

The Preposition Process of “guan”

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Abstract. The word “guan” develops the meaning of “control and jurisdiction” on the basis of the noun meaning of “key”. The use of preposition “guan” originated from the verb meaning “control”, and its intermediary syntactic condition is “guan+NP1+V2+NP2”, through the reanalysis and extension mechanism, the word “guan” semantically de-semanticized, experienced the process from “control” to “introduction of objects” and then to “disposition”; In the process of grammaticalization, the characteristics of dynamic parallelism, domain-limited, verb pairing are presented.

1. Introduction

In modern Chinese, the word “guan” was first seen in the pre-Qin Dynasty, and was originally used only as noun and verb. Its meaning is rich used as noun. The original meaning of “guan” is “the name of the ancient musical instrument”, also for the pipe sound instrument’s general name. The word “guan” has the characteristics of the cylindrical, slender, and hollow. “Guan” as a noun also has “key” meaning. The prepositional usage of “guan” comes directly from the verb and is the result of the gramaticalization of verb.

2. The evolution of verb meaning

“Guan” is influenced by cognitive psychological similarity or correlation metaphor mechanism on the basis of the semantic characteristics of “key”, and develops the meaning of “management and control” and makes a predicate for the structure of “guan+NP”, which indicates specific objects, or the relationship between people and things. For example:

(1) 所举于晋国，管库之士，七十有余家。（礼记·檀弓下）

In Sui, Tang and five dynasties, “guan” came into grammaticalization by expressing the involvement and connection between one party and the other from the meaning of actor and patient between people, people and things, people and abstract things, “guan” has the meaning of “questioning, interfering, involving” and is first seen in Zen classics. For example:

(2) 自作偈曰、我又谁管你天、谁管你地。（衡岳泉禅师·禅林僧宝传·卷15）

The meaning of “questioning, interfering, involving” is often used in the “guan+NP1(+NP2)” structure. In this structure, “guan” has the meaning of “related”. For example:

(3) 他强自进来坐着，管我腿事，打我？（金瓶梅词话·35回）

Example (3) can be understood as the meaning of “inaffiliation, relationship”. Meanwhile, the “guan” can also appear in the structure of “guan+NP1+predicate components”.

(4) 我不管你盡不盡，更道！（祖堂集·卷9）

In the structure of “guan+NP1+predicate components”, the relationship between “guan” and the object disappears, and “guan” means “responsible, guarantee”. In the Yuan and Ming dynasty, “guan” was further extended in the dual-object structure of “guan+NP1+NP2”.

(5) 我（施事）这里常管他（涉事）些衣裳儿（受事）。（金瓶梅词话·14回）

“Wo” (agent) is a passing behavior, or cause movement behavior, “ta” (case-related) is a willing recipient. This statement expressing specific semantics can be regarded as a construction, which is meant to be “give” and “intentionally give”. Thus, “guan” means “supply, provide”.

3. Process of preposition

In the Qing Dynasty, “guan” was used in the structure of “guan+NP1+jiao+NP2” to introduce related things. For example:

(1) a 怪道人都管着日头叫“太阳”呢，算命的管着月亮叫什么“太阴星”。(红楼梦·31回)

b 我胜三大伯，是他老三，我还得管他叫叔叔？(三侠剑·53回)

In the structure “guan+NP1+jiao+NP2”, the meaning of “management and control” of “guan” governs the object “NP1”, “NP1” and “jiao” exert influence on “guan”, then “guan” may have disposition meaning. Therefore, the grammatical process of “guan” is: from “management and control” to “object” to “disposal”. Example (6), “guan zhe” is the same with “guan”, “zhe” is an auxiliary word, meaning of the state of continuity. “Guan” retains the verbal use, not completely deprecation into prepositions, used to introduce objects to be named. In example (6), a and b sentences, respectively, name things or people, the equivalent of “ba” or “jiang”, more used in oral language.

“Guan” only introduces objects, as the disposal object of the core verb “jiao”, and “guan” and its object can not exist independently, must be combined with “jiao”. The structure has the function of naming the object NP1 (including people, things, or phenomena), which fully reflects the speaker’s subjective cognition of the object. The named object NP1 is often a noun (a sentence), an pronoun (c sentence), or a phrase containing pronouns (b sentence)

In modern Chinese, “guan” is also used in the structure of “guan+NP1+NP2”. Such as:

(2) 管你要钱，气你喝酒！(林徽因·九十九度中)

In the structure of “guan + NP1 + NP2”, the meaning of “management and control” of “guan” governs an “object”. The governed object becomes patient case. In this process from agent to patient, “guan” may evolve into the function of “direction”. The grammatical process of semantic of “guan” is from “in charge and control” to “object” to “direction”. The structure has the function of “requesting NP2 (mainly objects) from object NP1 (mainly people)”. “Yao” means “request, to ask for something”, “guan” introduces the requested subject “ni”. “Guan” indicates the person to whom the action is committed, which is equivalent to “xiang”.

In the “guan+NP1+ (jiao/ yao) + NP2” structure, there are two verbs that occur at the same time, “jiao/ yao”, and there is only one verb has syntactic characteristics related to indicate time information. There is no agent and patient relationship between “guan” and the object NP1, the nature of the verb “guan” weakened, “guan” does not make the core predicate and becomes the modification or supplementary component of “jiao/ yao”. Hence, “guan” gradually developed into a preposition. “Guan+NP1+V2+NP2” is the most direct syntax environment of the preposition “guan”. The preposition of “guan” introduces: (1) named object, equivalent to “ba/ jiang”, disposition meaning; (2) requested object, direction meaning.

