

# 行政院國家科學委員會補助專題研究計畫成果報告

## 客語「分」字語法化的研究 The grammaticalization of BUN in Hakka

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## 國科會專題研究計畫成果報告撰寫格式說明

### Preparation of NSC Project Reports

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#### 中文摘要

客語的「分」字是個具有多項功能的多義詞，它可做雙賓動詞、使役動詞，也可做表目的的標記詞或用於被動式中標示主事者，還可做連接兩個動作的連詞。本計畫即針對這樣的語言現象，從語法化的觀點提出合理且系統化的解釋。本研究認為，「分」的多功能現象是「多重語法化」的最佳表現。如一般雙賓動詞具有之特性，「分」字結構亦可有間接賓語移位的現象，因而造成雙向之發展路徑。其中一條路徑是由給予動詞發展成標示目的的標記詞，再進一步發展成連接兩個動作的連詞。另一條路徑則是由給予動詞發展成使役動詞，再進一步發展成於被動式中標示主事者。本研究為「分」的多義現象提出的解釋對語法化理論提供了一個驗證的實例，進一步增進語法化理論的譜遍性。

**關鍵詞：**多重語法化、間接賓語移位

#### I. Abstract

The polysemous lexeme *bun* in Hakka, meaning 'give' in its basic sense, exhibits multiple grammatical functions: a double-object verb, a goal-marking postposition, a clause-linking complementizer, a causative verb, or an agent-marking preposition. In investigating these phenomena, the study maintains that the various functions of *bun* illustrate a good example of polygrammaticalization. Due to the dative alternation inherent to double object verbs like *bun*, two clines are claimed to reflect the

interconnection between the different functional domains. From the former cline, a verb of giving is decategorized, through a goal-marking postposition, into a clause-linking complementizer; from the later, a verb-of-giving is developed into a causative verb and then into an agent marker. This study provides additional empirical evidence for the widespread observations cross-linguistically.

**Keywords:** polygrammaticalization, dative alternation

#### II. Motivation and purpose (緣由與目的)

Grammaticalization is usually defined as a process whereby lexical items and constructions assume in certain linguistic contexts grammatical functions, and once grammaticalized, continue to develop more grammatical functions. (Hopper & Traugott 1993; Heine et al. 1991) Not only have various principles of the theories in general been proposed, but important studies have also been done to discuss how a process has taken place cross-linguistically from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives.

Among the characteristics of grammaticalization, unidirectionality has been coined as the major tendency for structural properties. The grammaticalized process proceeds along certain likely clines in which major categories decategorized into minor ones. In addition to single clines, some cases of grammaticalization show development along two or possibly more different ones. The term polygrammaticalization given by Craig (1991)

is henceforth used to refer to the phenomenon where a single form is the source of multiple grammaticalization chains, as illustrated by the data from Rama. Givón (1991) also shows data from Biblical Hebrew where relative clauses develop into both adverbial clause domains and complementizer domains.

From the semantic point of view, grammaticalization processes have been claimed to be processes of metaphorical abstraction. As Heine et al. (1991) maintain that the processes usually follow a metaphorical abstraction scale whereby the denotations, operated by abstraction and similarity, extend from conceptually concrete domains to less concrete domains. Cross-linguistic examples have been illustrated by Heine, et al. (1991) and Hopper & Traugott (1993) among others.

Although the descriptions above are rather simplistic of the general pictures of grammaticalization, they should suffice for the purpose of this study, which is to focus on building up grammaticalization clines of a particular morpheme in a specific language. More specifically, the major aim of this study is, through an investigation of a particular morpheme *bun* in Hakka, to account for adequately the fact that a single morpheme may be the source of development in different functional domains.

The Hakka verb *bun* means ‘give’ in its basic sense. The same form can occur in various constructions where it adopts different grammatical functions, as illustrated below:

- (1) a. Gi bun yi gi bid ngai.  
he BUN one CL pen me  
‘He gave a pen to me’.
- b. Gi bun ngai yi gi bid.  
he BUN me one CL pen  
‘He gave me a pen’.
- c. Gi sungyi gi bid bun ngai.  
he give one CL pen BUNme  
‘He gave a pen to me’.
- d. Gi na dung-xi bun geu-e sid.  
he take thing BUNdog eat  
‘He took food for the dog to eat’.
- e. Gi bun ngai hi toibed.  
he BUN me go Taipei  
‘He let me go to Taipei’.

- f. Gi bun ngai da.  
he BUN me beat  
‘He was beaten by me’.

The data above presents a puzzling range of uses. In addition to the only main verb function as in (1a) and (1b), *bun* can appear in four other constructions, in which it indicates different functions. The uses in (1c) and (1f) appear to be in opposites: in the former *bun* is a goal marker, denoting the following noun phrase as a recipient of a transaction, while in the latter it is an agent marker, indicating that the following noun phrase is the one who performs the action. In (1d), *bun* acts like some kind of complementizer, linking two clauses, whereas in (1e), it acts like a causative marker.

With regard to these phenomena, a few questions need to be answered. How does a single morpheme travel from one domain to another? What links one meaning with another, especially for the seemingly contradictory ones? How does semantic change, together with the syntactic decategorization, occur? And what are the essential principles in grammaticalization that can best account for the semantic relatedness exhibited by the polysemous functions of *bun* in Hakka? This project henceforth aims at exploring plausible accounts for these questions.

