to language change and the phenomenon of grammaticalization will be introduced as the chapters proceed and as such notions become relevant.

1.1 Chapter 2 and the Classifier *Ge*: Movement and Re-analysis

The thesis begins in chapter 2 with an investigation of the general classifier *ge* in its full present-day distribution. Like other classifiers, *ge* frequently occurs with a numeral and an NP as in (1). However, *ge* is now also found in additional environments such as in (2) and (3) where other classifiers may not occur. The aim of the chapter is therefore to reach an understanding of the underlying synchronic syntax of this functional element and to see how it may have grammaticalized into a functional type different from ordinary classifiers:

- (1) ta chi-le liang *ge* pingguo.
he eat-Perf two *ge* apple
'He ate three apples.'

- (2) wo yao chi ge bao
 I want eat ge full
 'I want to do a satisfying eating'
- (3) ta yi-kouqi he-le ge san-ping jiu
 he one-breath drink-Perf ge three-CL wine
 'He drank three bottles of beer in one breath.'

Considering a wide range of data, it is seen that *ge* appears to co-occur with a variety of complement types, and not just NPs/nominal complements as in (1) and (3), but also adjectival complements as seen in (2) and sentential complements in other cases. In the sense that *ge* therefore tolerates a range of complement types, it is taken to be (largely) 'unselective' unlike other classifiers. Because the output of applying *ge* to adjectives, sentential complements and nominal complements is always a nominal category, *ge* is then suggested to be functioning as a *nominalizer*. Such a hypothesis is subsequently supported via a comparison of *ge* with nominalizers in Korean and English and the observation that certain restrictions on the use of *ge* with adjectival and sentential complements seem to mirror common restrictions found with nominalizers in other languages.

Ge analyzed as a nominalizer is then suggested to have an important aspectual function, often converting non-nominal categories into DP/NP objects which serve to provide either an end point for an activity predicate or an object which can be 'measured-out' in the course of the event. *Ge*-XPs thus introduce a natural aspectual bound to predicates and function to make such predicates telic.

Concerning this aspectual function it is significantly found that *ge*-XPs can only occur with perfective and not imperfective aspect-markers.

The chapter goes on to consider what syntactic category *ge* instantiates in its wider distribution. It is first pointed out that *ge* does not appear to be simply replacing other more regular classifiers in Cl^0 as seen in (4):

- (4) tiao ge/*tiao sheng
 jump ge CL-strip rope
 'do a rope jumping/*jump one rope'

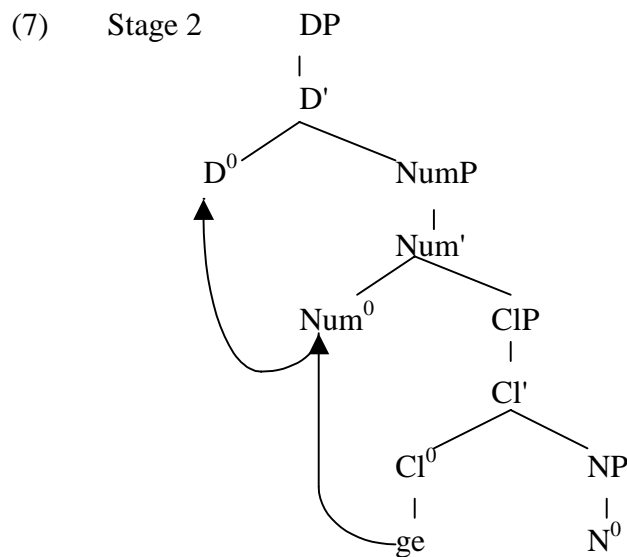
Note that *ge* also occurs with nominals which importantly already have a numeral+classifier pair as in (3). It is argued that *ge* must therefore occupy a higher functional head position in the DP than Num^0 or Cl^0 and suggested that *ge* in fact now occurs base-generated in the D^0 position as a determiner. This is further supported by the observation that *ge*-sequences of this type co-occur with the object expletive ta which Lin (1993) observes to only tolerate DP associates headed by weak determiners if without *ge*, as in (5):

- (5) a. kan ta san-ben xiaoshuo
 read it three-CL novel
 'do a reading of three novels'
 b. chi ta ge tongkuai
 eat it ge satisfied
 'have a satisfying eating'
 c. *chi ta tongkuai
 eat it satisfied

Ge is consequently concluded to be an unselective weak determiner in D^0 which results in non-specific indefinite interpretations of the DP it heads. This further explains the observation that such *ge*-XPs may not occur in either subject or topic positions (which are restricted to specific/definite DPs).

Diachronically, it is suggested that *ge* was originally base-generated in Cl^0 as other regular classifiers but later underwent raising to the higher D^0 position and then ultimately became re-analyzed as an element of type D^0 directly base-generated in the D^0 head. (6) below notes the suggested stages of development and (7) the intermediate stage 2:

- (6) Stage 1: *ge* was base-generated and remained in Cl^0 as a classifier.
- Stage 2: *ge* was base-generated in Cl^0 and also raised to the D^0 position.
- Stage 3: *ge* was fully re-analyzed as a D^0 and consequently base-generated directly in the D^0 position.



