A constructional account of the development of the Chinese stance discourse marker běnlái

Linguistics Seminar

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The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract

This paper examines the emergence of the Chinese adverb běnlái and its further development into a stance discourse marker (SDM). Most of the previous studies consider the epistemic modal adverb běnlái ‘indeed, truly’ originated from the temporal adverb běnlái ‘originally’. Based on the framework of constructionalization (Traugott and Trousdale 2013) and Van de Velde et al (2013)’s idea of multiple sources, I argue that the temporal adverb might not have been the only source for the modal běnlái to occur. Furthermore, the modal adverb changed into a SDM connecting the coherence in discourse and at the same time signaling speaker’s subjective evaluation. I argue that the change was enabled by both subjectification and analogization. The exemplars to which běnlái was by hypothesis analogized include the extant discourse connectives (e.g., kěshí) and the extant commentary pragmatic markers (e.g. kělán, suōxing) (Fraser 2009).

Speaker

Dr. Zhan Fanqiong is an assistant professor in the department of Linguistics and Translation at City University of Hong Kong. She received her Ph.D. from Stanford University in Chinese linguistics, and her research interests focus on Construction Grammar, grammaticalization and constructionalization, contrastive linguistics as well as second language acquisition. She is the author of the book The Structure and Function of Chinese Copular Construction—a Constructional Approach, and the translator of Constructionalization and Constructional Changes. Her major publications appear in Language and Linguistics, Journal of Chinese Linguistics, Studies in Language, Functions of Language and Diachronica.

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