Morphologization of the Degree Adverb *HEN*[*]

Kawai Chui

National Chengchi University

This study investigated morphologization of the degree adverb *hen* 'very', a process of semantic change to develop a bound constituent from a free independent word by way of cliticization and compounding. In the first stage of development, *hen* is a degree adverb; its gradable extent is higher than average. In the second stage it loses morphosyntactic autonomy and develops into a clitic, being bound to the adjacent scalar predicate. Finally, *hen* becomes a compound constituent, as a result of amalgamating the clitic form and its adjacent verb.

The significance of the semantic and morphosyntactic change of *hen* lies in fulfilling communicative needs. First, the semantic generalization of *hen* suggests that the speaker's attitude toward the gradable extent of the predicate is neutral at the moment of speaking. Second, developing new compounds from old constructions is motivated by the necessity of new independent concepts for communication.

Key words: morphologization, degree adverb, *hen*, Mandarin

1. Introduction

As a free lexical adverb, *hen* 'very' should be morphosyntactically autonomous with concrete meaning. However, its occurrence can be obligatory in communication. In example (1), the absence of *hen* makes the interaction unnatural, and even unacceptable; speaker H may also not convey the originally gradable meaning. As a matter of fact, this degree adverb is undergoing semantic shift, along with morphosyntactic change.

(1) L: ...na   ni%?/
         well   2.SG

<pre>
    ...xianzai biao   de   bi   ta   kuai   a=?/
      now   race   COMPL   COMPARE   3.SG   be.quick   QST
    'Well, you now race faster than he does?'
  H: ...nayou?/
       NEG
-->   ...ye   meiyou   **hen**   kuai   a=,_
       also   NEG   very   be.fast   PRT
-->   ...**hen**   ^jin   a=.\
       very   be.close   PRT
      …women ^san   ge   ren   yiqi   zou   ba=,_
        1.PL   three CL   person   together leave   PRT
</pre>

'No, I was not (very) fast. We were (very) close. I think we three left together.'

The process of semantic change peculiar to *hen* is morphologization which develops a bound constituent from a free independent word by way of cliticization and compounding. It is thus the purpose of this study to investigate the process of morphologizing the degree adverb *hen* in conversation from the synchronic point of view. How does it shift between the lexical structure and the grammatical structure? What mechanism leads to the change? Importantly, this study shows that such semantic and morphosyntactic development is motivated by communicative needs.

Three stages of morphologizing the degree adverb are evidenced in Modern Chinese, which will be discussed in section 2. Section 3 focuses on the pragmatic motivation for the semantic development of *hen*. Concluding remarks will be provided in the last section.

2. Morphologization of hen

Morphologizing *hen* includes three stages of development. In the first stage, *hen* is a full-fledged adverb modifying the predicate; in the second stage, it loses its morphosyntactic autonomy and develops into a clitic being bound to the predicate host; in the final stage, it becomes a compound constituent.

2.1 Degree adverb

In the adverbial category, *hen* has a full lexical meaning and a distinct grammatical status of being a degree adverb. Semantically, the extent of gradation it indicates is higher than average. Syntactically, it modifies a wide variety of scalar

predicates, including the adjectival *congming* 'be intelligent' in (2), the mental state *taoyan* 'hate' in (3), as well as the experiential *qianque* 'lack' in (4).

(2)   B: ...<A liao   nage   ren% A>,_
                  Liao   that   person
-->   ...**^hen**   **congming**,_
                  very   be.intelligent
-->   ...keshi   ta   jiushi   **hen**   **zifu**.\
                  but   3.SG   that is   very   self.be conceited
                  'That person Liao is very intelligent, but he is very conceited.'

(3)   A: ..yinwei   wo   xiaoshihou,\
                  because   1.SG   be.little
-->   ..**hen**   **taoyan**,\
                  very   hate
                  ..na   zhong   bohe,_
                  that   kind   mint
                  'It is because when I was little, I hated that kind of mint very much.'

