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Lexicalization of Phrases Involving the Distal Demonstrative Na (那) in Spoken Mandarin

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies in corpus linguistics have identified frequency as a contributing factor to language change. As the grammaticalization of the demonstratives in modern Chinese has been documented, this paper explores some further cases in which collocating phrases containing the distal demonstrative, Na, are going through stages of lexicalization in the Mandarin spoken in Taiwan. These lexicalization processes can be accounted for in terms of linguistic subjectification. Na is often used to express approximation or vague identification and to indicate the speaker’s uncertainty. On the other hand, many tokens of zai naban are not used to convey locative information but rather the speaker’s intention to highlight what s/he is saying and his/her detached stance. While these uses are extended from the basic meaning of the distal demonstrative, these cases also bear witness to the syntagmatic integration (among collocating elements) and the paradigmatic competition (among near synonyms) in the evolution of linguistic structure.

1. Introduction

This paper examines some of the phrases frequently used in spoken Taiwan Mandarin that contain the demonstrative Na. These phrases all display phonetic reduction and semantic extension. We focus on their lexicalization (and idiomatization), and examine the role of subjectification in these lexicalization cases.

First, a few words about several technical notions. Subjectification refers to the
mechanism that triggers semantic change that has its origin in the pragmatic inferencing commonly practiced in verbal interaction, which typically renders a word or a phrase originally referring to some entities/activities in the described event to refer to the speaker's attitude, viewpoint, or stance toward what is said in that describing event (Traugott 1989, 1995; Traugott & Dasher 2002).

Second, the notion of phraseology has gained more attention since the rapid development of corpus linguistics. In language use, a linguistic element is typically used in company with some other linguistic elements in a specific order. Through repeated use, they form a phrase. These phrases may not necessarily correspond to a syntactic/structural unit. However, if they are frequently used, these phrases may become a unit in the speaker's mental lexicon over time. In the literature, these phrases have been referred to with various terms. 陶红印 [Tao] (2003) refers to the same notion as 格式 (ge2shi4) in Chinese. We will use the term “phraseology” throughout this paper, following Cowie (1998) and Stubbs (2002).

2. Frequency and Language Change

In recent years because of the rapid development of corpus linguistics, large databases and sophisticated search tools have become more and more available. As the research methods bring about new perspectives, we come to appreciate more the close relationship between use frequency and language change (Bybee 2003; Bybee & Hopper 2001). As far as phraseologies are concerned, high frequency phraseologies typically display phonetic reduction (or fusion), semantic extension (polysemy or semantic change), categorial change, and (syntactic) reanalysis. Over time, some phraseologies will eventually reach the autonomous status, i.e., becoming an independent unit in the mental lexicon (Bybee 2005). Many of such cases instantiate grammaticalization, of which the classical example from English is be going to turning into gonna, which displays phonetic reduction, (syntactic) reanalysis, and the semantic change from lexical meaning to functional meaning (Hopper & Traugott 1993). The purpose of this paper is also to examine the development of a phrase into one lexical unit. However, not all such cases instantiate grammaticalization, turning lexical meaning into grammatical meaning. Many phraseologies in the spoken language do not grammaticalize but rather acquire meaning for the phraseology as a unit. The meaning is usually the result of the repetitive practice of pragmatic inferencing. The strengthening of the pragmatic inferencing often results in subjectification, i.e., the same linguistic form is turned to refer to the speaker's evaluation of what is being talked about. In English, the classic example of subjectification is the discourse function of I think, which marks the speaker's (fair but not absolute) certainty about what s/he says. The fact that I think can appear at positions other than the clause-initial position shows that this phraseology has gained an autonomous status in the native speaker's mental lexicon (Thompson & Mulac 1991). There are similar cases in Modern Chinese, such as 你知道 ni zhidao 'you know' (陶 [Tao] 2003). Some grammatical words are further “lexicalized” as a word-internal element attached to their frequent collocates, such as “x 是” “x-shi” (e.g., 就是 jiu4shi4 ‘that is’, 尤其是 youqi4shi4 ‘especially’), “x 着” “x-zhe” (e.g., 接着 jie2zhe4 ‘followed by’, 顺着 shun1zhe4 ‘along with’). It was mentioned above that phraseologies may not correspond to a syntactic unit. In fact, phraseologies whose constituents spread across syntactic hierarchies may also end up being an autonomous unit if they collocate and are used repetitively. The historical development of the 的 de2 string in Chinese is such an example (Jiang 2004). In contemporary American English, the frequent collocate of I don't, consisting of the first person singular pronoun (I) and the contracted negation, has also turned into a phonetically fused, cross-syntactic-stratum phraseology (Bybee & Scheibman 1999).

