

## Secondary Grammaticalization of Immediate Anteriority marker in Cantonese

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This paper investigates the secondary grammaticalization of the immediate anteriority marker in Cantonese. — ‘one’ has undergone grammaticalization to become an immediate anteriority marker (IMANTE): a temporal subordinator indicating two or more events consecutively occur, marking the event in the subordinate clause as immediately preceding the other:

- (1) 我 一 上床 就 訓著  
I One get.in.bed then fall.asleep  
‘As soon as I get in bed, I fall asleep.’

Drawing on corpora from early-nineteenth century to the present, the diachronic path suggests that an IMANTE has further developed into: (a) ‘whenever’; (b) immediacy marker. Regarding (a), a ‘whenever’ sense is most discoverable when the construction contains only one event, with a verb shared by two clauses. In (2), verb 食 ‘eat’ is shared by both clauses. It would sound unnatural with the IMANTE interpretation: ‘as soon as I eat, then I eat 10-ish eggs’ with ‘I eat’ and ‘I eat 10-ish eggs’ being two separate events. Instead, — ‘one’ is interpreted as ‘whenever’:

- (2) (我) 一 食食 十幾 隻 雞蛋  
(1SG) one eat eat 10-ish CL egg  
‘Whenever I eat, I eat 10-ish eggs’

For (b), the ‘anteriority’ meaning is bleached when the adverb 以前 attaches the subordinate clause, rendering a reversed event order:

- (3) 一 做 功課 前 就 好 焦慮  
One do homework before then very depressed  
‘Immediately before I do homework, I feel depressed.’

From a linguistic viewpoint, this study can pave a way for other linguists to study the same construction in other languages. There is work focusing anteriority and posteriority: ‘before’ and ‘after’ (Haspelmath, 1997; Hetterle, 2015), whereas an *immediate* anteriority is understudied with limited work (Kortmann, 1997)— it is not listed as one of the grammaticalization paths from numeral ‘one’ (Heine and Kuteva 2002). Hence, it is reasonable that its secondary grammaticalization is also not in the limelight. This study can help linguists predict the grammaticalization path in other languages such as Muylaq’ Aymara (Coler, 2014) and Guìqióng (Jiang, 2015).

### References

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