(4)   A: ...keshi   wo   juede,_
                  but   1.PL   feel
-->   ..women   jiushi   **hen**   **qianque**,_
                  1.PL   that is   very   lack
                  ..duihua   de   jingyan,\
                  converse   ASSC   experience
                  'But I think we very much lack the experience to converse.'

Moreover, *hen* also conveys the greater extent of both ability and epistemic modality of possibility. In the following turn (5), the degree adverb modifies the modal predication consisting of the possible ability *neng* 'can', without which the utterance, *ye hen jieshou* 'also very accept' becomes unacceptable.

(5)   B: ..ruguo%,\
                  if
                  ..<A ni   hai   xihuan   chouyan% A>,_
                     2.SG still   like   smoke
                  ...na   mei   youguanxi,_
                  that   NEG   have.relation
-->   ..ye   **hen**   **neng**   **jie^shou**.\
                  also   very   can   accept

'If you still like smoking, that doesn't matter. I also can very much accept it.'

For those predicates which inherently cannot be calibrated in degrees, the presence of *hen* suggests that the speaker regards them as scalar in the speech context at the moment of speaking. For instance, the predicate nominal *zhongguo* 'be Chinese' in (6) and the action verb *bang* 'to help' (7) become gradable while co-occurring with *hen*, in that the scalar qualities are ascribed by the speakers to the state of being Chinese (6), and to the situation of helping somebody (7).

(6) -->   A: ...ta   zhe   ge   ren   **hen**   **zhongguo**   de.\
               3.SG   this   CL   person   very   Chinese   PRT
           'He is very Chinese.'
(7) -->   B: [ranhou dou] hui   **hen**   ^**bang**   ni   o,_
               then   all   will   very   help   2.SG   PRT
           'Then, they all will help you a lot.'

Being a morphosyntactically autonomous adverb, *hen* can further be stressed and lengthened in actual discourse, as illustrated by the stressed caret sign '^' preceding *hen* in (2).

2.2 Cliticization

In the second stage of morphologization, the occurrence of this degree adverb has to be obligatory in communication; it also lacks the prosodic stress and lengthening. This is not merely restricted to the adjectival verbs, as Li and Thompson (1981:340) have claimed. Losing its morphosyntactic autonomy is widespread, including the adjectival predicates, be it monosyllabic such as *chao* 'be damp' in (8) or disyllabic as *kongbu* 'be terrible' in (9),[1] the transitive state verb *qingchu* 'be clear' (10), and the nominal predicate *buxiban* 'be a crammer' (11). Just like example (1), taking away *hen* surely makes these utterances unnatural and even unacceptable.

(8)   Y: ...na   xizao   deshihou,_
               then   take a bath   when

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[1] Some linguists claim that Chinese tends to be disyllabic, so bare monosyllabic predicates are unnatural, which might account for the obligatory occurrence of *hen*. However, example (9) is a counterexample to show that the obligatory presence of *hen* is not restricted to monosyllabic predicates only.

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            ..bushi          fangzi      hen          sh- --
             NEG.be          house       very         REPAIR
  -->        ...hen    [chao=]   ma?/
             very      be.damp   QST
            'Then when taking a bath, isn't the house damp?'
(9)    A:   ...<A ni          kandechulai,_
                  2.SG        can.see
            ..ta      liqi      hen      da        ma A>?/
             3.SG     strength  very     be.great  QST
            'Can you see he has great strength?'
       B:   ...(.6)wo     ^zhidao   ta       liqi       bu      ^xiao,\
                   1.SG   know      3.SG     strength   NEG     be.little
            'I know he does not have little strength.'
  -->   A:   ...<A ta       hen A>kongbu      ei,_
                  3.SG     very     be.terrible   PRT
            'He is terrible.'
(10) -->A:  ...<A wo        bushi      hen qingchu,_
                  1.SG      NEG        very   be.clear
            ..na      zhong     cailiao     de         dongxi A>,_
              that    CL        material    ASSC       thing
            'I was not clear about the thing using that kind of material.'
(11) -->A:  [[ni]]     bu       juede     hen%,_
             2.SG      NEG      feel      very
  -->       ..buxiban     ma?/
             crammer      QST
            'Don't you feel this teaching style is like a crammer?'
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When the speaker uses an English scalar predicate, like *be sick* in (12), it must co-occur with *hen*. In relativation or forming an adverbial phrase, this unaccentuated form also has to go with the following verbs, such as *da* 'be great' in the noun phrase *hen da de liqi* 'strength that is great' (13), and *xiong* 'be fierce' in the adverbial phrase *hen xiong-de* 'fiercely' (14).

