

- (1a) *Ta (shi) cong Beijing (1b) Ta [_{VP} [PP cong Beijing] huilai-le]
3SG be from Beijing 3SG from Beijing return-PERF
(‘He is from Beijing.’) ‘He has returned from Beijing.’
- (1c) Ta you ji -ge xuesheng [_{VP} 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.’)
- (2a) [_{TOPP} Youju [_{TOPP} [PP cong zher] [_{TP} ni wang nan qu]]]
post.office from here 2SG towards south go
(‘The post office, from here, you go south.’ (Lü et al. 2000: 130)
- (2b) [_{TOPP} Akiu [_{TOPP} [_{VP} chi fan] [_{TP} ta hen hui t_{VP}]], [_{TOPP} [_{VP} zuo shi] [_{TP} ta bu hui t_{VP}]]]
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 [_{VP} bu/zhi [_{VP} [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) [TopP [VP bu zuo shi] [TP ta hui t_{VP}]], [TopP [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) [CP C [TP T [VP1 V1 [VP2 V2]]]] (= 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) [_{VP}[_{PP}Cong tai -shang] tan ren] (Zuozhuan: Xuangong 2
 from platform-upon shoot people 5th c. - 3rd c. BC)

‘He shot people from up on the platform’

- (6b) Xia , zhuhou zhi daifu [_{VP} [_{VP} PRO [_{VP} cong Jin hou]] [_{VP} 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: Xiangong 14; 5th c. - 3rd c. BC)

- (7a) Wo [_{VP} jin [_{VP} yi [_{VP} [_{PP} gong zi] yu]]] ‘I today also talk to you.’ (Zutangji 5.057
 1SG today also with 2SG talk 10th c.)

- (7b) Wang [_{VP} [_{VP} PRO [_{VP} gong ren wuqian]] [_{VP} 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.