However, frequency is only one of the many mechanisms for language change. At any one particular time, it is not that all frequently used words or phraseologies display phonetic reduction and semantic extension. The phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and semantic aspects of a frequent word or phraseology are not necessarily correlated with one another, either. In contemporary English, the highly frequent be and have display clear phonetic reduction (i.e., the contracted forms 's and 've, respectively), but so far the contracted forms have not developed any distinct meaning (as opposed to the full forms) (Krug 1998).

Also related to frequency are the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic relationships. When we examine a phraseology, we are basically looking at the syntagmatic relationship between certain linguistic elements, i.e., the customary collocating relationship between these linguistic elements (or categories). However, the
syntagmatic relationship makes sense only when it is compared with that for other similar and potentially competitive collocates and proven relatively outstanding. For example, in written British English, the contracted negative form *don't* is used much more frequently than the full form *do not*. On the other hand, paradigmatically comparable contracted forms such as *doesn't* and *didn't* do not appear more frequently than their corresponding full forms (*does not* and *did not*, respectively). Therefore, we come to the conclusion that the distribution of the full forms and contracted forms for negation in written British English is skewed. In like fashion, the numeral *yi* 'one' (and to a lesser extent, *er* 'two' and *san* 'three') and the general classifier *ge* have displayed phonetic fusion (and syntactic reanalysis) in Beijing Mandarin as a result of frequent collocation, but the same phonetic fusion does not show up for other (relatively rare) numeral-classifier collocations (Chirikova 2004; Dong 2003; Tao 2002). The demonstratives (proximal and distal) also show skewed distribution in both Taiwan and Beijing Mandarin.

3. *Na* in spoken Taiwan Mandarin

This paper examines the two *na* phraseologies in spoken Taiwan Mandarin. Demonstratives are high frequency words, and the further grammaticalization of the demonstratives in Modern Chinese has been documented. While in the Mandarin spoken in Taiwan it is the distal *na* that is being grammaticalized into an article, in the Mandarin spoken in Beijing it is the proximal *zhe* (Fang 2002; Huang 1999; Tao 1999; Xu 1988). *Ge*, the general classifier, does not add any substantial meaning when combined with other linguistic elements. In spoken Taiwan Mandarin it is not surprising that it is the phraseology *nage* that is being grammaticalized into an article, as it is the most frequent phraseology involving *ge*. In this paper we want to pursue further and ask whether, in addition to *nage*, there are other *na* phraseologies? And if yes, whether they also show phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and semantic changes as signs of their becoming an autonomous unit in the speaker’s mental lexicon?

Paradigmatically speaking, while the most frequent collocate is *ge* for both the proximal *zhe* and the distal *na*, their respective frequency rates are quite different. In our Taiwan Mandarin database there are 1542 tokens of *nage* but only 624 tokens of *zhege*, rendering a 10:4 ratio. The relative high frequency of *nage* (as opposed to *zhege*) also explains its advanced status in grammaticalization. In this paper we will focus on phraseologies involving *na*; we will mention *zhe* only when it is necessary to make a comparison.

3.1. *Nazhong*

The top three *na* phraseologies in terms of frequency in our spoken Taiwan Mandarin database are *nage*, *nazhong*, and *nabian*. Like *nage* vs. *zhege*, *nazhong* has a much higher frequency than *zhezhang* (540: 157).

