

THE LEXICALIZATION PATH OF A TOPIC-SHIFTER 至於

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ABSTRACT

至於 (至于 in simplified characters) is used in Modern Chinese as a topic-shifter, whose function is to switch from a topic or topics mentioned previously in the discourse to a new topic. This research investigates how and when the topic-shifter usage of 至於 was derived. I argue that it originated from Old Chinese 至, a verb of movement, plus 于/於, a spatial goal marker. This paper illustrates the step-by-step process of the lexicalization of 至于/於 by analyzing all occurrences of 至于/於 in the Academia Sinica Old Chinese texts database. Each stage of lexicalization is clearly distinguished using syntactic and semantic criteria: (a) the syntactic structure of the sentence in which [至于/於+Obj] appears, (b) the syntactic status of [至于/於+Obj], and (c) the semantic features of the object of 至于/於. 至于/於 was used as a topic-shifter as early as in the Warring States period. Its use as a topic-shifter started to increase significantly in Middle Chinese, as is reflected in *Sanguo*

Abbreviations 1st: first person; 3rd: third person; ACC: accusative; ASP: aspect marker; ATT: attributive marker; BE: copula; CONJ: conjunction; DEM: demonstrative; NEG: negative; NOM: nominative; PREP: preposition, PL: plural; POS: possessive; PRT: particle, REL: relativizer, SG: singular; TpcMkr: Topic-marker; TpcSftr: topic-shifter.

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zhi 三國志. Finally, the lexicalization of 至於 into a topic-shifter was completed when 至於 was by far most frequently used as a topic-shifter and its original use became obsolete, as in *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類.

KEYWORDS

至於 (至于) Topic-shifter Lexicalization Old Chinese
Middle Chinese Early Mandarin

1. INTRODUCTION

至於 (至于 in simplified characters) in Modern Chinese is used as a topic-shifter, whose function is to switch from a topic or topics mentioned previously in the discourse to a new topic.¹ This research investigates how and when the topic-shifter 至於 in Modern Chinese was derived. I argue that it originated from Old Chinese 至, which was a verb of movement, plus 于/於,² which was a function word indicating the destination or the ending point of movement (that is to say, a spatial goal marker).

Chang (2014b, 211-215) analyzed the occurrences of 至于/於 in six Warring States period philosophical texts—*Xunzi* 荀子,³ *Zhuangzi* 莊子,⁴ *Liezi* 列子,⁵ *Guanzi* 管子,⁶ *Han Feizi* 韓非子,⁷ and *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋⁸—and found that there are already a handful of examples of 至于/於 used as a topic-shifter as early as in the Warring States period. This paper analyzes all occurrences of 至+于/於 in the Academia Sinica database of Old Chinese texts,⁹ in order to establish a step-by-step lexicalization path of 至 (Verb of movement) + 于/於 (a spatial goal marker) into a topic-shifter.¹⁰ Additionally, this paper analyzes all occurrences of 至+于/於 in a late Old Chinese text, *Shi ji* 史記 (The Grand Scribe's Records, *SJ* for short),¹¹ a Middle Chinese text, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the three states, *SGZ* for short),¹² and an Early Mandarin text, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (Conversations of Master Zhu, arranged topically, *ZZYL* for short),¹³ in order to locate the time when 至于/於 was mainly used as a topic-shifter and its original usage died out. It is shown that 至于/於, especially 至於, was occasionally used as a topic-shifter in Middle Chinese period,¹⁴ as is reflected in its usages in *SGZ*. Also, by the time of Early Mandarin, the original usage of 至+于/於

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“至於”的詞匯化過程考釋

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摘要

“至於 (簡體 ‘至于’) ” 在現代漢語裏有轉換話題的功能。筆者認為“至於”是由古代漢語表示移動的動詞“至”與表示到達點的介詞“于/於”結合而成的。本文旨在通過考察從上古、中古到近代漢語文獻所出現的關於“至于/於”的詞匯化演變用例闡述其最終轉變為轉換話題功能的過程。本文的用例來自中央研究院漢籍電子文獻中的古漢語語料庫 (<http://hanji.sinica.edu.tw/>)。本文從語義和語法層面上的差異觀察到“至于/於”的詞匯化階段。首先，在戰國時期的上古文獻中開始出現極少數轉換話題的“至于/於”用例；到了《三國誌》的中古時期，表示轉換話題功能的“至于/於”用例大幅增加；最後，在近代漢語《朱子語類》文獻時期，大部分“至於”被用於轉換話題，原來的“移動動詞+到達點”用例微乎其微，而“至于”的出現頻率大大縮減，其原因與“于”本身的消失有關。到了現代漢語時期“至於”簡化為“至于”。

關鍵詞

至於 (至于) 轉換話題 詞匯化 上古漢語 中古漢語 近代漢語