

## How a pronominal ends up as a conjunctive and sentence-final mood particle Evidence from Old Chinese *er* (而)

Foong Ha Yap and Charles Tsz-kwan Lam (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

This paper examines how a second person pronoun *er* (而) evolved into a third person pronoun and an anaphoric demonstrative ('it', 'this'), then later into a versatile connective, with coordinative, sequential, consequential and concessive uses ('and', 'and then', 'and thus', 'and yet'). Conditional ('if...then') and conditional concessive ('even if') interpretations could also emerge, given the appropriate context. *Er* (而) also appeared as part of a sentence-final mood particle. Such usage was already attested in Old Chinese texts such as *Shijing* (Book of Odes) from the Western Zhou period, 11<sup>th</sup>~6<sup>th</sup> century BC. There has been little discussion in the literature on how conjunctives might be related to sentence-final mood particles. In this paper we examine this question from a grammaticalization perspective with evidence from Old Chinese *er* (而), using data from computerized databases such as the Chinese Ancient Texts (CHANT) database. Our analysis reveals the following development for conjunctive *er*:

2SG > 3SG and DEM > CONJUNCTIVE (sequential, consequential) > CONCESSIVE

From ancient texts such as *Mengzi* (Mencius) from the Warring States period, 5<sup>th</sup> ~3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, we also see evidence of *er yi* (而已) used as a mood particle meaning 'that's all' and often used in the mitigative sense of 'only' or 'just', as in (1). It appears that *er yi* (而已) may have evolved from a terminative clause expressing speaker's emphasis on the finality of his preceding statements in the sense of "that's it; there's nothing more" as follows:

Classical Chinese:	Clause-1, Clause-2, <i>er yi</i>
English translation:	Clause-1, Clause-2, <i>that's all / that's it</i> .

Given its emphatic and evaluative reading, and given its terminal position in a series of clauses, *er yi* (而已) could easily have been reanalyzed either as a sentential adverb or a sentence-final particle. It is often accompanied by another perfective mood particle *yi* (矣) to yield the more complex string *er yi yi* (而已矣), as in (2).

As attested in Modern Chinese, adverbials with evaluative modal values such as *qi shi* (其實) 'actually' and *zhi* (只) 'only' frequently appear adjunctively on the left-edge to accompany *er yi* (而已), as in (3). This kind of semantic harmonizing in the form of sentence adverbials at the left periphery is also observed in the case of other sentence-final particles that appear on the right edge of the clause. This is reminiscent of Fischer's (2002) discussion of the functional similarities between epistemic modals and sentence adverbials in Germanic languages (including English, Dutch and German), with both types either sharing or vying for V2-type position. In this paper, we will also examine typological differences in which Chinese frequently makes use of *discontinuous constituents*, with adverbial adjuncts expressed *pre-predicatively* harmonizing with sentence-final modal particles expressed *post-predicatively*.

## Examples

- (1) 君子 之 事 君 也, 務 引 其 君 以 當 道,  
 jun zi zhi shi jun ye wu yin qi jun yi dang dao  
 gentlemen ZHI serve king YE must lead his king with correct way  
 志 於 仁 而 已。  
 zhi yu ren er yi  
 aim at goodness **only**  
 ‘When the noble-minded serves (the sovereign), he leads him in the right path, aiming at goodness **only** / **that’s all**.’ (Mencius 12:8)
- (2) 天 不 言, 以 行 與 事 示 之 而 已 矣  
 tian bu yan yi xing yu shi shi zhi er yi yi  
 heaven NEG speak through action and event reveal ZHI **SFP** (lit.  
 ‘that’s all’)  
 ‘Heaven never speaks: it reveals itself **only** through actions and events.’ (Mencius 9:5; translation by Hinton 1998)
- (3) 他 好像 說 得 很 有 道 理,  
 ta hao xiang shuo de hen you dao li  
 3SG seem speakADV very have reason  
 其 實 只 是 一 個 藉 口 而 已。  
 qi shi zhi shi yi ge jie kou er yi  
**actually only** be one CL excuse **SFP**  
 ‘It seems what he says is logical, (**but**) **actually** it’s **just** an excuse.’ (Modern Mandarin Chinese)

## References

- Fischer, Olga. 2002. *Morphosyntactic Change*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hinton, David (Translator). 1998. *Mencius*. Washington, DC: Counterpoint.
- Pulleyblank, Edwin G. 1995. *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Shinzato, Rumiko. 2007. “(Inter)subjectification, Japanese syntax and syntactic scope increase”, *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 8.2: 171-206.
- Tang Sze-Wing. 2006. 粵語框式虛詞結構的句法分析 [A syntactic analysis of the discontinuous construction of function words in Cantonese]. 《漢語學報》 [*Chinese Linguistics*], 14.2: 16-23.