

A Diachronic Study on Chinese Complex Directional Complements “guòlái/come over” and “guòqù/go over”: From the Perspective of the Macro-event Hypothesis

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The complex directional complements in Mandarin have been widely studied. Most research on this topic focused on semantics (e.g., Liu 1998), sentence patterns (e.g., Xiao 1992), acquisition (e.g., Yang 2003), etc. Some studies also adopted the cognitive perspective such as exploring their image schemas (e.g., Ma 2005), but few, with the exception of the author's (2018, 2019) research, chose to explore the topic from the perspective of the macro-events.

Talmy's (1985, 1991, 2000a, b) well-known two-way typology is based on the fundamental concept of “macro-event”. Languages, he claims, characteristically adopt either verb roots or satellites to encode the core schemas of the macro-events (Talmy 2000b: 222). Based on this framework, Talmy believed that Mandarin is a satellite-framed language, which has triggered a heated discussion over past decades (e.g., Li 2018; Shen 2003; Shi 2011; Shi & Wu 2014). Findings of the previous studies not only identified some challenges faced by the two-way typology, but also demonstrated that there are more general rules to express two relevant events and their semantic relations in languages, i.e., the Macro-event Hypothesis (Li 2019, 2020).

This Hypothesis contains three continuums, one of which is the grammaticalization continuum of some elements within one single clause. Li's (2018, 2019) findings have preliminarily confirmed this continuum by studying the 11 simple directional complements diachronically, but the 17 complex directional complements have not been investigated yet. Therefore, to justify the Hypothesis empirically, this study aims to probe into “guòlái/come over” and “guòqù/go over” diachronically. It also sheds light on how and why the 11 simplex directional complements, particularly “lái/come” and “qù/go”, could be collocated with each other and further grammaticalized into complex directional complements (see Li & Liu 2021).

Through retrieving data from the CCL corpus (Zhan & Guo & Chen 2003) across five Chinese historical periods (BC1046-present), this study supports the grammaticalization continuum in the Macro-event Hypothesis. Firstly, it was not until Stage II that “guòlái/come over” and “guòqù/go over” were used together, but they acted as nouns in the single clauses. In Stage III, they developed to be collocated with other verbs, but the degree of grammaticalization was low since most could only encode motion events, with few expressed state changes. However, in Stage IV, they expressed more event types such as realizations, which confirms this continuum. Additionally, it indicates that the Path element regarding space encoded in “guò/past”, “lái/come”, and “qù/go” enables them to collocate together and further be grammaticalized, allowing them to extend other meanings of time and match with the main verbs encoding the co-events. For “guòlái/come over” and “guòqù/go over”, the Path element encoded in them also allows their degree of grammaticalization to deepen. It first referred to changes in space, which could only encode motion events. However, since it can be extended to the time dimension, the two words could express other types of events such as state changes and realizations.

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