The development of *ge* is thus suggested to be an example of grammaticalization which involves a simple three-stage sequence of movement and re-analysis in the functional super-structure dominating a lexical category (the noun). In such a process of 'vertical' grammaticalization, an element is originally base-generated in a lower position A and then raised higher to a second functional position B and eventually re-analyzed as being base-generated directly in B. During the intermediate stage 2 of the process, the element will instantiate both categories A and B, and in stage 3 only B, allowing for A to be occupied by a new overt instantiation of this category. This is the stage assumed to characterize *ge* in modern Mandarin examples such as (3) where *ge* base-generated in D^0 co-occurs with a distinct numeral and classifier respectively in Num^0 and Cl^0 .

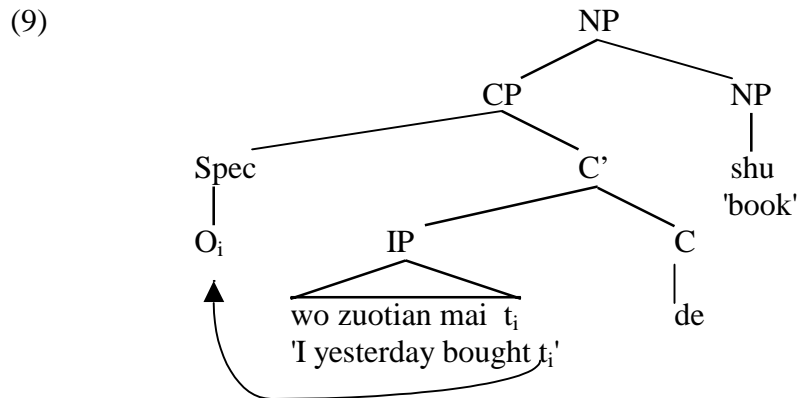
Chapter 2 thus introduces and illustrates a first type of grammaticalization process which results in categorial re-analysis critically via movement upwards in a functional structure and subsequent re-analysis ('vertical grammaticalization').

1.2 Chapter 3: Relative Clause *De*, Tone Sandhi and S-final Particles

Chapter 3 essentially has two major parts. The first focuses on the syntactic status of the functional morpheme *de* which occurs in relative clauses such as in (8):

- (8) [wo zuotian mai] de shu
I yesterday buy DE book
'the book(s) I bought yesterday'

Standard GB-style analyses such as Chiu (1993/1995) and Ning (1993) assign relative clauses structures such as (9) with *de* analyzed as a complementizer selecting a leftward IP complement:

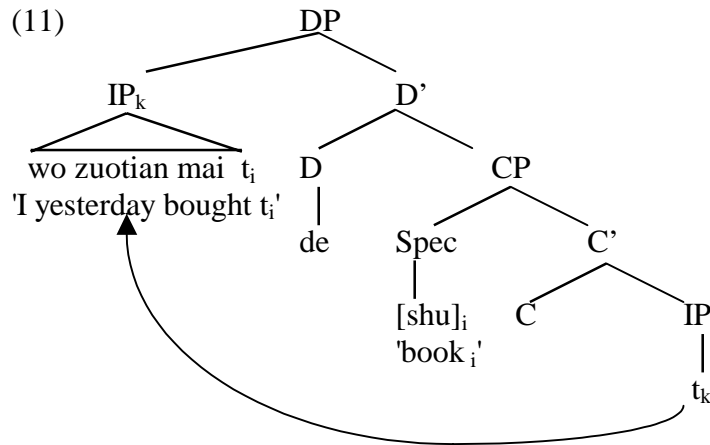


Such analyses however go against the observation that the general direction of selection in Chinese is rightward as in other regular V-O languages. (9) also does not recognize in any way the fact that relative clauses in Chinese are typologically extremely marked and that Chinese is a rare case of V-O language having pre-nominal relative clauses.

Following discussion in Simpson (1997), the chapter then argues for and defends a Vergnaud (1985)/Kayne (1994) analysis of relative clauses in Chinese and suggests that *de* is actually a bleached determiner in D^0 grammaticalized from the element zhi which occurred as an early demonstrative in examples such as (10):

- (10) zhi er chong you he zhi
 these two worm again what know
 'And what do these two worms know?' (*Zhuangzi* 1.10)

It is suggested that in relative clauses such as (8) the head noun shu 'book' first undergoes raising to SpecCP, and then that this is followed by raising of the IP remnant to SpecDP, D^0 being headed by *de* as in (11):



The chapter both draws on existing observations in Simpson (1997) and also provides a whole range of new arguments in favor of an analysis such as (11). The new arguments includes child language data as in (12), comparisons with prenominal relative clauses in Japanese, and tone sandhi phenomena in relative clauses in Taiwanese:

- (12) luotuo chi caomei de caomei
 camel eat strawberry DE strawberry
 'the strawberry which the camel ate' (Chiu 1998)

In Taiwanese it is shown that tone sandhi patterns interestingly mirror syntactic structure, clearly indicating Specifier, head and complement relations. The tone sandhi patterning found in relative clauses is then seen to provide strong support for

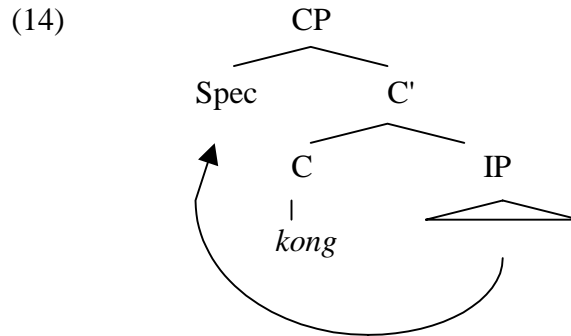
the Kaynean structure in (11) and significantly cannot be captured by the more traditional analysis in (9).