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(12)   C:   ..<A erqie        wo      juede    hen    exin A>.\
                  moreover   1.SG    feel     very   disgusting
            'Moreover, I felt that the movie was very disgusting.'
       B:   (0)duia,_
                right
            'Right.'
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   A: ..erqie,\
     also
-->   ..ye **hen** \<L2 ^**sick** L2>.\
     also very sick
     'Also, it made me sick.'

(13) A: ..^xiang ni dou   yong,\
     like 2.SG all   use
-->   ..**hen** **da** **de** **liqi**.\
     very great ASSC strength
     ...yinwei ta   de% --
     because 3.SG ASSC
     ...(.7)jiqililiang man da%,\
      machine power quite be.great
     'Like you, the strength you use is great, because its machine power is quite great.'

(14) A: ..ranhou%,\
     then
-->   ...(1.3)**hen** **xiong-de** **ma** wo \<P zheyangzi P>.\
      very fierce   scold 1.SG like this
     'Then he scolded me fiercely.'

In addition to losing the autonomy as an independent word and lacking the prosodic stress and lengthening, the adverb also undergoes semantic change. Li and Thompson (1981:340) have observed that 'in spoken Mandarin, the adverb *hen* occurring with an adjectival verb usually loses its semantic content when it is unstressed'. This can be illustrated by their example *ta* 's/he' *hen* 'very' *gao* 'be tall' which can simply mean 'S/He is tall'. This is not the whole scenario, in that semantic shift can all be found in adjectival, verbal, and nominal predicates (see (8) to (11)).

Although the unaccentuated *hen* does not convey the intensive meaning, its absence makes the utterance unnatural and unacceptable. Its obligatory attachment to the predicate suggests that *hen*, unlike the ordinary adverbs of degree, is becoming a 'phrasal clitic' (Hopper and Traugott 1993:133), being bound to the adjacent scalar predicate, known as the host. It thus maintains a grammatical affinity just for this particular type of host; the host that *hen* attaches to is the entire verb phrase, such as the whole negative predicate *bu wending* 'be not stable' in (15). The scope of attachment in example (5) is also the whole modal predicate *neng jieshou* 'can accept'. Furthermore, the clitic *hen* bears out Klavans's (1985) claim that clitics subcategorize for PHRASAL hosts, as a VP modifier.

(15)   A: ...\<F ruguo F> dajia   dou   ba%.. nage%,\
                   if   everyone all   BA   that
             ...(.6)ba,\
                   BA
             ..jiazhibiaozhun,\
                standard of value
             ..qu   yifu   zai yi   ge   xugoude   dongxi   shang   dehua,\
                go   adhere at   one CL   fabricated thing   on   if
-->   ..na   shi   **hen   bu   wending**,\
                that   be   very NEG   be.stable
             ..<DIM erqie shi   hen   weixian   de   shiqing DIM>.\
                    also   COP   very be.dangerous ASSC   matter
             'If everyone has the standard of value adhered to a fabricated thing,
             that is a not stable but dangerous matter.'

