

A COGNITIVE LINK BETWEEN QUANTIFICATION AND ASPECT: THE CASE OF CHINESE “YOUSUO”

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It has been highly debated in Chinese historical linguistic studies why and how “Yousuo” underwent the evolution from a cross-level combination to a perfective marker with the implication of “low degree (of the action)”. Shi (2004) concludes the change of “Yousuo” is systematically motivated by the rise of resultative constructions. In terms of mechanism, Xue (2009) argues that the aspectual meaning resulted from frequent combinational use of “Yousuo” and verbs of measurable action. While Duan (2012) suggests the evolution is caused through neoanalysis and analogy. However, a more elaborate diachronic description and analysis were not given in her study.

This research is aimed to present a detailed analysis of the historical evolution of syntactic and semantic characteristics of “Yousuo”, based on data from Center for Chinese Linguistics (CCL) Corpus proof-read by the researcher. It is illustrated that “Yousuo” has undergone three phases:

- (a) a combination of the verb “You” and a nominalization marker “Suo” Jin Dynasty
会遇兵乱, (草创子书) 流离播越, 有所亡失.....
'When I became involved in an armed rebellion and found myself wandering and scattered even farther afield, **(there were some of** my outlines of philosophical writing) getting lost.'
- (b) a perfective marker with the implication of “low degree” Song Dynasty
有流而甚远, 方有所浊。
'The water flows far, then it would **end up thick slightly.**'
- (c) a perfect marker which is still in the grammaticalization process Modern
成交量有所放大, 但仍属于小量格局.....
'The volume of transaction **has risen**, but the whole change is still of a small amount.'

This research also proposes there is a cognitive nature of the link between quantification and aspect: aspect can be seen as quantification of action. The further grammaticalization of “Yousuo” expressing Perfect aspect can be explained as a use shift from action quantifier to event quantifier. Then, more cross-linguistic evidence is offered in the present research to validate the cognitive link between quantification in the entity level and quantification in more abstract levels such as degree and speakers’ perspectives of events: According to Traugott(2010), in English, “piece of” originally expressed partitive meaning, then underwent the grammaticalization and became a modifier of degree referred to by its following adjective. While Finnish witnesses a more similar grammaticalization process to Chinese: its partitive marker developed to have an aspectual meaning (Kiparsky, 1998).

Finally, the research gives a further analysis of Chinese, English and Finnish cases. In addition to analyzing differences among the three cases, the research builds a common cognitive link on a higher level, shared by all of mentioned cases.

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