Tone sandhi also provides the link into the second basic part of chapter 3 which focuses on the grammaticalization of sentence-final particles in head-initial languages. If such particles are taken to instantiate functional heads such as Mood, Aspect and +Q/C due to their functional roles and interpretations, their occurrence in sentence-final position is problematic, as in head-initial languages they are instead expected to be located in clause-initial positions. In Chinese in particular, the occurrence of sentence-final question particles such as ma has led to claims that CP is a head-final projection in Chinese and that Chinese therefore has to be accepted as being a mixed head-initial and head-final language. Taking such a view to be rather unsatisfactory, the second major part of chapter 3 examines the ongoing creation of a new particle in Taiwanese, the element kong which is grammaticalizing from the verb 'to say' as a complementizer-type particle in an unexpected sentence-final position as illustrated in example (13):

- (13) A•-hui m• lai kong•
A-hui NEG come KONG
'A-hui is not coming.'

In contrast with older S-final particles elsewhere where the origin and creation of such elements is often unknown, the source of Taiwanese kong is still very clear and the syntax underlying its development is also largely transparent due to patterns of tone change which occur when kong is used. The combination of information

available with kong is shown to strongly suggest that its sentence-final position in fact results from an operation of IP clausal raising schematized in (14) and that the apparently head-final surface form found with this S-final particle actually hides a fully regular head-initial structure:



It is argued that the S-final particle kong began to develop when an original bi-clausal structure collapsed into a mono-clausal form with the verb in the higher clause grammaticalizing as a functional head in the new mono-clausal structure. Increased dependency following grammaticalization combined with the stress-initial property of syntactic phrases in Chinese and also considerations of topic-comment structure are suggested to have subsequently led to an inversion of the original linear order and caused raising of kong's new IP complement to its Specifier position (Spec of CP).

The active grammaticalization patterning found with kong provides new insights into the debate about whether Chinese should be considered to be exceptionally head-final in CP. It indicates that one should not automatically assume that the surface linear ordering of a phonologically dependent particle-head and its complement necessarily mirrors the underlying order of these constituents. It is also

suggested that the kong paradigm reveals a significant route of grammaticalization by means of which head-initial languages may quite generally develop S-final particles.

Finally, under the assumption that tone sandhi alternation is a phonological process, it is shown that the patterning with kong provides strong evidence either for the occurrence of large-scale clausal movement at PF, or the alternative idea of 'cyclic Spell-Out,' and that a derivational rather than a purely representational model of grammar is required to accommodate the patterns found.

1.3 Chapter 4: *De* in the *Shi-de* Construction and 'Horizontal Grammaticalization' from D to T

Chapter 4 continues to investigate the categorial status of the element *de* as it occurs in clause-final position in cleft-like sentences such as (15), and attempts to account for the alternation where the object of the verb optionally appears positioned after *de* as in (16):

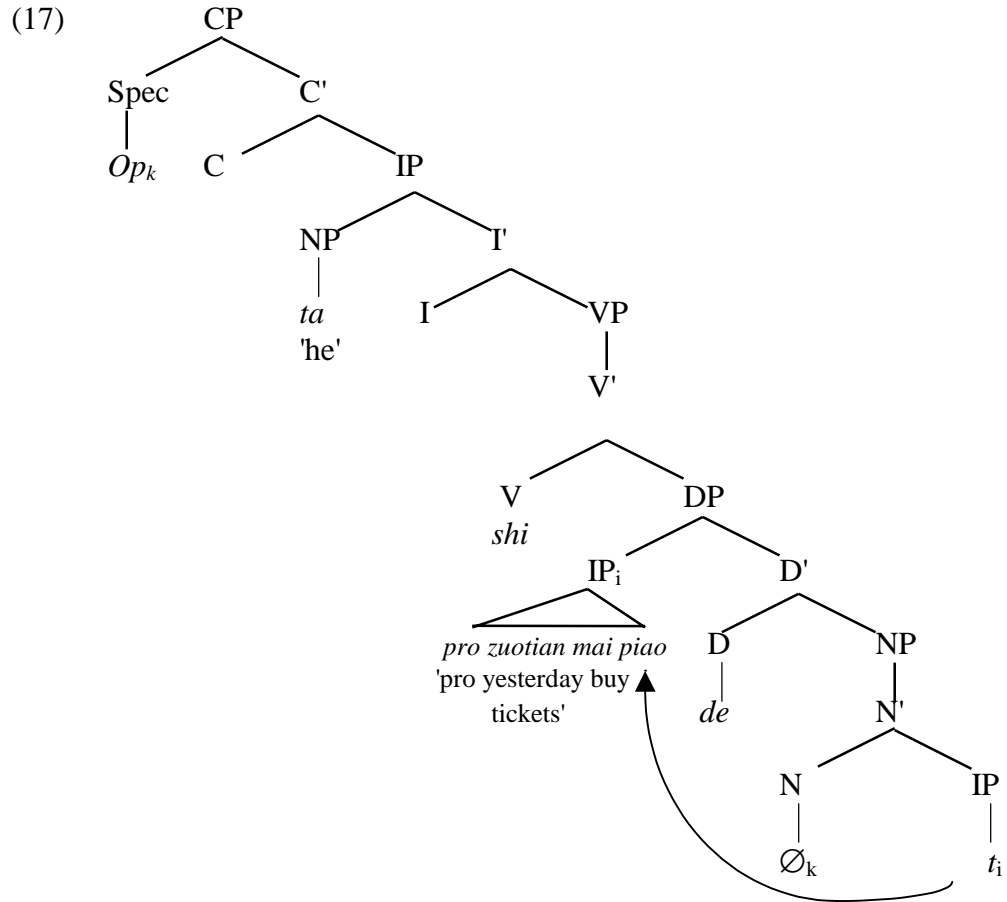
(15) ta shi zuotian mai piao de
he BE yesterday buy ticket DE
'It was yesterday that he bought the ticket.'