According to the criteria of Zwicky and Pullum (1983), *hen* is not a 'special clitic',
because unlike the English possessive *'s*, *hen* has a corresponding full form indicating
the greater extent of gradability. Rather, it behaves like a 'simple clitic', since '[its]
distribution in sentences is exactly the same as that of associated full forms' Zwicky
and Pullum (1983:510). In other words, despite the fact that the clitic form is neither
stressed nor lengthened, its structural distribution shares with the full-fledged adverbial
counterpart, both co-occurring with verbs (see (2~4), (8~10)), modals (5), and predicate
nominals ((6) and (11)).

In short, the clitic *hen* is a PHRASAL clitic attaching to the whole verb phrase; it
is also a SIMPLE clitic maintaining the same syntactic distribution as its adverbial
form. This stage of cliticization can be represented as:

<div align="center">LEXICAL ITEM > PHRASAL CLITIC</div>

Shifting from a lexical domain to a more syntactic domain is typical of
grammaticalization. When it becomes grammaticalized, the obligatory *hen* can neither
be stressed nor be lengthened in speech manifestation, thus forming a single accentual
unit with the following host, as many clitics do (Klavans 1985, Zwicky 1985).

Semantically, the clitic form no longer conveys the intensive gradable sense,
instead, the gradability is neutralized. Then, what is the function of *hen* without the
concrete meaning? Clitics in many languages perform grammatical functions to show
aspect, modality, and case, whereas some others are connectives, pronouns, or
interrogative markers, but *hen* rather develops a pragmatic function to fulfill a
particular communicative need. This will be taken up in section 3.

2.3 Compounding

Lacking the prosodic and the morphosyntactic structure of being an independent word, together with the generalization of meaning, is preliminary to the third stage of morphologizing *hen* to a bound compound constituent. This can be exemplified by the compound adverb *hen-shao* 'very-be less; seldom' in (16).

(16) --> A: ..ta **hen-shao** hui gen nuhaizi jiang name jiu,_
              3.SG very.be less will with girl talk so long
              'He seldom talks with girls for such a long time.'

Different from the phrasal concatenation of *hen* and *xiong* 'be fierce' in (14) which, together, performs the adverbial function in derivation, *hen-shao* is not a phrasal adverb being derived from a verb phrase,[2] because the original gradable meaning of *hen* has been completely lost in the compound. In other words, speaker A in (16) by no means grades the extent of being *shao*, but the compound as a whole modifies 'his talking with girls for a long time'. Thus, while the speaker in (14) can express a different degree of gradability by substituting *hen* with another degree adverb *feichang* 'strongly' (17), he can never do that for *hen-shao* since changing the compound component causes ungrammaticality, as in (18).

(17) A: ..ranhou%,\
              then
  --> ...(1.3)**feichang xiong-de** ma wo <P zheyangzi P>.\
              strongly fierce scold 1.SG like this
              'Then he scolded me strongly fiercely.'
*(18) --> A: ..ta **feichang-shao** hui gen nuhaizi jiang name jiu,_
              3.SG strongly.be less will with girl talk so long
              'He strongly seldom talks with girls for such a long time.'

Compounding linear syntactic structures is common in Chinese, and the meaning of the component may also be lost. Parallel to *hen* in the adverbial compound is the classifier *ge* in the compound nominals, such as *ge-an* 'CL-case; case' and *ge-xing* 'CL-personality; personality'. Since the meaning of the classifier component has become neutralized and its grammatical status has been lost, these two compounds can co-occur with a full-fledged classifier to form a noun phrase with a demonstrative, as

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2 Adjectival phrases are regarded as a kind of verb phrases in this study.

exemplified by *zhe* 'this' *zhong* 'kind' *ge-xing* 'personality' which means 'this kind of personality'.

In this stage of development, when the co-occurrence of the two words has been routinized, the linear phrasal boundary between the clitic *hen* and its adjacent predicate is rebracketed via reanalysis which 'essentially involves linear, syntagmatic, often local, reorganization and rule change' (Hopper and Traugott 1993). Thus this mechanism causes the amalgamation of the two constituents into a compound: [*hen*] [*shao*] > [*hen-shao*]. While morphologization is typical of developing clitics into inflections, *hen* suggests a case of cliticization feeding compounding instead. The transition can be represented as:

PHRASAL CLITIC > COMPOUND CONSTITUENT

Concerning the syntactic bases for morphological forms, Anderson (1988:338) claims that:

> developments internal to the morphology can alter the relations among morphological elements within a word, thus obscuring their bearing on earlier syntactic states of affairs. Even where the morphology does reflect earlier syntax without change, the construction thus reflected may not be *basic* syntax.