While *nazhong* is much less frequently used than *nage* (540: 1542), tokens of *nazhong* still display phonetic reduction and fusion. In most cases, the initial consonant of *zhong* is dropped, and the two vowels in the phraseology are reduced and fused into almost one syllable. The most conspicuous trace left behind as evidence of the original two syllables is the drift from the fourth tone (of *na*) to the third tone (of *zhong*). The monosyllabization of the phraseology encourages us to speculate whether the meaning of the phraseology is also undergoing some changes.

Most of the *nazhong* tokens found in our database are still used for the referential function, i.e., *na* is still a demonstrative and the noun following *nazhong* is still referential. However, it is no surprise that the meaning of *zhong* ‘kind, type, sort’ is associated with the meaning of ‘about the same, seem, like’. The case has a perfect parallel in English, where sortal terms such as *kind* and *sort* have developed into expressions for approximation, *kind of* and *sort of*. Thus, in the case of *nazhong*, the meaning is no longer compositional and referential (i.e., ‘that (one) kind (of)’) under certain circumstances; rather, an idiomatic (and non-compositional) meaning of ‘approximation’ or ‘vague identification’ arises. “Approximation” and “vague identification” reflect the speaker’s subjective judgment and evaluation, thereby indicating the speaker’s uncertain stance toward what he is talking about. This meaning development is natural and accountable in terms of the pragmatic strengthening in the process of grammaticalization and lexicalization.

1 Taking the collocation and the syntagmatic relationship seriously, the form that is undergoing grammaticalization should be *nage* rather than the monosyllabic *na*. Most of the examples provided in Huang (1999) are *nage* while only a small portion involves *nazhong*.

2 Our spoken database consists of 50 sets of naturally occurring conversation, and the total length is about 14 hours. See Biq and Lee (2004) for details about the frequency and the phonetic reduction of the *na* phraseologies.
Because it is approximation and ambivalent stance, the idiomatic use of nanzhong is often accompanied by hesitation expressions such as you(yijian) 'somewhat, a little' suoweide 'so-called', and shenme(de) 'stuff like that'. Consider the following examples:3

(1) 那种俗性，又有点制服裤的那种米黄色那种卡其裤

Nanzhong hen su, you youdaiai xiang zifuku de nanzhong mihuangel nanzhong kajiku
‘That sort (of) cheap, somewhat like the uniform, that sort (of) beige colored, that sort (of) khaki pants.’

(b) 或是说你在电影中也会看到那些所谓的那种象征手法啊等等什么的

Huoshi shuo ni zai eh dianying zhong ye hui kandao naxie shenme suoweide nanzhong xiangzheng shousa a shenme shenmede
‘Or say you may ch also see in the movies those something like the so-called that sort of symbolisms or stuff like that.’

In the above examples, what nanzhong refers to is vague, but it is still referential. On step ahead, nanzhong is also used together with noun phrases referring to generic concepts. In these cases, nanzhong can no longer be referential. Not using nanzhong would be more “grammatical”; nanzhong is superfluous in these contexts. Consider the following example:

(2) 外科医师不是会有那种年龄限制吗?

Waike yingshi bushi hui you nanzhong nianling xianzhi ma
‘Isn’t there that kind (of) age restriction for being a surgeon?’

Furthermore, nanzhong also occurs before proper names. In the following example, Jianan Earthquake refers to the earthquake occurred in the Jianan area in Taiwan in 1964. The co-occurrence of nanzhong and the proper name suggests the speaker’s view that the intensity of the earthquake currently being talked about in the conversation is the same as that of the Jianan Earthquake. In this kind of use,

nanzhong is no longer a phrase consisting of “(distal) demonstrative + (nominal) classifier”, but rather a single (meaning) unit expressing “vague identification” or “approximation”.

(3) 那么大的地震，我以为是那种喜命的大地震。

Name da de dizheng, wo yiwei shi nanzhong Jianan da dizheng
‘Such a big earthquake! I thought it was like that kind (of) the Jianan Earthquake.’