(16) ta shi zuotian mai de piao
he BE yesterday buy DE ticket
'It was yesterday that he bought the ticket.'

Most research on the *shi-de* construction has concentrated on offering accounts of how the focus interpretation of such forms may be syntactically encoded

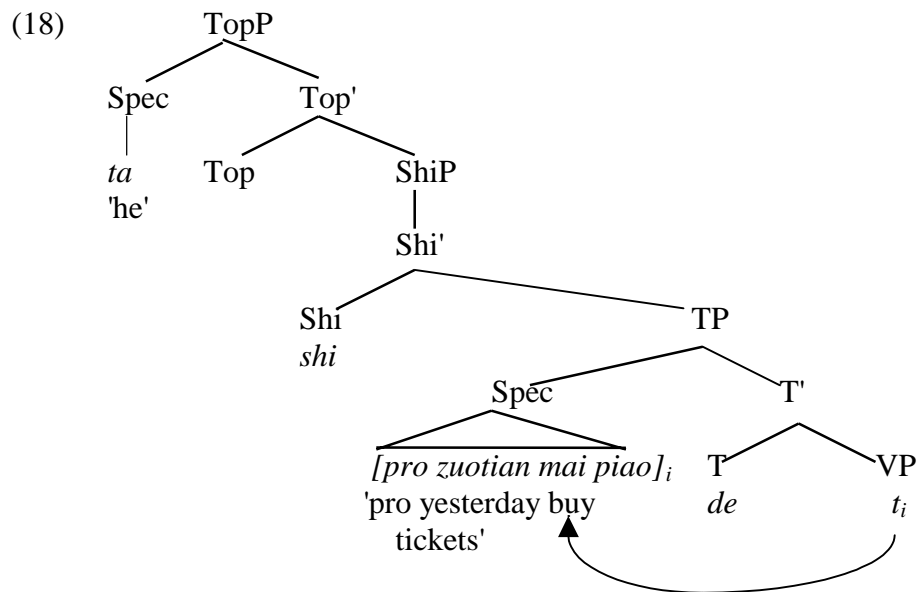
and this has led to interest being firmly centered on the element shi. Comparatively little attention has however been given to the role and status of the element *de* and there is almost no discussion of the alternation in (15) and (16) in the current literature. The chapter suggests that a study of the role played by *de* and the alternation in (15) and (16) leads to a better understanding of the *shi-de* construction and the interesting conclusion that *de* in such structures is currently undergoing a significant re-analysis and re-grammaticalization.

The chapter begins by showing that there is considerable cross-linguistic and cross-dialectal evidence to support the suggestion that *shi-de* forms incorporate a clausal nominalization selected by shi. Assuming the analysis of relative clause *de* as a determiner outlined in chapter 3, it is suggested that the nominalization hypothesis would essentially result in (15) translating into a structure and derivation such as (17) with *de* in D^0 :



Following this however, it is pointed out that there is a variety of other evidence which might seem to argue against assuming a nominalization structure of the type illustrated in (17), notably problems relating to the interpretation of adverbs and the positioning of *wh*-adjuncts and object DPs. The chapter then investigates what possible accounts might be given for the object alternation in (15) and (16) and argues that the only plausible explanation of the wider patterning observed is that *de* is actually undergoing movement to the verb as a new verbal clitic. Considering further aspects of the interpretation of *shi-de* forms in order to understand what kind of verbal clitic *de* might be coming to instantiate, it is noted that the strong

background presupposition present in *shi-de* forms frequently results in a conversational implicature that the event described in *shi-de* sequences occurred in the *past*. It is therefore suggested that as the past time conversational implicature has strengthened over time, this has now reached the point where the D⁰ determiner *de* has now become re-analyzed as an instantiation of (past) Tense/T⁰. Such a re-analysis is argued to explain the fact that where *de* hypothetically raises over the object to encliticize to the verb as in (16), such forms can *only* have a past time interpretation, and the past time implicature can no longer be over-ridden by future-oriented adverbials. It is therefore suggested that an original nominalization structure such as (17) is currently undergoing re-analysis as (18) with *de* formerly in D⁰ being re-interpreted as a past tense morpheme in T⁰ (and raising to cliticize to the verb from its underlying T⁰ position):



The re-analysis with *de* in the *shi-de* construction is suggested to be an example of 'horizontal grammaticalization,' where a functional head in one domain (here the nominal domain) is simply re-analyzed as a corresponding functional head in another domain (here the clausal domain). In contrast to the 'vertical grammaticalization' process illustrated in chapter 2 where an element undergoes movement within the functional structure of a single domain and is eventually re-analyzed as instantiating the higher functional head, in horizontal grammaticalization there is no movement of the element which undergoes re-analysis, and the relevant element is simply re-analyzed as instantiating a related functional head in a different but parallel domain. With *de*, it is suggested that although new past tense elements may otherwise commonly arise from the grammaticalization of perfective aspectual verbs, the re-analysis of a D^0 element as a T^0 morpheme is in fact a rather natural developmental shift. Noting that D^0 and T^0 are both functional heads which serve to provide reference to their respective (NP and VP) complements, in the D-to-T re-analysis it is argued that the definite reference-fixing property of the D^0 -element simply becomes re-interpreted in the locus of temporal reference, the T^0 position.

