

The grammaticalisation pathways of the GET verb [tie⁵³] in the Shaowu dialect in southern China

(oral/poster)

Much investigation on the argument structure and realisation of GET, GIVE and TAKE verbs has been carried out over the past decades (c.f. Newman 1996, Gronemeyer 1999, Diedrichsen 2012, Lenz & Rawoens 2012, Nolan 2012, Tragel & Habicht 2012, inter alia). These analyses give a special focus to these verbs in Indo-European languages. My paper offers a different set of typological data, hence perspectives, from a Sino-Tibetan language called Shaowu of the Sinitic branch, spoken in Fujian province in southern China, which I collected over the past four years in the field. In particular, I look at the polysemy of the GET verb [tie⁵³] 得 in Shaowu, and attempt to explain its multi-functionality in terms of its diachronic development and change in argument structure. I also examine how its different syntactic configurations coerce gradual semantic change (c.f. Zhang Min 2011, Chappell 2012). Finally, I propose a polygrammaticalisation pathway that is unique to Shaowu, and compare it to the GET verbs in Mandarin, Cantonese, English and French.

The morpheme [tie⁵³] starts out as a concrete lexical verb meaning ‘to get’, ‘to obtain’ (as instanced in example 1). This mono-transitive lexical [tie⁵³] has then developed into a di-transitive lexical [tie⁵³], meaning ‘to give’ (as in example 2). This curious antonymic sense occurs within the di-transitive construction, the mechanism of which will be accounted for, and which may explain the interesting fact as to why Shaowu does not have a basic verb of ‘giving’.

(1) As a mono-transitive lexical verb ‘to get’ [S+V_{get}+O]

□他/她 得 到 了 蜀 个 奖。
 xu³⁵ tie⁵³ tau²¹ ə⁰ ei²¹ kei²¹ tsiŋ⁵⁵
 3SG get reach PFV one CLF prize
 ‘S/He got/obtained a prize.’

(2) As a di-transitive lexical verb ‘to give’ [S+V_{give}+IO+DO]

□我 得 □他/她 十 块 票 儿。
 xaŋ³⁵ tie⁵³ xu³⁵ ein²¹ k^huai²¹ p^hiau²¹³ ə⁰
 1SG give 3SG ten CLF bank note
 ‘I gave him/her ten RMB (monetary unit in China).’

In addition, it can also be used as a causative verb ‘to make’ (example 3), or a permissive causative ‘to let’ (example 4), or a modal auxiliary meaning ‘to allow’.

(3) As a ‘make’ causative verb [S+CAUS_{make}+O+VP]

大 家 得 新 姐 夫 向 人 客 敬 酒。
 t^hai³⁵ ka⁰ tie⁵³ sən²¹ tsia⁵⁵ fu⁰ xiŋ²¹ nin²² k^ha⁵³ kin²¹ tsəu⁵⁵
 Everyone CAUS bridegroom ALL guest toast wine
 ‘Everyone made the bridegroom toast to the guests.’

(4) As a permissive ‘let’ causative verb [S+CAUS_{let permissive}+O+VP]

娘 佬 得 小 团 子 去 外 头 玩。
 niŋ²² lau⁰ tie⁵³ əiau⁵⁵ kin²¹ tsə⁰ k^hə²¹ uai³⁵ xəu²¹ kau⁵⁵
 mother CAUS small child DIM go outside play
 ‘The mother let the little child go to play outside.’

The multi-functional [tie⁵³] has progressed along various grammaticalisation pathways to be used as a benefactive marker (example 5), a dative marker (example 6) and a passive marker (example 7), as well as a verb complement marker. Most, if not all, of these pathways are found in some of the world’s languages, documented in Heine & Kuteva (2002).

(5) As a benefactive marker [S+BEN+O+VP]

(□你) 得 □我 去 买 菜。
 xieŋ³⁵ tie⁵³ xaŋ³⁵ k^hə²¹ mie⁵⁵ t^hə²²
 2SG BEN 1SG go buy food
 ‘(You) go and buy food for me.’

(6) As a dative marker [S+V+DO+DAT+IO]

□我 拿 了 个 本 书 得 □他/她。
 xaŋ³⁵ na²² ə⁰ kei²¹ pən⁵⁵ ey²² tie⁵³ xu³⁵
 1SG take PFV one CLF book DAT him/her
 ‘I gave a book to him/her.’

(7) As a passive marker [Patient+PASS+Agent+VP]

□我 得 □他/她 骂 了。
 xaŋ³⁵ tie⁵³ xu³⁵ ma²¹³ ə⁰
 1SG PASS 3SG scold PFV
 ‘I was scolded by him/her.’

It is the aim of this paper to explore these various roles of [tie⁵³] by looking at its syntactic configurations and semantic functions, as well as how they interact with each other. A diachronic account will be given to explain the multi-faceted synchronic properties of [tie⁵³], against a backdrop of typological features belonging to what Chappell (2012) classified as transitional area between the North and the South.