Finally, at the structural level, a nominal classifier should be followed by a nominal element, but in the spoken language there are numerous examples in which the following element is not nominal. In the following example, nanzhong is used before the predicate.

(4) 对啊，你看中医那种秘方通常是那种口耳相传。

Dui a, ni kan zhongyi nanzhong mifang tongchang shi nanzhong kouer xiangchuan
‘Yes, you see the sort so-called “secret prescriptions” of Chinese medicine are typically that kind (sort of) (like) passed down through mouth and ear.’

Nanzhong can also appear within the predicate, right before the verbal element that expresses either action or degree. Consider the following examples:

(5) 你会觉得- 哪怎么气氛忽然那种严肃起来。

Ni hui juede, a zeme qifen huran nanzhong yansu qi
‘You’d be wondering, eh-, how come the atmosphere has suddenly that kind (of) (like) become serious.’

(b) 他就说他耳边就有一个声音响起，就跟他说来来了来了… 对啊，就是在耳边那种唤起样子。

Ta jiu shuo ta erbian jiu you yige shengyin xiang qi, jiu gen ta jiang shuo lai le lai le, … dui a, jiushi zai erbian nanzhong huansi zheyangzi
‘He then said that there was a voice next to his ear, telling him it’s here, it’s here, … yeah, (that) kind (of) (like) calling him at his ear, something like that.’
From the structural perspective, the *nashong* in the above examples has gone through reanalysis and become a modifying element in the predicate. Again, *zhong* is no longer a nominal classifier; nor is *nashong* a composition of two independent elements but rather a lexical unit with its own meaning.

If the meaning of *zhong* triggers the lexicalization of *nashong*, does the same effect occur for *zheshong*? Indeed the two most frequent left collocates for *zhong* are the two demonstratives, *na* and *zhe*. In my database, there are 300 tokens of *nashong* and 150 tokens of *zheshong*. In the case of *zheshong*, since the vowel for *zhe* is a schwa, it is hard to judge if it is further reduced. However, we checked on the reduction of the initial consonant of *zhong* in *zheshong*. While it is not as widespread as that in *nashong*, it is still the majority (Biq and Lee 2004). However, in the database we cannot find solid evidence for the lexicalization of *zheshong*. In almost all tokens of *zheshong*, *zhe* is still used as a demonstrative. Only in several examples, *zhe* does not have a clear referent. For example:

(6) 你看現在這種經濟都不景氣。
Nikan xianzai zheshong jingqi dou bu jingqi
“You see these days *this kind* (of) (the) economy is in recession.”

In the above example, *zheshong* is superfluous. We can take this example as an example of the very first step for semantic bleaching. In other words, *zheshong* plays the role of pause filler in such examples. Many tokens of *zhege* also function as pause filler in speech (Huang 1999, p. 93). However, in our database, such use of *zheshong* is still not widespread. This is where *zheshong* and *nashong* are different. The difference in the degree of lexicalization of *nashong* and *zheshong* is parallel to that between *nage* and *zhege*. This patterned distinction is apparently related to the fact that *na* is much more frequent than *zhe* in both sets.

3.2. *Zai nabián*

*Nabian* is the third *na* phraseology in terms of token frequency in our database. However, here we will focus on a more restricted phraseology, *zai nabián*. As a locative adposition (postposition), *nabian* (and *zhebian*) is attached after a noun phrase (*e.g.*, *tushuguan nabian* ‘over (there) by the library’), but they can also be used as a nominal right after the locative marker, *zai* (*e.g.*, *zai nabian* ‘(located) over there’). *Zai* is the most frequent left collocate for both *nabian* and *zhebian*. Furthermore, the *zai* locative phrase can appear before the verb (pre-position) (*e.g.*, *zai nabian wan* ‘play over there’), expressing the starting point for the action, or after the verb (post-position) (*e.g.*, *zuo zai nabian* ‘sit over there’), expressing the ending point of the action.