Givón's (1971:413) 'today's morphology is yesterday's syntax' is controversial. Nevertheless, this principle is borne out by the development of *hen*, since it conforms to the basic word order of synchronic Mandarin syntax.

In short, *hen* is a bound constituent without the gradable sense in compounding. Such a shift from grammatical to lexical structure is also motivated by communicative need, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.4 Discussion

For the adverbial *hen* to shift between the grammatical structure and the lexical structure has been shown to include three stages of development through the mechanism of reanalysis. The complete process of morphologization is represented below:

LEXICAL ITEM > PHRASAL CLITIC > COMPOUND CONSTITUENT

The development is unidirectional, in that the degree adverb undergoes grammaticalization to a clitic, being syntactically bound to the following predicate.

Some syntactically fixed constructions eventually amalgamate morphologically and become compounds. Morphologization of syntactic constructions is thus in evidence.

Since the various forms of *hen* do not change abruptly, its different stages of development coexist in Modern Chinese. Their respective functions form a continuum: the greater extent of gradability in adverbial form at one end, the lack of gradability in form of compound at the opposite end, and the neutral gradability of the clitic form in the middle.

The effect of morphologization is mainly on the lexicon. As mentioned above, the process of reducing an originally syntactic collocation into a lexical compound is a recurrent type of development in Chinese, though the three stages of development may not all coexist synchronically. For instance, the modal-verb compounds, such as *ke-ai* 'can-love; be lovely' and *ke-pa* 'can-fear; be terrible', just indicate the sequential coalescence of the modal of possibility *ke* and the adjacent verbs. Whether the phrasal compounds involve the intermediate stage of cliticization, or it does not necessarily exist remains unknown. The synchronic approach using discourse data is then important to gain a more complete profile of language change, especially the change is pragmatically motivated (see the next section).

Finally, the spread of cliticization and compounding analyses across linguistic contexts is gradual rather than abrupt, since 'changes occur at different rates and different times...and very rarely go to completion' (Hopper and Traugott 1993:207). Thus, in contemporary language development, the adverbial, the clitic, and the compound forms do not exhibit rigid category differences, and the diffusion of cliticization and compounding still continues.

3. Pragmatic motivation

The previous section has discussed cliticization and compounding of *hen* from a full-fledged adverb. This section proposes that these two stages of development are pragmatically motivated by different communicative needs in the course of speaker-hearer interaction.

First, although the meaning of the unaccentuated clitic form has become general, its absence makes the utterance unacceptable. In other words, without suggesting the greater extent of gradability, *hen* still has to be present for fulfilling a pragmatic function in Chinese discourse. Zwicky (1985:304) claims that:

> in addition to clitics indicating particular arguments of a verb, modality,
> sentence type, negation etc., some serve to indicate speakers' state of mind
> with respect to the content or form of what is said, their estimate of the

speaker/addressee relationship, or their estimate of the role of the current utterance within a larger discourse.

The particular pragmatic function of *hen* also concerns the subjective attitude on the part of the speaker. Degree adverbs in general convey the speaker's attitude toward the gradable extent of an event. The unnatural or unacceptable absence of *hen* thus suggests a pragmatic principle for communication--'Always Indicate the Gradable Extent of the Scalar Predicate'. As a matter of fact, the syntagmatic construction comprising a degree adverb and a scalar predicate is frequently occurring. For those predicates that do not convey inherent gradability, as exemplified by the action verb 'to help' in (7) and the predicate nominals 'be Chinese' (6) and 'be a crammer' (11), as long as they are regarded as scalar at the moment of speaking, the speaker has to conform to the pragmatic principle by indicating a certain extent. However, when the speaker's attitude is neutral, instead of inventing a new word to fulfill the principle, this pragmatic force motivates the semantic neutralization of *hen*, because of its high textual frequency. In short, the clitic *hen* functions to convey the neutral gradability toward the event on the part of the speaker. Again, the synchronic approach is crucial to examining the pragmatic motivation for semantic change, as well as the linguistic behavior of the speaker in real interaction.

