

Modelling the typological shift of Chinese: Evidence from 使-shǐ-make and Macro-event at work

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Theoretical background & research target – Chinese language underwent a dramatic typological shift from a synthetic language to an analytic one. The typological change is clear if we observe the evolution in the way in which causativity is expressed from Old to Modern Chinese. Mandarin expresses causativity mainly analytically, dominated by analytic causative constructions with 使-shǐ-make (SHI-cxn henceforth), with the form [NP₁+SHI+NP₂+V]. In contrast, in Old and Middle Chinese causativity was generally expressed by labile verbs (e.g., 树 shù ‘tree/plant a tree’) or morphological causatives (e.g., 食 shí ‘to eat’/sì ‘to feed’). The verb SHI is particularly intriguing because it is the only verb that is steadily used to express causativity from Old to Modern Chinese. Existing research on the diachronic change of SHI has unearthed rich insights into its polysemy in Old Chinese and pure causative use in Mandarin, based on which a lot is known about the qualitative aspects of its grammaticalization. However, there have been few attempts to systematically investigate the diachronic change of SHI with a quantitative and construction-based approach. This study is an attempt at bridging this gap by proposing a corpus-based diachronic analysis of SHI-cxn. Another point of focus is to investigate whether the two privileged semantic relations (*cause* and *manner*) that motivate typological change in the Macro-event Hypothesis (Li 2020), and the five types of macro-event (Talmy 2000), can be attested by SHI-cxn and its development.

Research questions – 1) Regarding the polysemous status of SHI in Old Chinese, what are the distributional features of SHI-cxn across stages of Chinese? 2) Does the development of SHI-cxn support the Macro-event Hypothesis? If yes, to what degree?

Data & method – Our dataset are extracted from the historical CCL Corpus (Center for Chinese Linguistics from Peking University). We follow Wang (1980) in periodization, viz. Old Chinese, Middle Chinese, Early Modern Chinese and Modern Chinese. Occurrences of SHI-cxn are collected and annotated regarding their syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and contextual features. We will report the distributional patterns of different uses of SHI-cxn first, and then use both exploratory and confirmatory statistical techniques to gauge the effect of the above-mentioned factors on the development of SHI-cxn.

Preliminary findings – A pilot study reveals 1) different degrees of host-class expansion across stages of Chinese, for instance, the verb collexemes of SHI in Old Chinese are dominated by activity verbs including 聘-pìn-engage, 盟-méng-ally, 伐-fá-attack, etc, representing action correlating events. In Mandarin, it preferably collocates with change-of-state verbs (e.g., 达到-dá dào-achieve, 充满-chōng mǎn-fill...with) and change-of-possession verbs (e.g., 得到-dé dào-get, 有-yǒu-own) (Liu & Li forthcoming), expressing stage change and realization events; 2) the verbs occurring in the V slot of SHI-cxn are mainly monomorphemic verbs in Old Chinese, whereas from Middle Chinese onwards, verb complex represented by resultative constructions, disposition constructions and serial verb constructions continues to increase.

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