Just like the contrast between *nage* and *zhege*, and between *nashong* and *zheshong*, *zai nabián* is much more frequent than *zai zhebian* (111: 13). Furthermore, in both phraseologies, the pre-posed use far exceeds the post-posed use — 93:18 for *zai nabián* and 11:2 for *zai zhebian*.

Another set of phraseologies paradigmatically comparable to *zai na/zhe bian* is *zai nali* and *zai zheli*. However, the token totals of *zai nali* (14) and *zai zheli* (8) are both far fewer than that of *zai nabián* (111). Moreover, the pre-posed and post-posed distribution of *zai nali* (5:9) and *zai zheli* (4:4) is also more balanced than that of *zai nabián* (93:18). The chart below summarizes the numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phraseology</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Pre-posed</th>
<th>Post-posed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zai nabián</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zai zhebian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zai nali</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zai zheli</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apparently, *zai nabián* is paradigmatically outstanding, taking up 76% of the frequency total of all four sets of phraseologies (111: 146). Furthermore, its pre-posed use is even more outstanding, taking up 64% of the same total (93: 146). The pre-posed use of *zai nabián* thus seems to be the most routinized form, most likely to lexicalize into an autonomous unit in the mental lexicon. Indeed, the idiomatic meaning to be discussed below is seen only in the pre-posed use (for both

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4 In fact there are 107 tokens of pre-posed *zai nabián*, but 14 of them occurred in truncated intonation units whose meaning was incomplete. These tokens were therefore excluded from our analysis. Tokens for other phraseologies did not occur in any truncated intonation units.
Both za nian and za zhebian display phonetic reduction. In addition to the de-retroflexion commonly seen in Taiwan Mandarin, the vowel of both demonstratives either reduces to a schwa or disappears. The tone for both demonstratives either disappears or is assimilated by the tone of the next syllable (the first tone of bian) into a first tone. The phonetic value of za is correlated with whether the phraseologies are used pre-posed or post-posed. When pre-posed, za retains its phonetic form in most cases. Thus, in the case of, say, za nian wan 'play over there', only the demonstrative na displays phonetic reduction. When post-posed, because the stress falls on the verb, the initial consonant of za is often dropped. Thus, in the case of zuo za nian 'sit over there', both za and na display phonetic reduction.

In our database, just like the case of nazhong, za nian can be used with a variety of functions, such as being a locative phrase with definite reference or being a referentially superfluous expression but highlighting the speaker's stance. However, no clear example has been found for structural reanalysis. Thus, on the road to lexicalization, za nian can be seen as lagging behind nazhong.

The literal – compositional – meaning of za nian is the locative information. Locative information can be either necessary or optional depending on the speech context. In the following example, the locative information provided by za nian is required in the context. The speaker here explains why the hotel staff were all standing in front of the hotel front entrance. ‘Za nian refers to the hotel front door. This piece of information is necessary in order to make sense of the speech.

Optional locative information refers to that which is not necessary in the context

in order to make sense of the speech. In the following example, za nian refers to the location where the speaker did her “thinking”, which is necessarily the place where she was sitting for meditation. Even if za nian is not said, there would be no misunderstanding whatsoever given the context.

(8) 我这次去打伞我就在那边想，我在那边想啊，我希望赶快考试。
Wō zhē cì qu dǎ Zhuō wo jīn zāi nian shì xiāng, wo zāi nian xiāng a, wo xiāng gǎnkǔn kǎo shì
‘This time when I went for meditation I was over there thinking, I was over there thinking, I hope the exam comes soon.’

In fact, za nian can not only refer to the location of the event but also the time of the event. The extension from spatial reference to temporal reference is commonly seen in many languages (Heine et al. 1991; Hopper and Traugott 1993).

