英语主位结构的语法化

葛忆翔 著

Thematic Structure in English:
A Grammaticalization Approach

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前 言

本书从语法化的视角探讨了英语中的主位结构，主要描述了古英语、中古英语和现代英语时期主位结构的特点并分析了主位标记性的历史性迁移，从语法化的视角考察了几种重要主位转换手段的形成过程。研究得出结论：英语中的主位标记性经历了语法化的过程，在这一过程中主语被语法化为唯一的无标记主位成分；英语中一些语法结构形成的动因是主位表达的需要。

语言学研究中共时方法和历时方法长久以来被严格区分。不过，语言学中最近的动向要求这两个研究方法拥有同等的地位。在这个背景下，本书将共时与历时两种研究方法进行了结合。本书首先对英语主位结构进行共时的描述，在共时描述的基础上进行历时的分析。

本书中采用的理论和方法主要涉及两个领域：主位结构理论和语法化理论。在本书第二章，我们对这些理论和方法进行了简要的回顾。“主位”这个概念不同于“主语”、“话题”和“已知信息”，这是因为主位的定义完全基于它在句中的位置：主位是句子的第一个成分。主位结构和语法结构相互关联，因为主位化必须依赖于语法的手段。主位化不仅依赖于一门语言所能提供的语法手段，而且还受制于这些语法手段。为主位化目的而使用的语法手段可以被称做“主位转

换结构”或“主位化手段”。本书简单讨论了六种主位转换结构:(1)话题化,(2)被动结构,(3)tough 移动,(4)主语提升和宾语提升,(5)外置,(6)分裂句和拟似分裂句。

语法化概念已经从它传统的定义扩展为更宽泛的定义。语法化传统的定义指实词失去词汇意义成为具有语法功能的词或词缀的过程,广义的定义指一个形式或结构变得固定或必要的过程。本书所说的语法化是它广义的定义。

本书对两个粗略划分的英语发展历史阶段(早期英语和现代英语)的主位结构进行了共时描述。在早期英语中,相对自由的语序使得几乎每一个句子成分都有可能自然地出现在句首位置,但是不同的句子成分还是具有不同的位置上的倾向。主语尽管有时也会出现在句中或句末位置,但是它强烈地倾向于出现在句首,尤其是代词充当的主语和较短的主语。本书比较了句子成分不同的位置倾向,发现主语最倾向于出现在句首,而最少出现在句首的成分包括间接宾语、宾语补足语和一些状语。根据这个发现,本书得出结论:在早期英语主位标记性的层级结构中,主语是无标记性程度最高的,而间接宾语、宾语补足语和一些状语是标记性程度最高的。本书还介绍了早期英语中的主位转换结构,包括话题化、被动结构和外置。

对于现代英语主位结构的共时描述显示现代英语中 SVO 语序的固定使得主语成为唯一的无标记主位。任何其他句子成分如果出现在句首的话都是标记性主位,其中,当动词出现在句首时,是标记性程度最高的成分。现代英语中的主位转换结构包括:被动结构、tough 移动、外置、分裂句和拟似分裂句。

在对早期英语和现代英语的主位结构分别进行了共时描述的基础上,本书对主位标记性和主位转换结构进行了历时分析。研究发现,英语中无标记主位的语法化和英语中 SVO 语序的语法化密切关联;英语中被动结构、tough 移动、外置、分裂句和拟似分裂句,这些

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重要的主位转换结构的形成和许多因素有关，包括语序的语法化、屈折形式的消失、交际的有效性和成分的重量等。

本书尝试将语法化的理论和方法应用于英语主位结构的研究中去，并且尝试把共时描述和历时分析相结合。语法化理论研究的前景非常广阔，因为语法化的理论可以应用于语言学研究广泛的领域，使我们更深刻地理解语言变化的本质，也可以使我们在对比语言学领域取得更多的成果。

葛忆翔

2007 年 9 月

Foreword

This book investigates the thematic structure in English with a grammaticalization approach. It outlines the characteristics of the thematic structure in Old English, Middle English and Modern English and analyzes the shift of thematic markedness over the historical stages. It also examines the evolution of important thematic transformations from a grammaticalization perspective. The book develops the conclusions that the thematic markedness in English has experienced a process of grammaticalization with the subject being grammaticalized as the only constituent of unmarked theme and that the rise of some grammatical structures in English has been triggered by the need of thematic expression.

It has been long since the synchronic approach and the diachronic approach were separated as two distinctive approaches to language study. The recent trend in linguistics now requires the two approaches to enjoy equal status. It is in this context that this study is conducted in a way that the two approaches are integrated. The present study is a diachronic analysis of thematic structure in English based on synchronic descriptions.

