

The constructionalization of antonymous compounds Evidence from the adverb *chi-zao* in Mandarin Chinese

[反義複合詞的構式化：以漢語的副詞「遲早」為證]

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In modern Chinese, the adverb *chi-zao* is regarded as an adjective-adjective compound, with morphemes *chi* ‘late’ and *zao* ‘early’ as extreme poles in a gradable temporality. The formation of *chi-zao* as an antonymous compound has not received much attention from a diachronic construction grammar perspective. This study reports on the historical change of *chi-zao* as evidence showing the interplay of antonymous compounds and constructionalization in modern Chinese. Based on corpus analysis, I found that the formation of *chi-zao* as a lexical construction inherits from previous changes but emerges instantaneously in Pre-Modern Chinese, where its form has been condensed and its meaning has been bleached to indicate subjectivity. Three arguments shed light on the model of constructionalization: (1) constructionalization at the compound level can be associated with three motivations: subjectivity, frequency, and metaphor; and (2) the operation of constructionalization is at work not only at the sentential and phrasal level but also at the morphological level of compound word formation in Chinese; (3) rhetoric as an output of language use plays a part in the development of constructionalization in relation to antonymous compounds.

Keywords: constructionalization, antonymous compound *chi-zao*, frequency, subjectivity, metaphor

關鍵詞：構式化、反義複合詞「遲早」、頻率、主觀化、隱喻

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