The speaker is still grading the event in the second stage of development, just the speaker's attitude toward the gradable extent is neutral. In the final stage, however, the gradable sense of *hen* is completely lost as it develops into a compound constituent by reanalyzing the grammatical structure into lexical structure. Such development is also pragmatically motivated by the necessity of new independent concepts for communication. In other words, new meanings are evolved out of old linear constituent structures without inventing brand-new words.

4. Conclusion

This paper studied the semantic development of the degree adverb *hen* through reanalysis of originally syntactic constructions. Compared to the full adverbial, the unaccentuated clitic is more context-dependent and more general in meaning, which is preliminary to morphologizing it to a bound compound constituent. The significance of such semantic and morphosyntactic change lies in fulfilling communicative needs, which further evidences the interdependence between the various facets of language and pragmatic use.

Since the main function of language is communication, and semantic shift is largely motivated by language use, the discourse data in real interaction becomes

indispensable to understand the plausible pragmatic motivation for change. This may further reflect the usual linguistic behavior of the speaker. Thus, the pragmatic principle suggested by the cliticization of *hen* is peculiar to Chinese speakers in communication. Despite the fact that numerous compounds in Chinese, just like *hen-shao*, are also developed from syntactic concatenation, owing to the lack of synchronic discourse data, whether there is any intermediate stage of generalizing the component parallel to the cliticization of *hen* to reflect speakers' linguistic behavior can never be resolved. This paper encourages the study of language change from the synchronic viewpoint in relation to language use.

Appendix A: Abbreviations of linguistic terms

1.PL	first person plural
1.SG	first person singular
2.PL	second person plural
2.SG	second person singular
3.PL	third person plural
3.SG	third person singular
ASSC	associative morpheme
BA	the morpheme BA
BC	backchannel
CL	classifier
COMPARE	compare morpheme
COMPL	complementizer
COP	copula verb
DLM	delimitative aspect
EMP	emphatic adverbial
EXP	experiential aspect
NEG	negative morpheme
PF	pause filler
PRF	perfective aspect
PROG	progressive aspect
PRT	discourse particle
QST	question particle
REPAIR	repair phoneme(s)
SELF	reflexive morpheme

Appendix B: Transcription conventions

The transcription system was proposed by Du Bois et al. (1992).

Units
{carriage return}	intonation unit
--	truncated intonation unit
{space}	word
-	truncated word

Speakers
:	speaker identity/turn start
[]	speech overlap

Transitional continuity
.	final
,	continuing
?	appeal

Terminal pitch direction
\	fall
/	rise
_	level

Accent and lengthening
^	primary accent
=	lengthening

Pause
...(N)	long
...	medium
..	short
(0)	latching

Vocal noises
(H)	inhalation
%	glottal stop
@	laughter

Quality
<@	@>	laugh quality
<Q	Q>	quotation quality
<A	A>	allegro: rapid speech
<F	F>	fast tempo
<P	P>	piano: soft

<PP PP>		very soft
<DIM DIM>		diminuendo: gradually softer
<MRC MRC>		each word distinct and emphasized

Specialized notations

<L2 L2>		code switching from Mandarin to English
<L3 L3>		code switching from Mandarin to Japanese
(( ))		transcriber's comment

Relevant expressions in examples are in boldface; the lines where the relevant expressions in question appear are marked by the arrow sign '-->'.

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English Department
National Chengchi University
64, Sec. 2, Chih-nan Road
Wenshan, Taipei 116, Taiwan