Finally, the chapter re-considers non-past interpretations in *shi-de* sentences and argues that speakers actually maintain a dual analysis of *de* as both a T^0 and a D^0 element in different structures such as (17) and (18), this having direct effects on a number of syntactic phenomena.

1.4 Chapter 5: Resultative Constructions, Re-analysis and Directionality

Chapter 4 discussed the ongoing re-positioning of the element *de* from sentence-final position to a position right-adjacent to the verb and preceding the verb's object. Such a change in basic linear ordering schematized in (19) has historically occurred elsewhere in Chinese in resultative verb constructions and with the development of the aspectual morpheme *-le* from the verb *liao*.

(19) V Object *de* → V-*de* Object

Resultative verb constructions (RVCs) such as (20) and (21) synchronically consist in two adjacent verbal elements V_1 and V_2 , where the V_2 encodes the result of an action represented by V_1 and the object of the action follows the V_1 - V_2 pair:

(20) ta xi-ganjing yifu le
he wash clean clothes LE
'He washed the clothes clean.'

(21) wo kan-wan shu le
I look-finish book LE
'I have finished reading the book.'

Historically such sequences derived from strings in which the object in fact occurred between V_1 and V_2 . Consequently there has occurred over time a change which seems to resemble that in (19) with the V_2 in RVCs apparently repositioning itself over the object and right-adjacent to V_1 as in (22):

(22) V_1 Object $V_2 \rightarrow V_1 - V_2$ Object

A similar change also occurred historically when the verb liao re-positioned itself right-adjacent to the verb as an aspect-marker and reduced into *-le*, this being schematized in (23):

(23) V Object liao \rightarrow V-liao/le Object

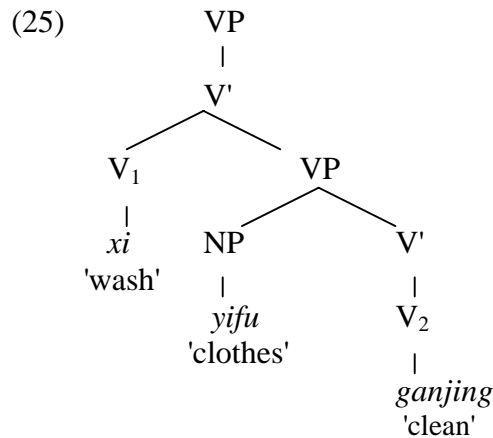
Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the developments in these constructions and attempt to answer the important questions in (24):

- (24) a. What was the reason for the re-positioning of the sentence-final element to a position right-adjacent to the main lexical verb?
- b. What is the current syntactic status of such constructions?

Chapter 5 first considers the case of RVCs and endeavors to see how a better understanding of the ongoing change in (19) established in chapter 4 now offers useful insights into the earlier change which took place in the similar patterns (22) (and (23) in chapter 6). Broadly the chapter argues that the second verb V_2 in RVCs synchronically has the status of an aspectual suffix combined with the main verb V_1 in the lexicon and licensed/checked by an Aspect projection dominating the VP, against recent syntactic accounts of resultative V-V sequences in Zou (1993) and Sybesma (1999). Historically it is suggested that the movement/re-positioning of V_2 to its present position right-adjacent to V_1 occurred as part of a significant re-analysis

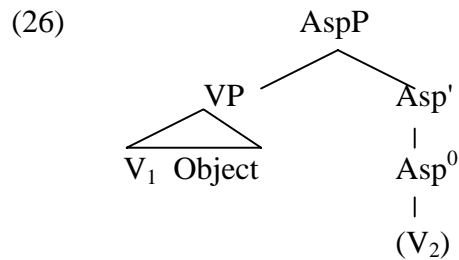
process in which the V_2 underwent grammaticalization as a functional element and became re-analyzed as instantiating an aspectual head.

An important part of the argumentation concerns claims that the V_2 in RVCs is *predicated* of the object, hence that ganjing 'clean' is predicated of yifu 'clothes' in (20) as in structure (25):



Chapter 5 argues that V_2 elements originally brought two discrete properties to RVCs. First of all the V_2 is suggested to have predicated directly onto the object. Secondly the V_2 is also taken to have regularly encoded a telic bound on the activity represented by V_1 just as in present day RVCs, the result-state represented by V_2 indicating the end of the activity depicted by V_1 . In the earliest RVCs it is assumed that V_2 elements were syntactically licensed in such structures primarily in virtue of their predication relation with the object NP. Later on however, it is suggested that a significant increase in focus on the telic aspectual contribution of V_2 led to the re-analysis of V_2 as *primarily* an aspect marker (with certain additional inherent lexical content). This re-orientation of the primary contribution of V_2 in RVCs from being

one of direct predication of a lexical property onto the object of V_1 to being one of aspectual modification of the predicate is suggested to have resulted in V_2 elements being re-analyzed as predicating of the V_1 and its object together. Formally this is taken to have resulted in V_1 and its object being re-analyzed as a VP occurring in the Spec of an Aspect projection headed by V_2 as in (26):



