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主持人：張妙霞 執行機構及單位名稱 國立台灣師範大學英語系
計畫參與人員：余瑞瑩 執行機構及單位名稱 國立台灣師範大學英語研究
陳麗雪 執行機構及單位名稱 國立政治大學國文研究所
李秋欣 執行機構及單位名稱 國立台灣師範大學英語系

一、中文摘要

本文旨在探討及比較漢語中「卜」、「欲」及「要」的歷史語意演變。由於台語文字目前尚未標準化，當語言學學者討論到意願動詞 *beh* 的語意時，常用三個語意相近的文字來代表 *beh*：「卜」、「欲」或「要」。在台語及現代國語中，「卜」意指推測，「欲」代表意願及欲望，台語的 *beh* 及國語「要」則具有較豐富的語意及語法功能。*Beh* 可表意願，未來助動詞，近似(*proximity*)及條件等語意；國語「要」則除了這些語意外，還具有表責任或義務及比較的語意。由於古文中的「卜」、「欲」及「要」將語現代口語用法比較，因此本研究語料來源以接近口語的宗教典籍及通俗文學為主 (Norman 1988)。結果發現，古文中「欲」主要用來表達欲望，意願及未來。由聲韻及「要」來自「腰」或「簿書」，並演變成表意願，條件，義務，及未來、近似等語意的動詞。「卜」在古文及現代漢語中，語意並無太大變化；主要語意為「占卜」、「卜卦」等。因此顯示閩南語中 *beh* 所用的「卜」字，並非本字，純為借字。閩南語的 *beh* 則與比同時期的「欲」語意豐富，與「要」類似，表意願，條件，義務，及未來、近似、需要等。現代台語中義務及需要等語意則已消失。

關鍵詞：意願動詞，語意演變，漢語，閩南語

Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the diachronic semantic development of *bu*,

yao, *yu* and Southern Min *beh*. The historical periods in question include Early Old Chinese, Late Old Chinese, Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese and Pre-Modern Chinese. The data include texts that represent vernacular literature each historical period in question. Drama scripts that were written in the Southern Min dialect were also analyzed to compare the use of *beh* with the other three verbs. Results show that *bu* has not undergone major semantic change since Early Old Chinese and it was used mainly in rituals of divination. *Yao* might have originated from the noun signalling 'book of records' or 'waist'. It later evolved senses including 'importance' (in compounds), 'volition', 'proximity', 'future' and 'conditional'. *Yu* was used as a verb of volition and future in Early Old Chinese and does not undergo further change in modern Chinese. Compared with *yao*, it is preferred in formal texts. *Beh* in Southern Min displayed polysemy not unlike that of *yao*. However, the origin of *beh* remains unanswered as texts prior to the 16th century representing Southern Min are not available at the present time.

Keywords: volition verbs, semantic change, Chinese, Southern Min

二、Motivation and Goal

The current study aims to investigate the historical development of the Chinese future verb 卜 and the volition verbs *yao* (要) and *yu* (欲). The three verbs are chosen for study because they are suggested to be the possible orthography of Taiwanese *beh*. This suggests the semantic affinity of these

verbs.

An extensive literature has shown that volition verbs into future markers (Ullian 1978, Bybee & Pagliuca 1985, Bybee et al. 1991:20, Heine et al. 1991, & Bybee et al. 1994:252). In light of the universal tendency of development of volition verbs, Chang (1996) conducted a corpus-based study on the semantic link of Taiwanese discourse in an attempt to postulate its grammaticalization path. However, it is based on synchronic data and it speculates on the historical development of *beh*. Although the explanation of semantic link of *beh* seems to correspond to general grammaticalization theory, without historical evidence, the developmental path of *beh* is inconclusive but a mere speculation. Furthermore, the semantic relationship among the three morphemes 欲, 要 and 卜 in classical Chinese remains a myth. Compared with this synchronic approach, Liu (1993) examines the semantic development/grammaticalization of Mandarin *jiu* and *cai* from a historical perspective. It makes an important contribution to the diachronic development of Chinese morphemes in the framework of grammaticalization. In light of Liu's study and with the lack of historical support of the grammaticalization of verbs of volition/future 欲, 要 and 卜, the present study seeks to address the meanings of these three verbs in different historical periods of Chinese and the mechanisms of change that account for evolution from one sense into another and how they evolve into contemporary use. In so doing, it is hoped that the semantic link of these three verbs would be revealed and that the origin of Taiwanese *beh* and Mandarin 卜 and 要 can be traced.

三、結果與討論

The current research examined the use of *yu* (欲), *yao* (要), *bu* (卜) in historical data from Early Old Chinese, Late Old Chinese, Pre-middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese and Pre-Modern Chinese. In addition, *beh* 'want' (written as 卜) in diachronic texts

from drama scripts of Southern Min and contemporary Taiwanese is also investigated. It is found that these different verbs might well have originated from different sources.

