



# (Inter)subjectification at the left and right periphery: Deriving Chinese pragmatic marker *bushi* from the negative copula<sup>☆</sup>



Jiajun Chen\*

International Cultural Exchange School, Fudan University, 220 Han Dan Road, Shanghai, 200433, China

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## ABSTRACT

The connection between (inter)subjectification and movement to peripheral positions of a clause is investigated using diachronic data on the Chinese pragmatic marker *bushi*. This pragmatic marker derived from the negative copula use of *bushi* in medial positions, and was recruited to serve exchange- and action-structure-related functions (including subjective and intersubjective functions) at the left and right periphery. Key factors are identified to operationalize (inter)subjectification in the expansion of functional range, based on the historical evidence. (Inter)subjectified cases are shown not to conform to the asymmetry hypothesis, in which there is a fair division of labour between pragmatic markers at left and right periphery and in which elements recruited to the left and right peripheries undergo subjectification and intersubjectification respectively. Analysing the distinct patterns of *bushi* not only expands our knowledge of pragmatic marker origins in the understudied context of Chinese, but will yield a better understanding of the generalizability of existing findings based primarily on Indo-European languages.

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## 1. Introduction

Research on pragmatic markers has exploded across a wide range of language varieties since the early 1980s. Over the last two decades, the scope of this research has broadened into the field of historical pragmatics, in order to consider the central mechanism and motivations for diachronic development of pragmatic markers (e.g. Jucker, 1995; Brinton, 1996; Brinton and Traugott, 2005; Hansen and Rossari, 2005). This comparatively late but important focus has been related to several significant assumptions (see, especially, Auer, 1996; Brinton and Traugott, 2005 on grammaticalization; Aijmer, 1997; Norde, 2009 on pragmaticalization; Heine, 2013 on cooptation).

Notably, however, these works have primarily involved pragmatic markers at left-peripheral positions in sentences, across languages (see Traugott, 2016, for discussion). Markers in right-peripheral positions, by contrast, have received far less attention in previous studies, from either a cognitive/functional or a formal perspective, though the right periphery has been evinced to abound in pragmatic markers in at least some Indo-European languages, such as French (e.g. Lambrecht, 1981; De

*Abbreviations:* BA, disposal marker; CL, classifier; COP, copula; CRS, currently relevant state; CSC, complex stative construction; EXP, experiential aspect; FOC, focus; GEN, genitive; NAME, name; NEG, negation; NOM, nominalizer; NP, noun phrase; PART, particle; PAS, passive voice; PFV, perfective aspect; pl, plural; TERM, term; sg, singular.

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\* 220 Han Dan Road, Guanghai Tower, East Building, International Cultural Exchange School, Fudan University, Shanghai, 200433, China.

E-mail address: [chenjiajun2006@gmail.com](mailto:chenjiajun2006@gmail.com).

Cat, 2007) and Italian (e.g. Frascarelli, 2004), and in East Asian languages such as Japanese (e.g. Horie, 2011; Higashiizumi, 2016), Korean (e.g. Ahn and Yap, 2013; Rhee, 2016) and Chinese (e.g. Yap et al., 2010). Among the still limited and exploratory studies on right-peripheral pragmatic markers, the focus has remained primarily on Indo-European languages; few studies consider other languages, including Chinese.

In this study, I focus on the historical development of the Chinese pragmatic marker *bushi*, deriving from the negative copula use in medial positions and coming to serve a range of pragmatic marker functions at the left and right peripheries. Synchronically, the pragmatic marker *bushi* can be used to perform any of a polysemous network of pragmatic functions, with no functional overlap, at left and right periphery. Diachronically, the case demonstrates distinct, direct development paths from negative copula use to various pragmatic functions and polysemies at both peripheries. It also reflects a semantic change pattern involving the emergence of pragmatic functions at both peripheries sharing a common core of semantic features (i.e. 'to not be') out of one earlier usage. Similar origins and evolutionary paths to those of *bushi*, as far as I have been able to determine, have not been reported before in the literature; aside from their intrinsic interest for the study of Chinese, they will also inform the study of pragmatic marker development and help determine the generalizability of existing findings largely based on Indo-European languages.