The theories and methods adopted in the present study cover two areas: thematic structure and grammaticalization. In Chapter 2, we make a brief review of these theories and methods. "Theme" is different from "subject", "topic", and "given information" in that it is defined only with regard to its position—the initial element in a sentence. Thematic structure is related to grammatical structure in that thematization has to be realized by grammatical means. Thematization is both dependent on and restricted by the grammatical devices that a language possesses. The grammatical devices for the purposes of thematization can be termed as "thematic transformations" or "thematizing devices". We briefly discuss six thematic transformations: (1) topicalization, (2) passivization, (3) tough movement, (4) subject and object raising, (5) extraposition, and (6) cleft sentences and pseudo-cleft sentences.

The concept of grammaticalization has been expanded from its traditional definition to a broader one. Traditionally, grammaticalization refers to a process whereby lexical elements lose their lexical status and come to be employed as grammatical function words. The term is now used in its broader sense that a form or a construction has been fixed or obligatory. The discussion in this book is based on this broader definition of grammaticalization.

This book makes a synchronic description of the thematic structure in two roughly divided historical stages of English: Early English and Modern English. In Early English, the relatively free word order made it possible for almost every clausal element to naturally come to the initial position of the clause but different clausal elements had different positional tendencies. The subject, though sometimes occurred

in the medial position or the end position, had a strong tendency toward the initial position, particularly the pronominal subject. We compare the different tendencies and find out that the subject had the strongest tendency toward the initial position and the indirect object, object complement and some adjuncts had weakest tendency. Based on this finding, we conclude that in the scale of thematic markedness in Early English, the subject was the most unmarked theme and the indirect object, object complement and some adjuncts may be loaded with the most amount of markedness. We also study the thematic transformations in Early English, including topicalization, passivization, and extraposition.

The synchronic description of the thematic structure in Modern English reveals that the fixation of SVO word order in Modern English makes the subject the only possible unmarked theme. All the other clausal elements in the initial position are marked with the verb being the most marked theme in the scale of thematic markedness. The thematic transformations in Modern English include passivization, extraposition and tough movement, and cleft and pseudo-cleft sentence.

On the basis of the synchronic accounts of the thematic structure in Early English and Modern English, we proceed to the diachronic analysis of thematic markedness and thematic transformations. We discover that the grammaticalization of the unmarked theme is closely related to the grammaticalization of SVO word order in English. The rise of such important thematic transformations in English as passivization, cleft and pseudo-cleft sentences, tough movement and extraposition is related to various factors including the grammaticalization of word order, leveling of inflections, efficiency of communication and con-

stituent weight.

This book is an attempt to apply the theories and methods of grammaticalization to the study of thematic structure in English. It also attempts to combine the synchronic approach with the diachronic approach. The prospect of grammaticalization theory is promising in that it can be applied in a more extensive way to help us gain more insight into the nature of language change and make more achievements in the comparative study of language.

Ge Yixiang

September, 2007

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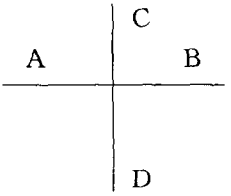
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Origin

Anyone who has ever studied language comes up with a natural impression that every human language has its own intrinsic system of rules, including orthography, morphology, and grammar. Traditionally, priority has been given to the synchronic study of these rules, usually for the purposes of school learning and linguistic study on the synchronic dimension. The synchronic study aims to answer such a question as "*What the present language is like?*" It, however, cannot answer the question of "*How the present language is like this?*" The investigation into how the relatively stable and fixed system of rules of language has come into being arouses interest in the diachronic study of language, whose basic argument is that any system of rules of any human language is in constant change.

For a long time in the history of linguistic study, however, the diachronic approach was overshadowed by the mainstream synchronic approach and the two approaches seemed to have been distinctly separated from each other, although they ought to have shared the same significance in language study. This tradition began from Saussure,

who drew a clear-cut line between the two distinctive approaches to language study—the synchronic approach and the diachronic approach, each having their own principles and methodologies. Saussure's dichotomy of the two approaches is illustrated as follows:



Line AB stands for the synchronic dimension and Line CD stands for the diachronic dimension. Priority is given to the dimension of Line AB over Line CD in that if at each specific stage of language evolution, the synchronic study is well conducted, then the diachronic development is automatically revealed. This dichotomy of the synchronic approach and the diachronic approach and the superiority of the former one have jointly humbled the diachronic study in the domain of language study.

The trouble is that the synchronic study of language proves to be inadequate in certain aspects of language study. A typical example of this inadequacy is the fact that there does exist some VS pattern in English clauses such as "*Long live our motherland*". Should this be accounted merely as the synchronic deviation of the dominating clause pattern of SVO① in English? The synchronic study itself seems to be unable to provide a convincing explanation. But a diachronic examination can easily tell that this clause is the residue of the VS pattern in Early English, when it was not surprising at all to have VS clauses in

① The symbol "SVO" is used in this book to inclusively stand for all the variations of the dominating clause pattern in the present-day English, in which the subject always takes the initial position, including SVO, SVoO, SVOC, SVC, SV, SVA, SVOA etc.

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