It is argued that $V_{2(ASP)}$ elements therefore came to be licensed in RVCs not in virtue of any predication relation holding between V_2 and the object NP, but solely due to $V_{2(ASP)}$ providing a telic aspectual bound to the predicate [$V_1 + NP$]. A direct consequence of this change in focus of the licensing of V_2 elements is suggested to be that certain V_2 's began to occur in RVCs which did not predicate of the 'object' NP--the 'phase'-type V_2 elements which are found in RVCs only from a historically later time. (27a) is an example of such a phase V_2 zhu 'live' in modern Mandarin which does not predicate of the object NP ta 'he/him' as shown by the fact that (27a) does not entail the result in (27b):

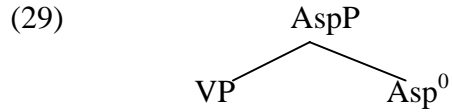
- (27) a. wo liu-zhu-le ta
 I retain-live-LE he
 'I stopped him.'
- b [ta zhu-le = he lived] + [this was a result of a retaining event]

Following this, V_2 taken to be re-analyzed as Asp^0 underwent its critical re-positioning to V_1 . Here it is suggested that the re-ordering of V_2 elements right-adjacent to V_1 was not triggered by any phonological reasons or enclitic properties of the V_2 and in fact did not result from any *movement* of V_2 at all, unlike the attraction of *de* to the verb in the *shi-de* construction. Instead it is proposed that the linear re-positioning occurred as an instance of simple re-structuring, in the following way. It is first suggested that objects in RVCs were frequently either topicalized as old information or occurred in null pronominal form and that this would have significantly given rise to regular natural instances of $V_1 V_2$ adjacency as schematized in (28):

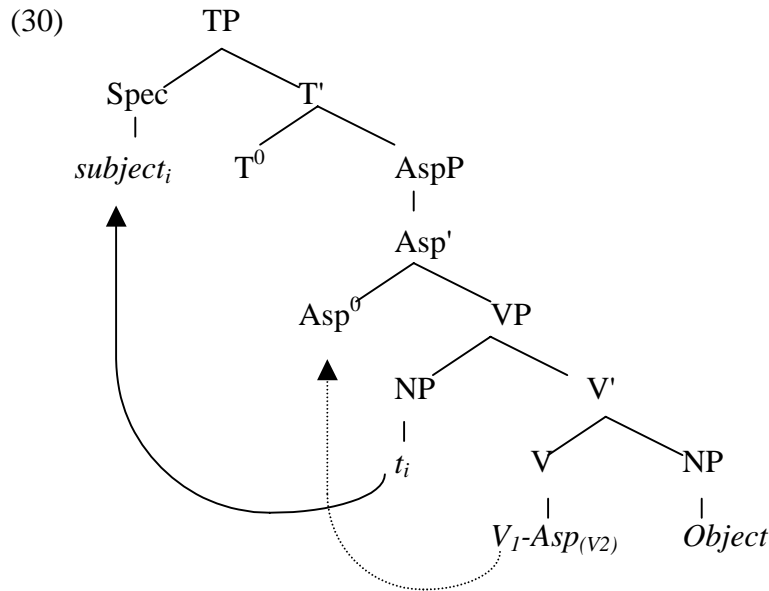
- (28) a. NP_i Subject V_1 t_i V_2 topic structure
 b. Subject V_1 *pro* V_2 object as null small *pro*

With V_1 and $V_{2(ASP)}$ naturally adjacent in this way, it is suggested that the V_2 aspectual head became re-analyzed as an aspectual SUFFIX taken to be combined with V_1 in the lexicon. The motivation for such a re-analysis is suggested to be the *directionality* of selection. It is argued that because the structure in (26) has a non-branching *Asp'* node, such a structure is effectively interpreted not as an *AspP* with a leftward Specifier containing the VP argument of Asp^0 , but instead as the structure in

(29) which has no vacuously non-branching nodes and Asp^0 with a leftward *complement* VP rather than a leftward Specifier:



Given that Chinese is essentially head-initial in its basic direction of selection, structures such as (29) would seem to go against this canonical direction of selection. However, if V_{2ASP} is re-analyzed as a suffix base-generated on V_1 and only checked/licensed against Asp^0 at LF, this automatically allows for the AspP to be mentally re-analyzed as *preceding* the VP as in (30), with the V_1 - V_{2ASP} unit raising to Asp^0 at LF for licensing of the aspectual specification (i.e. Asp-feature-checking):



The re-analysis of V_{2ASP} as a suffix therefore critically allows for a non-head-initial structure to be naturally re-analyzed as being head-initial and in harmony with the canonical direction of selection in Chinese. The chapter thus adds formal

understanding to typological claims that there is language-internal pressure for a single direction of selection and that examples of non-canonical directionality in selection relations may undergo 'correction' over time wherever this is possible.