After an outline of key terms and some broad issues in the study of pragmatic functions in different positions, in Section 2, Section 3 provides a brief description of the data and methodology employed in this study. Section 4 sketches the pragmatic functions of *bushi* in both positions, based on attestation in the CCL corpus (see Section 3). Section 5 seeks to elucidate the historical development of the case. Section 6 presents criteria for operationalizing the (inter)subjectification of the marker and considers in this context questions that have been of concern in recent work concerning pragmatic markers generally. Conclusions are drawn in Section 7.

## 2. Background

This section will begin by outlining the key concepts and the definitions of them adopted in the current study; it will then present an overview of the theoretical background.

The term 'pragmatic marker' is generally used as an umbrella term for different types of linguistic forms that have effect at the communicative level (e.g. Fraser, 1996; Hansen and Rossari, 2005; Traugott, 2016). Following Fraser (1996, p. 168), my operational definition of 'pragmatic marker' is 'the linguistically encoded clues which signal the speaker's potential communicative intentions', distinct from the propositional content of the sentence. Given this definition, a range of seemingly heterogeneous uses, such as 'questions tags' (e.g. *didn't he?*), and 'emotive words or phrases' (e.g. *no*), are considered to be sub-categories of pragmatic markers.

I use the term 'periphery' to refer to both edges of a clause, sentence, utterance, unit of talk, or speaker's turn, as often in recent studies (see for example, Onodera, 2004; Haselow, 2012; Beeching and Detges, 2014; Degand, 2014; Traugott, 2016; Beeching, 2016). In this sense, periphery is understood as lying outside 'the dependency structure of the verb' (Degand, 2014, p. 154) or the host clause/propositional/ideational core (Traugott, 2016, p. 27; Onodera and Traugott, 2016, p. 163); hence, the left periphery represents clause-/utterance-initial position and the right periphery, clause-/utterance-final position.

The development of pragmatic markers can be viewed as the result of a grammaticalization process if the process is defined as one 'of organization of categories and of coding' (Traugott and Heine, 1991, p. 1). Two pairs of important notions intersecting with grammaticalization, namely subjectivity vs. intersubjectivity and subjectification vs. intersubjectification, are therefore also critical to the present work. In line with Lyon (1982), Traugott and Dasher (2002), and Traugott (2003, 2010, 2012), I consider subjectivity to be an ambient synchronic state coding the speaker's beliefs and stance towards what is said, whereas intersubjectivity is understood as an ambient synchronic state coding the speaker's awareness of the role of the hearer in the discourse situation and particularly the hearer's face, needs, and self-image. Given these definitions, subjectification and intersubjectification are then, respectively, diachronic processes of change giving rise to expressions with subjective and intersubjective meanings from non-/less subjective and intersubjective uses.

Over the years, different types of pragmatic markers have been studied in considerable detail synchronically and diachronically, across languages, but without extensive attention to the correlation between pragmatic function and periphery. In recent years, however, distributional preference of pragmatic markers—the preferred positions a particular marker occurs in and its various functions in different positions—has received scholarly attention in a number of works. Among them, Haselow (2012, p. 154) points out the 'gravitation of an increasingly high number of lexemes towards the right periphery of an utterance' over time in English and based on the case study of *then* addressees the factors affecting this syntactic 'gravitation'. Traugott (2016) has been particularly concerned with markers at the right periphery, and has also turned the spotlight on the historical development of a diversity of right-peripheral pragmatic markers in English.

Notably, Beeching and Detges (2014) hypothesize a functional asymmetric division of labour between left and right periphery that deserve special attention: Pragmatic markers occurring at left and right periphery have a neat inherent division of labour—the left periphery is the expected locus for subjective uses, while the right periphery is typically associated with intersubjective functions—and hence, elements recruited to the left periphery undergo subjectification, whereas those recruited to the right periphery undergo intersubjectification. This asymmetry hypothesis is generalized primarily based on case studies of Indo-European languages, such as Degand and Fagard (2011) on French *alors*; Degand and Waltireit (2014) on

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