Verb-to-preposition reanalysis in Chinese

Redouane DJAMOURI djamouri@ehess.fr Waltraud PAUL wpaul@ehess.fr Centre de Recherches Linguistiques sur l'Asie Orientale (CRLAO), CNRS-EHESS, Paris

Since the introduction of the MP relegating variation to the lexicon, there has been a growing awareness that syntactic change should in fact be captured by changes in the discrete features of individual lexical items. This insight has given rise to independently developed proposals:

- Grammaticalization: shift "up the tree" to a functional category (Roberts & Roussou 1999);
- Reanalysis as relabelling: changes only in categorial or projection ([±max, ±min] features and elimination ("pruning") of unmotivated structure, under preservation of structural (c-command) relations (Whitman 2000);
- Inertial Theory: syntactic change i.e., change in the formal features of a lexical item only occurs when caused by other types of change, e.g. phonological and semantic changes including the (dis)appearance of whole lexical items (Longobardi 2001).

While these approaches have in common to locate syntactic change in individual lexical items, they differ, however, in other respects. Roberts & Roussou (1999) for example can only account for changes of a lexical to a functional category, but not for changes from one lexical category to another. This kind of change is however well-attested by e.g. the numerous cases of V>P reanalysis in Chinese and African languages. In most accounts, P is not a functional category and certainly not an FC dominating VP.

Roberts & Roussou (2003: 129) (henceforth R & R) take up this problem. Comparing V>P reanalysis with the reanalysis of the first verb in a serial verb construction (SVC) as complementiser, they suggest that the preposition resulting from a V>P reanalysis "remains lexical and therefore can have predicative properties", ie V>P reanalysis is not an instance of grammaticalization, there being no "new grammatical (functional) morpheme". Furthermore, such a preposition is claimed to still have relation properties in the sense of Hale & Keyser (1993) and no loss of the external argument is said to have occurred, the latter being a crucial component in the V>P reanalysis according to Whitman's (2000) analysis.

Chinese offers an ideal test case here: not only are V>P reanalyses attested (e.g. *gen* 'accompany' > 'with', *cong* 'pursue' > 'from', *dui* 'face' > 'towards', *gei* 'give' > for'), but they are likewise claimed to have SVC as sources. Chinese also provides us with a richly documented history of more than 3000 years. This paper examines Chinese data from different historical periods in order to investigate the precise mechanisms of V>P reanalysis.

We will argue that contrary to R & R's predictions, prepositions in Mandarin and other contemporary varieties do not retain the relational status of VPs: they are not predicative and do not provide evidence for an external argument.

- (1a) *Ta (shi) cong Beijing (1b) Ta [$_{\nu P}$ [PP cong Beijing] huilai-le] 3SG be from Beijing ('He is from Beijing.') 3SG from Beijing return-PERF ('He has returned from Beijing.'
- (1c) Ta you ji -ge xuesheng [$_{\nu P}$ hui shuo zhongwen] /*[$_{PP}$ cong Beijing]] 3SG have several-CL student can speak Chinese / from Beijing 'He has several students who can speak Chinese / several students from Beijing.'
- (2b) [TopP Akiu [TopP[VP chi fan] [TP ta hen hui tVP]]], [TopP [VP zuo shi] [TP ta bu hui tVP]]] Akiu eat food 3SG very can do work 3SG NEG can 'Eat, Akiu certainly can, but work, he cannot at all.' (Huang 1982: 164)
- (3a) (*bu /zhi) gei Akiu, wo zuo cha (3b) Wo [,P bu/zhi [,P [PP gei A.] zuo cha]] NEG/only for Akiu 1SG make tea 1SG NEG/only for A make tea 'I only make tea for Akiu/don't make tea for Akiu.'

(4) $[T_{OPP} [VP bu zuo shi] [TP ta hui t_{VP}]]]$, $[T_{OPP} [VP bu chi fan] [TP ta bu hui t_{VP}]]]$ NEG do work 3SG can NEG eat food 3SG NEG can

'Not work, he can, but not eat, he can't.'