Further, there is a gray area between using za nian for providing optional locative information and as a superfluous expression. In some examples, both interpretations are acceptable. Consider the following example:

(9) 我们觉得放那种鞭炮，感觉满过瘾的，对面人家不是在那边放那个鞭炮吗?
Wǒ men jī jǐ fàng nà zhòng biānpào, gǎn jué mǎn guò yìn de, dì miàn rén jiā bù shì zài nà biān fàng nà zhòng biānpào ma?
‘I think that kind of firecracker is fun; it’s exciting to play it. Isn’t the neighbor across the street playing the environ-safe firecracker (over there)?’

In this example, za nian can be interpreted literally, i.e., indicating that the neighbor was playing the firecracker “over there”. However, this piece of locative information does not really add much to what we understand otherwise. Without it, the message would not miss out anything. So we can also take it as a superfluous expression. We count token examples like this one as members of the “vague"
category. The existence of the vague category in the data is perfectly normal from the perspective of grammaticalization and language change. When meaning undergoes evolution, there are numerous occasions where speakers use the expression to refer to both the old and the new meanings (Hopper & Traugott 1993). Here, for the benefit of doubt, we count all the token examples in the "vague" category as examples of the literal – compositional – interpretation (Type One).

Some (but not all) superfluous uses of zai nabian further develops, in the right speech contexts, into an expression suggesting the speaker's stance. Using this superfluous phraseology in a context in which the locative information is not really critical, the speaker can strategically call the hearer's attention with the seemingly factual detail about the described event. We have said above that zai nabian can refer to the time of the described event. This is natural given that zai, the first constituent element in the phraseology, is an aspect marker for duration in Chinese. Zai nabian, as a whole, gives a sense of "being at the scene where events are unfolding." In the interest of making one's speech vivid, it is natural for the speaker to throw in zai nabian to motivate the hearer to pay attention to his/her speech. Thus, the superfluous expression is superfluous at the semantic level only; it is a strategic device at the pragmatic level to highlight the speech. Furthermore, the superfluous zai nabian can also imply the speaker's detached stance about what s/he is saying. In some (but not all) examples, the described event is ridiculous, hilarious, or negative. In other words, the described event is (perceived and presented by the speaker as) far from the speaker's expectation, and the speaker casts a tone of voice to disassociate him/herself from the described event. Of course, the detached/negative sense is rooted in the meaning of na as a distal demonstrative. This meaning extension is natural given what we know about how meaning evolves in subjectification.

In the following excerpt, the speaker speaks humorously that her kind of man would have to be able to tolerate her talkativeness. If taken literally, the locative information of zai nabian is superfluous to the factual understanding, but the phraseology brings a sense of immediacy (i.e., as if we are seeing the woman keeps talking right in front of our eyes), "dramatizes" the narrative, and highlights the extraordinariness of the described event -- a woman constantly doing talking.

(10) 那一定要找一个男人，要嘛就是闭嘴，让我一直讲一直讲一直讲一直讲，然后不会嫌我烦。就不会嫌我啰嗦不会嫌我啰嗦，然后就去睡他的觉，让我在那边一个人讲讲讲讲讲。要不然就是要那种比我还厉害，我还会跑，然后就讲得比我多，那种男生。

Na yiding yao zhaon yiye nanren, yaoma ta jiushizi bzu, rang wo yizhi jiang yizhi jiang yizhi jiang yizhi jiang, ranghui bu hui xian wo fan. Jiushi bu hui xian wo laodaohu hui xian wo luosuo, huihui ju shui tade jiao, rang wo zai nabian yige ren jiang jiang jiang jiang jiang. Yaoburan jiushi yao nazhong bi wo hai liai, bi wo hai hui pao, huihui hua jiangde bi wo dudo, nazhong nasheng.
‘So I got to find a man who’s either shut up and let me talk, talk, talk, and talk, and wouldn’t mind it. (He) can’t think I am nagging or talkative; he’d just go to sleep and let me do the talking over there. Or, he has to be the kind of guy who’s better than I, “runs faster” (i.e., does things more quickly), and talks more.’