In summary, the preposition of “guan” originates from verb, and it is semantically experienced: the process of “in charge and control” to “object” to “disposal”, and the process of “in charge and control” to “object” to “direction”.

4. Grammatical characteristics of “guan”

4.1 Grammar mechanism of the preposition

4.1.1 The evolution mechanism of syntactic

The syntactic evolution mechanism of the “guan+NP1+V2+NP2” structure is: firstly reanalysis, and then extension. Reanalysis and extension are the internal mechanisms of language evolution, which complement and alternate each other in the process of grammaticalization. Reanalysis is the main mechanism for the evolution of syntax, changing only the underlying structure of the syntax structure and does not involve any direct or internal adjustment of the surface expression (Harris and Campbell 1995: 61).

The structure “guan+NP1+V2+NP2” is the main syntactic environment of the preposition

“guan”, after the word “guan” is deflated, the “guan+NP1” structure develops into an adverbial of “V”, and the structure “guan+NP1+V2+NP2” is reanalyzed as a modifying construction structure. Such as:

(1) a 孩子们管这叫“画地图”。(看上去很美·1章)

b 你别找我, 管他要!

“V1+NP” is not established, and V1 can not be used as the main verb, so the core is V2. The structures of “guan zhe” and “guan ta” are adverbials of “jiao” and “yao” respectively. The basic syntactic form of “guan+NP1” is deduced into another structural form “guan+NP1+V2+NP2”. The relationship between the verb “guan” and NP1 is no longer dominated by the real meaning, and the semantic domain of “guan” is expanded. The grammaticalization of “guan” is realized in the structure of “guan+NP1+V2+NP2”.

4.1.2 Semantic evolution mechanism

The semantic evolution mechanism of the grammaticalization of “guan+NP1+V+NP2” construction is desemanticization. Desemanticization is also called semantic bleaching, which means the disappearance (or generalization) of meaning content (Heine and Kuteva 2002: 33-34). It is reflected in the semantic characteristics that grammaticalized words lose the meaning of the original noun. Bleaching refers to the relationship between the semantic characteristics of NP and the semantic domain required by V1; if they are the same, V1 does not occur bleaching as a verb; if they are related, then V1 occurs bleaching, breaking away from the structure, “V1+NP” structure can not be simply used, V1 tends to be preposition; if they are different, then V1 furthers bleaching and breaks away from the structure. V1 is basically empty into a preposition.

In the structure of “guan+NP1+V2+NP2”, the prepositional meaning of “guan” comes mainly from its semantic characteristics. If NP1 has [- manageable] characteristics, it is related to the degree of semantic fusion of the word “guan” from the same to different, and V2 exerts influence on NP2. After the word “guan” is bleached, it becomes a preposition.

4.2 Grammaticalization Characteristics of Preposition “guan”

4.2.1 Parallelism of verb and preposition

After the grammaticalization, it did not follow the cline of grammaticalization (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 7), that is, substantive > grammatical word > attachment > inflectional affix down to the end, and did not develop into a pure preposition, but verbs and prepositions parallel development. The semantics of “guan” has not been completely bleached yet. As a preposition, the meaning of the verb still lingers, and the verbal function is still prominent.

4.2.2 Limited scope of semantics

The two usages of the preposition “guan” are very limited in the scope of semantic of the object: disposal meaning. The object semantic used for naming and addressing are limited to people, things and events; the preposition object is limited to people when it is used to refer to the requested object; the grammatical meaning is difficult to be further emptied; and the scope of application is relatively small. It is generally active in Northeast Mandarin and spoken Beijing dialect.

4.2.3 Verb pairing

Construction grammar focuses on the interaction between constructions and verbs. Verb meaning is the precondition of constructional meaning. After acquiring the independent meaning of the construction, it merges with the existing lexical components to form a schematic construction, accompanied by the pairing of new form-new meaning. This pairing is regarded as constructivism (Traugott and Trousdale 2013: 22). In “guan+NP1+jiao/ yao+NP2”, the verbs “jiao” and “yao/ zu/ jie” respectively add specific constructional meaning of naming and claiming. In the “guan+NP1+yao+NP2” construction, the preposition “guan” is usually collocated with introverted monosyllabic verbs (such as yao), or a few verbs with two-way meanings (such as zu/ jie).

5. Conclusion

Firstly, an extended development relationship exists between the semantics and parts of speech of

“guan”. It is embodied in that “guan” derives the meaning of “control and jurisdiction” on the basis of the semantic features of the noun “key”. The verb meaning “govern” is the semantic basis for the grammaticalization of the word “guan” into prepositions. Secondly, from the perspective of syntactic mechanism, the prepositional mechanism is “guan+NP1+V2+NP2”, NP2 has the characteristics of [- manageable], and V exerts influence on NP2, which makes the meaning of “guan” bleach and become preposition. The grammaticalization of “guan” has gone through the process of “manage -object -disposal; manage- object- direction”. After the grammaticalization of “guan” as a preposition, there are two main uses: (1) disposition meaning, referring to the object, which is equivalent to “ba”. (2) direction meaning, referring to the requested object. Thirdly, “guan+NP1+V2+NP2” is semantically de-semanticized through reanalysis and extension mechanism, showing the characteristics of parallelism of verb and preposition.

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