### III. Discussions (結果與討論)

Like a prototypical verb that inherently signifies acts of giving, *bun*, carrying two internal arguments, has the thematic structure <agent theme goal>. These verbs typically involve dative alternation because they allow more than one way of expressing the two arguments. The dative alternation is characterized by an alternation between the prepositional frame in which the goal is linked to an oblique prepositional phrase ‘NP1 to NP2’, using English as an illustration, and the double object frame whereby the goal is linked to an indirect object ‘V NP2 NP1.’ (cf. Levin (1993)) I argue that it is exactly the alternation that brings out the two separate functional paths

of *bun*. From the former frame, *bun* develops from a full-fledged verb of giving, through a dative marker, to a clause-linking complementizer. From the latter frame, *bun* develops from a verb of giving, through a causative verb, then to an agent marker. It is exactly the dative shift that brings out two separate functional paths of BUN. From the first frame, BUN is decategorized from a full-fledged verb of giving, through a goal-marking postposition, into a clause-linking complementizer. Along the structural development, *bun*, displaying a metaphorical abstraction, extends its meaning from denoting an activity of giving, through marking the thing that is given, to more abstract domains of goal and purpose. (cf. Heine et al. 1991; Sweetser 1988) From the latter frame, *bun* is developed from a verb-of-giving into a causative verb and then into an agent-marking preposition. Due to the parallelism between the conceptual structures embodied in possession and control that motivates the co-existence of the giving and the causative senses, the meaning of giving someone something is transferred into giving someone the permission to do something. (Newman 1993) Now along this transfer-of-control argument, the meaning of *bun* develops into an agent-marking sense—indicating the original object NP, namely the *bun* NP, has done something to affect the subject. This study not only offers a plausible account for the semantic relatedness of *bun*'s multiple functions but also provides additional empirical evidence for the widespread observations cross-linguistically.

#### IV. Remarks (成果自評)

In this project, I have presented a study about a typical double object verb *bun* in Hakka, which undergoes a functional shift whereby it develops its grammatical status. I have further argued that the grammaticalization paths of *bun* are two ways, due to the two typical frames by dative alternation of *bun*. A number of features characteristic of grammaticalization can be found in the present study, which I will discuss below, with reference to similar

phenomena found cross-linguistically.

First of all, in both of the two clines, the verb-to-complementizer cline and the verb of giving-to-agent marker cline, the development is unidirectional; namely, *bun* undergoes a decategorized process in which it loses its verbhood. (Hopper & Traugott 1993; Hopper 1991) In addition, *bun* shows that one form assumes several distinctive functions, from verb to other grammatical functions. The phenomenon reflects what Hopper (1991: 22) refers to as divergence, when an entity, undergoing grammaticalization, results in pairs or multiples of forms which share a common etymology, but diverge functionally. Moreover, the study of *bun* illustrates a good example for the principle of persistence, since *bun*, originally a verb meaning ‘giving’, is moving toward an adposition, and later a complementizer. Or it is moving from a verb to an agent marker. Either case reflects a polysemous morpheme during the intermediate stages of grammaticalization. (cf. Hopper 1991:22)

Another similarity between the data in the present study and typical cases of grammaticalization concerns semantic extension. Along the path, *bun*, losing its verbal status but gaining more grammatical features (cf. Sweetser 1988), extends its meaning across conceptually associative domains, such as from a verb of giving to a purpose clause linker, or from a verb of giving to passivity. Its meaning extension illustrates a good example for the abstraction hierarchy proposed by Heine et al. 1991.

Given the analysis of *bun*, which arguably develops into two different grammaticalization chains, one will find similar phenomena across-linguistically. In studying Rama, a Chibchun language of Nicaragua, Craig (1991) points out that Rama provides a good illustration of polygrammaticalization. Enormous data is presented to show how various chains of grammaticalization interconnected through a common set of morphemes. This study of *bun* illustrates another piece of empirical evidence for the argument that multiple grammaticalization chains may originate in

one particular lexical morpheme.

The two clines developed from Hakka *bun*, a complementizer from a verb and an agent marker from a verb, have been identified in other languages. In studying Newari, a Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal, Genetti (1991) notices that the development of postpositions into subordinators occurred frequently over the last several centuries. Like Hakka *bun*, a specific pattern of extension, from a dative postposition to a purpose subordinator, is found in the Newari data. (cf. Genetti 1991: 229-30) Carlson (1991:217) shows examples where a main verb develops into a complementizer via a postposition stage in Senufo languages. Matisoff (1991), examining Lahu, Vietnamese and Yao, finds strikingly parallel patterns, whereby the same morpheme functioning as main verb can also function as a benefactive postposition or a permissive/causative complementizer. (cf. Noonan 1985)

With regard to the development of an agent marker from a verb of giving, similar observations are plentiful cross-linguistically. Xu (1994) points out regular parallelism among 23 dialects in Chinese, where morphemes which express the full verb meaning 'give' also denote agent markers. Comrie (1976) also shows that the dative functions as an agent of a passive sentence in Mongolian. Thus we have seen that the present data from Hakka is similar to other cases of grammaticalization in a number of respects.

The study, based on the data from Hakka, demonstrates a case of polygrammaticalization in which the polysemous features exhibited by the morpheme *bun* is accounted for naturally. The analysis presents not only an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in the particular language Hakka but also a manifestation of cross-linguistic universals. Yet, two issues need to be investigated further. First, while the study claims two different paths of development of the polysemous uses of *bun*, it does not provide evidence for the relative timing of the various developments. This issue is closely related to

the second one, which concerns the diachronic data. Unlike Mandarin, Hakka, lacking its modern written system, has to trace back to the documents from ancient Chinese. Diachronic data through careful documentation is needed to complete the study. But these two tasks have to be left for further research.

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