In the following excerpt, when asked about his opinion about the revolving “pirate boat” in the amusement park, the speaker gives his negative response. The phraseology, zai nabian, again, adds a sense of “being at the scene” and highlights the monotonousness of this amusement feature.

(11) 我觉得还好啦，只是我觉得没什么意义啊，就在那边转来转去而已啊。

Wo juezhe hai hao e, zhishi wo juezhe mel shenme yiyi a, jiu zai nabian zhuansai qu er yi a
‘Well it’s OK. It’s just that there wasn’t much “meaning” (i.e., fun). (The piece) just turned around and around over there, that’s all.’

As said before, all the idiomatized use of zai nabian is in the preposed position and none was found in the postposed position. Among the 93 preposed tokens, 29 belong to Type One – the literal interpretation expressing locative information. The rest 64 tokens belong to Type Two – the idiomatized interpretation. In other words, more than two thirds of the tokens (64: 93) are used in the non-compositional, idiomatic way. Phonetic reduction is strongly associated with the semantic differentiation. In all of the preposed tokens that are used with the idiomatic meaning, the na in zai nabian is clearly reduced, such that the vowel is gone but only the nasal is left as a trace. By contrast, for the preposed tokens with the literal
interpretation, the vowel in na is still retained in some while reduced to a schwa in some other. The phonetic and pragmatic evidences suggest that zai nabian is beginning to become an autonomous unit in the mental lexicon of speakers of Taiwan Mandarin. As a unit, the phraseology has its own idiomatic meaning which refers to the intention on the part of the speaker to highlight what s/he is saying but at the same time to suggest his/her detached stance toward the described event. However, so far there is no structural change; the phraseology maintains its preposed position. Furthermore, at present, the idiomatic interpretation still relies on the cues from the speech context. (The examples for the idiomatic interpretation given above, if isolated from their context, may all be interpreted literally as providing locative information.) Compared to nazhong, discussed in 3.1, which has clearly undergone structural reanalysis, zai nabian is still at the very beginning of the long process of lexicalization. Thus, at this point we can only say that there is evidence that zai nabian has been idiomatized; it is still a long way before it gets lexicalized, if it ever does.

Compared to zai nabian, zai zhebian is much less frequent. While the preposed position is the unmarked one (11 out of 13 tokens), the majority of the preposed (8 out of 11) is interpreted literally, conveying locative information. Therefore, at this point, meaning extension is hardly established for zai zhebian. The string is a frequent collocate, but has not yet fully stabilized into a phraseology, and is still far from becoming an autonomous unit in the speaker’s mental lexicon.

There are only 5 token examples of preposed zai nali in the database. Just as the case of zai nabian, most of the zai nali tokens (4 out of 5) express the speaker’s intention to highlight the described event as well as his/her detached stance. However, since the data size is too small, we will not draw any conclusion here. In like fashion, data size for zai zheli is small, too, but just like the case of zai zhebian, the tokens are all used literally to convey locative information. The following chart summarizes the relevant numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposed total</th>
<th>Literal interpretation</th>
<th>Idiomatic interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zai nabian</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zai zhebian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zai nali</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zai zheli</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3. Spoken vs. written

In this section we compare the spoken uses with those found in our written data. The lexicalization/idiomatization of nazhong and zai nabian/nali have not spread to written Chinese. The written data show a rather different frequency profile for all of the collocates: zhezhong is far more frequent than nazhong (about 5:1 ratio), zai zheli is also far more frequent than zai nali (about 2:1). On the other hand, zai zheli/nali are far more frequent than zai zhebian/nabian. We checked all of the na collocates in the database (about 100 tokens for nazhong, 50 for zai nali, and 5 for zai nabian). In almost all of the tokens na is used as a demonstrative. There is no lexicalization example for nazhong. Only one example is found for the idiomatized use of zai nabian/nali, which happens to be a (written) rendition of an oral narrative. It is safe to say, then, that the lexicalization and idiomatization of the collocates involving na have not entered the written language, possibly because written language is typically for information transmission rather than interpersonal interaction. The fact that the distal na is used less frequently than the proximal zhe in the written language, but more frequently in the spoken language may be accounted for by two factors: (1) that the proximal demonstrative is crucial for written Chinese because of its anaphoric function, and (2) that the distal demonstrative gets much higher use frequency in spoken Mandarin because of its involvement in grammaticalized (nage), lexicalized (nazhong) and idiomatized (zai nabian) phraseologies.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have examined two phraseologies involving the distal demonstrative na which have respectively gone through lexicalization and idiomatization because of their frequent uses in spoken Taiwan Mandarin. From the movement of nazhong and zai nabian, we witness the development of new meaning