To claim verbal (lexical) character for prepositions as R & R do, implies that like the VP, the PP is selected by a v-like head. However, the data above demonstrate that there is no "extended P projection" to assign the external theta-role in Chinese. PPs cannot function as predicates, neither as primary (1a) nor as secondary (1c). PPs can freely occur in topic position, while VPs can only be topicalized when complement of an auxiliary (2b). Unlike VPs (4), PPs cannot be negated nor modified (3a); this fact is obscured within TP (3b) because negation and adverbs mark the left edge of the VP and hence precede adjunct PPs. This demonstrates the lack of functional structure above P, there is no "little p" selecting the PP in Chinese, notwithstanding its verbal origin. Pruning of the external argument must therefore have taken place along with the V>P reanalysis (cf. Whitman (2000).

Furthermore, the crucial role attributed by R & R to SVC in the grammaticalization process needs to be examined more closely. Because like many studies on diachronic syntax, R & R do not provide precise enough a structure for the SVC. While an SVC is described as involving two (or more) VPs expressing a single event (p. 125-126) and is given the structure in (5) where the main verb V1 takes V2P as its complement, important questions are left open, such as possible constraints on the verbs and their arguments (e.g. in terms of restrictions to certain verb classes, obligatory object sharing etc.).

(5) $\left[\text{CP C} \left[\text{TP T} \left[\text{VP1 V}_1 \left[\text{VP2 V}_2 \right] \right] \right] \right]$ (= R & R 2003: 126 (90a))

Recent studies on V>P reanalysis in Chinese within the MP (cf. Whitman 2000, Whitman & Paul 2005) demonstrate that V>P reanalysis is structurally constrained: the main verb in an object sharing SVC à la Collins (1993) does not become reanalysed as a preposition, but remains the head of a complex VP. Instead, it is only verbs in adjunct position or those contained in the complement of the main verb which are liable to undergo V>P reanalysis. This last discovery shows that SVCs are in fact not a privileged source for V>P reanalysis: in Chinese, the primary historical source for Ps derived from verbs are adjunct clauses (6b, 7b).

- (6a) $[_{\nu P}[PPCong tai -shang] tan ren]$ (Zuozhuan: Xuangong 2 from platform-upon shoot people 'He shot people from up on the platform'
- (6b) Xia , zhuhou zhi daifu $[_{\nu P} [_{\nu P} \text{ PRO } [_{\nu P} \text{ cong Jin hou}]] [_{\nu P} \text{ fa } Qin]]$ summer feudal.lord SUB high.offical follow Jin duke attack Qin 'In summer, the high officials of the feudal lords, following the duke of Jin, attacked Qin.' (*Zuozhuan*: Xianggong 14; 5th c. 3rd c. BC)
- (7a) Wo $[_{\nu P}$ jin $[_{\nu P}$ yi $[_{\nu P}$ $[_{PP}$ \underline{gong} zi] yu]]] 'I today also talk to you.' (*Zutangji* 5.057 1SG today also with 2SG talk 10th c.)
- (7b) Wang [$_{\nu P}$ [$_{\nu P}$ PRO [$_{VP}$ gong ren wuqian]] [$_{\nu P}$ zheng tu fang]] (Hou shang 31.6 king gather man 5000 punish Tu tribe 13th-11th BC)

'The king, gathering 5000 men, went on a punitive expedition against the Tu.'

Against this background we discuss the findings in Djamouri & Paul (1997) that some items are prepositions from their earliest attestations on (14th c. - 11th c. BC); yu 'in, to' e.g. is used for spatial and notional locatives and also introduces the goal in double object constructions. A detailed comparison will show that all prepositions - irrespective of their origin - share the main properties listed above, ie PPs cannot function as predicates, cannot be modified by adverbs and negation and display a greater distributional freedom than VPs.

To conclude, V>P reanalysis in Chinese offers us a window on the mechanisms of lexical change and the restrictions governing it. It also illustrates that in order to make meaningful statements about language change, it is indispensable to have a precise structural analysis of both the input and the output structure.