First, *yu* (欲) as a verb was used to refer to the desire of the agent and as a future marker in Early Old Chinese, exemplified in such texts as *Zuo Zhuan* (左傳), in contrast to Cheng's (2001) claim that a future *yu* did not appear until Late Old Chinese in *Hanshu* 'History of the Han Dynasty' (漢書). The meanings of this verb have not changed until modern Chinese. However, it is more often used in compounds. On the other hand, compared with another verb of similar meanings *yao*, *yu* is preferred in formal texts.

Second, the use of *yao* (要) has undergone extensive semantic changes over time. The meanings of contemporary Mandarin *yao* include 'want', 'will', 'if', and 'near', and it usually appears in a compound meaning 'important/urgent'.

There were two possible sources of *yao*, 'waist' and 'account book'. Then it evolved a sense of 'necessity' or 'importance'. The latter sense rendered *yao* an adjectival use modifying nouns. It did not evolve an optative sense until Late Middle Chinese. During this period, the future sense also emerged as a main use of *yao*. A conditional was found to emerge in Late Middle Chinese and prevailed as a main use in Pre-Modern Chinese.

Compared with *yu* and *yao*, *bu* (卜) is less polysemous in that it has been used as a verb 'to predict', as a noun of 'prediction' or as a surname since Early Old Chinese through contemporary Chinese without undergoing any semantic change. Besides, as it usually refers to rituals of divination, it is rare in the spoken language, especially in modern Chinese.

Another verb of interest in this present research is Southern Min *beh*. In historical texts since the 16th century, the verb *beh* has

consistently borrowed the form 卜 in drama scripts. Compared with 卜, *beh* has much richer meanings than 卜. Its semantic meanings include a volition, necessity, doubt, proximity, and a conditional marking. The earliest documented data were the Story of Lichi in the 16th century, in Ming Dynasty. In the 16th century, we have observed a highly polysemous use of *beh* with all of the above uses appearing in the drama script. In Contemporary Taiwanese, the sense of ‘doubt’ has been lost. Besides, *beh* in some uses has undergone syntactic change from lexical to functional category. That is a raising effect is observed in contemporary Taiwanese.

Two questions that remain unresolved is the origin of *beh*. First, we were not able to find texts written in Southern Min dialects that were dated earlier than the 16th century. As shown above, *beh* had a rich repertoire of meanings in the 16th century. This strongly suggests that the semantic development of *beh* had already been under way long before the 16th century. So the overall semantic path of change of *beh* remains unknown. Second, the relationship between *yao* and *beh* remains unanswered. Given that these two verbs are highly synonymous, one might wonder if there is any etymological connection between *yao* and *beh*. However, phonetically, *beh* does not seem to evolve from *yao*. As for *bu*, as the context where *bu* appears is quite restricted. It is less likely that *beh* derived from *bu*. On the other hand, In the 16th century, in texts like Journey to the West (西遊記), *yao* was a full-fledged verb and was highly polysemous, while approximately at the same period *beh* was used extensively in the Story of Lichi in the drama scripts for Southern Min.

The results show that the above four verbs, especially *yu*, *yao* and *bu* had different origins and each had different meanings, with *yao* being the most polysemous and most frequent volition in Chinese in general. On the other hand, although *yao* and *beh* are almost identical in their use, whether one derived from the other remains a question

that awaits future research.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from investigation into the semantic development of the four verbs at issue is that the emergence and stabilization of meaning require a long span of time. For example, the conditional use of *yao* emerged in Sung Dynasty (10th-12th century) and did not stabilize as a conditional marker until Ming Dynasty (14th century).

四、成果自評

In this study, we have investigated texts from different periods with the aim of tracing the origins of the verb *bu* (卜), *yao* (要), *yu* (欲) in Chinese in general and *beh* (written as 卜 or 欲) in Southern Min. Efforts have been made to search vernacular literary texts that are more representative of the spoken language of each period in question. Statistical methods were used for the frequency and distribution of these four verbs in texts that represent each historical period. Some of the findings of *yao* modify Cheng’s (2001) study in that Cheng does not provide statistical evidence of the development of *yao* and some meanings such as ‘conditional’ is not attested in her study. Besides, Cheng does not examine the diachronic development of *bu* in Chinese. On the other hand, we have attempted to delve into the diachronic semantic development of *beh* in Southern Min and compared *beh* with *ai* ‘love’. Statistical results show that semantic change must have been under way long before the 16th century.

The contribution of the current research is that we have looked into different types of corpora that represent each historical period and examined the development of verbs of volition or prediction with statistical means. The results suggest that these four verbs might have derived from different origins as they had different distribution and uses. The only insufficiency of this study is that we were not able to delineate the origin of Southern Min *beh* and its relationship with the other three verbs in Chinese in general. The problem lies in the lack of historical

evidence of Southern Min prior to the 16th century. Only until earlier documents are unearthed are we able to trace the origin of *beh*.

On the other hand, if *yao* and *beh* originated from different verbs, then we have shown that two very different verbs can have exactly the same path of change and the semantic fields that account for each of these two verbs are almost identical. This lends strong support to the universality of the development of volition verbs, as has been attested in a lot of languages noted above.

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