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3 The written database we use for this study is drawn from the Sinorama Magazine online corpus.
and even new form due to the routinization of the pragmatic inferencing originally arising out of the interaction between the speaker and the hearer. While meaning extensions manifest the driving force of subjectification, the newly developed meanings are still strongly associated with the original meaning of the constituent elements. The distal demonstrative function of na serves as the basis for the extended senses of “uncertainty” (as in the case of nazhong) or of “detachedness” (as in the case of zai nabian). The original meaning of zhong, in like fashion, serves as the basis for the extended sense of “approximation” or “vague identification” (as found in the extended meaning of nazhong). The locative marker, zai, and the locative particle, bian, are originally space terms, but they also serve as the basis for conveying the more abstract concept, “vividness”.

While the two cases examined here show clear evidence for lexicalization or idiomatization in the spoken language, these newly developed uses have not appeared in written Chinese discourse primarily for information transmission on a regular basis. This fact reminds us that the two cases are still at the inception stage of their way to lexicalization. Compared with each other, zai nabian is at an even more initial stage than nazhong, since syntactic evidence is available for the latter to confirm its autonomous status in the mental lexicon but not for the former. This is why for zai nabian we acknowledge that it has begun to undergo idiomatization but it is still too early to speak about lexicalization.

The study of phraseologies exposes the significance of the syntagmatic relationship between linguistic elements. The more linguistic elements co-occur, the more likely they combine and fuse in (phonetic) form and in meaning - rendering idiomatization or even lexicalization. The lexicalization of phraseologies is a particularly important mechanism in the evolution of the Chinese language given that the majority of the morphemes in Chinese are monosyllabic.

The paradigmatic comparison, on the other hand, highlights the asymmetrical relationship across elements in the same grammatical category. In spoken Taiwan Mandarin, the distal na is much more frequently used than the proximal zhe. On their way to grammaticalization, lexicalization, and idiomatization, the na phraseologies are also much ahead of the zhe phraseologies. In terms of use distribution, the grammatical category of demonstratives is thus a skewed system. We have to acknowledge that after all, structural categories are conceptual and cognitive; the individual elements in the same category can behave quite differently in everyday language use.

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Tough Construction and Movement in Chinese

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Since the beginning of generative syntactic theory, tough construction (TC) has proved to be an intriguing phenomenon. A range of apparently contradictory properties suggest its derivation involve the application of both A-movement and A'-movement operations. However, most of previous studies focus on English, and the analyses have not been fully tested in other languages. Chinese also has an English-like TC (shown in (1)). This paper will analyze Chinese tough construction and propose that Chinese TC involves subject-to-subject raising (SSR). The availability of optional topicalization and a null pronominal complicates the analysis (shown in (2)).

(1) Yuehan hennan quyue.
John very difficult please
‘John is very difficult to please.’

(2) Analysis of (1)
[s topic Yuehan, [s pro-arb hennan [op-fin] t_q quyue t_v]]

In (2), the embedded subject is a phonologically silent argument defined as a universal quantifier. It is obligatorily raised to the matrix subject position as SSR. The embedded object also moves to the topic position, but this movement is optional and not unique to TC.
The analysis shows evidence for universal preference of SSR to object-to-subject raising. It is also consistent with research of L1 influence in English TC learning among Chinese ESL speakers. Further studies may focus on cross-linguistic difference in tough construction.