Finally, the chapter notes that the occurrence of suffixation in head-initial languages is typologically much less common than in head-final languages for simple reasons relating to the linear ordering of elements in SOV-type languages (Greenberg 1978 and Dryer 1992). A further important conclusion of the chapter is consequently the principled explanation it offers for how and why less frequent instances of suffixation in head-initial languages might in fact develop when a combination of grammaticalization and re-structuring co-occur.

1.5 Chapter 6: Verbal *-le*, Aspect and Tense

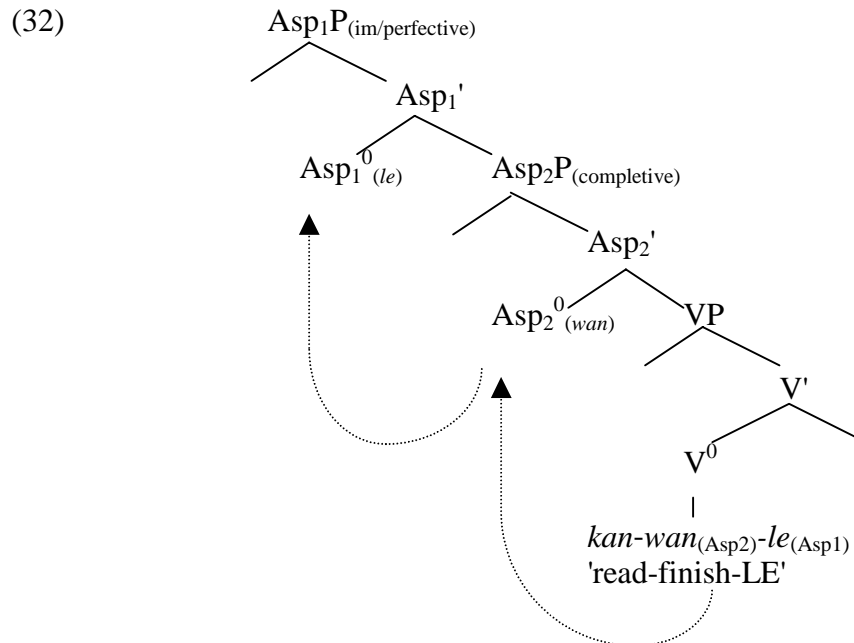
Chapter 6 turns to verbal *-le* and consider how the re-positioning of *-le/liao* relative to the main verb and its object noted in (23) relates to parallel changes observed in resultative constructions. Largely because of the completive meaning of *liao/le* and its re-positioning adjacent to the verb at a time when other V_2 elements also became right-adjacent to the verb, it is concluded that *liao/le* historically underwent structural re-analysis as COMPLETIVE ASPECT similar to other V_2 elements in RVCs. The chapter then concentrates on the synchronic status of verbal *-le* and notes that *-le* may occur together with other overt V_2 -completive elements as in (31). This suggests that *le* has a function different from simple completive aspect in these cases, since an explicit completive element is already present.

- (31) wo yijing kan-wan-le nei-ben-shu le
I already look-finish-LE that-CL-book LE
'I already finished reading that book.'

In order to account for the patterns found, I adopt Smith's (1997) two-tiered approach to aspect which suggests that there are two fundamental types of aspect--VIEWPOINT ASPECT (including perfective and imperfective aspect), and SITUATION ASPECT (relating to the telicity and aspectual bounding of a predicate). I suggest that since its initial grammaticalization, verbal *-le* has developed from being a completive SITUATIONAL aspect marker to instantiate structurally higher PERFECTIVE viewpoint aspect, a view which is in line with common synchronic perceptions of *-le*.

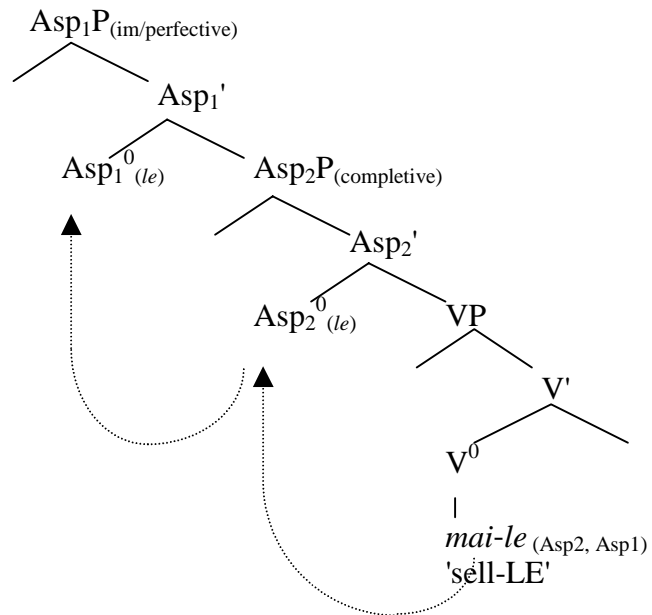
The chapter then attempts to provide a formal modeling of this hypothetical change of *-le* from completive aspect to perfective aspect and argues for a development of the approach to grammaticalization introduced in Simpson (1998b) and assumed in chapter 2 for *ge*. Whereas this approach was initially intended to account for the re-analysis of free-standing morphemes, chapter 6 suggests that SUFFIXES are also subject to further grammaticalization and re-analysis in a highly similar way, and that the model of grammaticalization initiated for free morphemes can be naturally developed to account for this. It is argued that grammaticalization and re-analysis in *both* free *and* bound morpheme cases is critically movement-dependent and results from raising of an element upwards in the functional structure dominating a lexical projection to successively higher positions. This hypothetical

re-analysis of *-le* is shown to have the further significant consequence that it strongly supports the Minimalist view that functional affixes are base-generated together with their lexical host and then licensed via movement to a functional head, such movement furthermore often being covert and taking place at LF (Chomsky 1993/1995a/1995b). (32) represents the structure argued to underlie (31) with wan being a completive aspect suffix checked against the lower situation Asp_2^0 and *-le* being a perfective viewpoint aspect suffix licensed against the higher Asp_1^0 when raised at LF:



The chapter also argues that with certain verbs *-le* may in fact still instantiate lower completive aspect as well as higher perfective aspect and that *-le* in such cases carries two sets of aspectual feature specifications, being sequentially checked against both Asp_2^0 and Asp_1^0 as in (33):

(33)

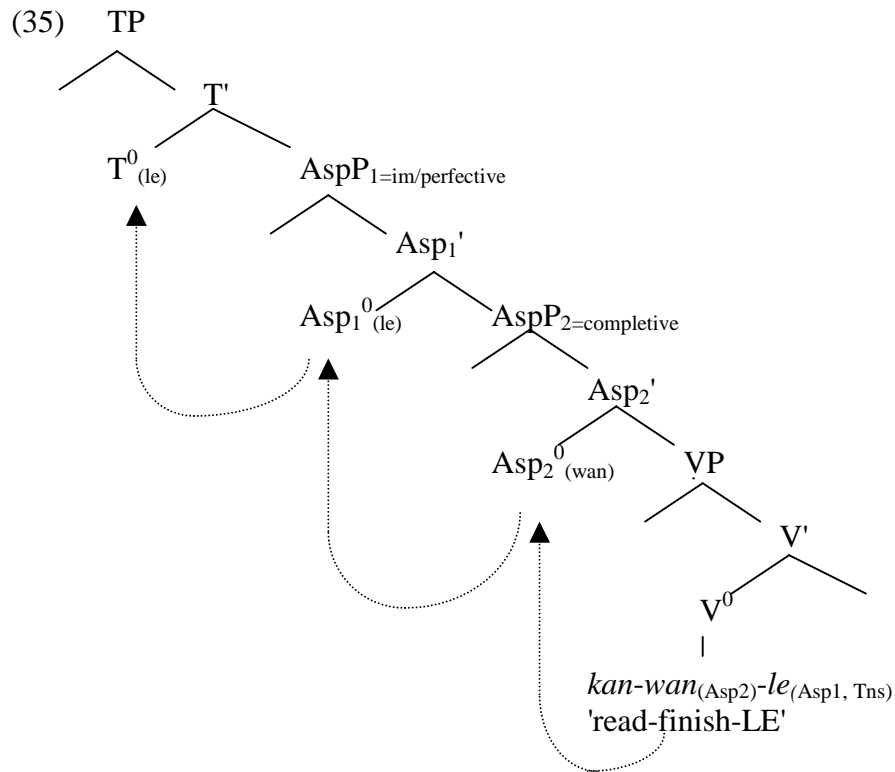


Synchronically then, the suffix *-le* is potentially ambiguous and (with certain verbs) allows for use as both as completive aspect (here reflecting its original source as a completive V_2) and as perfective aspect.

Following this, the chapter attempts to account for other aspects of the interpretation of *-le* and makes the contentious speculation that *-le* has now grammaticalized and developed further to instantiate *past tense* as well as perfective aspect. This accounts for the necessary past time interpretation which accompanies its use in sentences such as (34). Note that the use of *-le* as just perfective aspect should be compatible with future time reference. However as (34) shows, this is not possible.

- (34) wo (*mingtian) (*hui) zai Beijing canguan-le Gugong
 I tomorrow will) in Beijing visit-LE Imperial Palace
 'I visited the Imperial Palace in Beijing.'
 NOT POSSIBLE: 'Tomorrow I will visit/will have visited the Imperial
 Palace.'

While the possibility that *-le* encodes past tense has been explicitly rejected by some linguists (e.g. in Li & Thompson 1981), it is argued that this is largely due to the narrow view that overt morphemes must necessarily stand in a fully rigid one-to-one correspondence relation with a single meaning/function (such as past). Chapter 6 suggests instead that functional meanings/interpretations are associated with morphemes as the result of an active combination process linking functional features and lexical hosts. In such a process it is suggested to be possible for a single morpheme-host to be combined with more than a single functional interpretation/feature (and therefore instantiate multiple functions). It is also argued that in certain circumstances (discussed in the chapter) the association of a particular function with a particular morpheme may be either optional or even blocked. (35) represents *-le* as being combined with and carrying both perfective aspect and past tense features and being licensed/checked against Asp_1^0 and T^0 during the course of LF raising:



Such assumptions and a careful re-consideration of the objections to an analysis of *-le* as tense raised in Li & Thompson (1981) and elsewhere then ultimately allows for a full account of the distribution and interpretation of verbal *-le* and a principled defense of the hypothesis that *-le* instantiates tense. The chapter concludes that this interpretation is significantly not random but actually determined by clear syntactic factors, and that the further grammaticalization of perfective *-le* as tense is one which is fully expected given the model of grammaticalization developed and defended in the thesis.

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