# Multifunction Word *Lau* in Early Hakka

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**Abstract.** Based on Biblical Histories in Hakka Colloquial, a biblical reading in Hakka published by Basel Mission in 1868, this article outlines the usage of Hakka multifunctional word *lau* over a century ago, which is also compared with contemporary Hakka dialect, to reflect grammaticalizaion pathway of *lau*, i.e. verb – commitive preposition – co-agent preposition – benefactive preposition – object preposition and coordinating conjunction (for animate noun) – coordinating conjunction (for all nouns) – coordinating conjunction (for all nouns and adjectives) – patient particle – emphatic particle. The next part is a synchronic comparison with contemporary Meixian Hakka and Hong Kong Cantonese, which reveals that the *lau* in New Territories Hakka is the most grammaticalized, followed by that in Meixian Hakka, while the *lau* in Hong Kong Cantonese has not been grammaticalized.

**Keywords:** *lau*; grammaticalization; Basel Mission; New Territories; Hakka Multifunctionality

## 1 Introduction

The "multifuctionality" of word, which has gradually become a hot topic in linguistics, is a synchronic phenomenon commonly seen across languages. [1][2][3] Like *gei* in Mandarin Chinese[4], *kang* in southern Min[5] and *tong* in Cantonese[6], *lau* in Hakka dialect has various functions and different regions, so it is a multi-functional word. The object of this study is Biblical Histories in Hakka Colloquial (BHHC), which is a condensed biblical reading published in 1868 by Basel Mission, a Hong Kong-based Christian church organization dedicated to the missionary work among Hakka people since the middle of the 19th century[7]. The book is produced in romanized Hakka colloquial in a total of 85 pages and divided into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, composed of 31 and 41 short stories, respectively. As Chang and Zhuang (2001) mentioned, the biblical publication in dialect (of Basel Mission) is based on the Hakka spoken in the New Territories region[8]. Thus, in this article, this publication is regarded as the record of New Territories Hakka (NT Hakka) one and a half century ago, which is used to reflect the multifuctional word *lau*. The investigation into the multifunctional *lau* provides side evidence for the conclusion of Li Rulong(2014) that over the past century, the grammatical features of NT Hakka have remained stable in general with subtle shifts and repetition of some phenomena[9].

## 2     Verb

In contemporary NT Hakka, *lau* as a verb means to stir or mix, e.g., chiyou *lau* fan (mixed rice with soy sauce). In Hong Kong Cantonese (HK Cantonese), it is pronounced as lou1 (high and level tone, with a tone pitch of 55) and written as 捞、, while in Taiwan, it is usually written as 扌老, or 摎 in some cases. The corresponding Chinese character remains inconclusive, thus in this article, it is written as *lau* as in BHHC. Research shows that in the book, *lau* occurs at a high frequency and bears more one meaning. However, there can be found only one example where it acts as a verb (within the parentheses is the standard Chinese translation, with the English literal translation and paraphrasing; the same below):

(1) Yalahan you yizhi zhizi，ming anzuo Luote，ye *lau* jin tongxia qv.

(Abraham have one CL nephew, name call Lot, also *lau*-ASP together go.)

(Abraham had a nephew called Lot, who also went with him.)

The *lau* here is followed by *jin*, a progressive aspect marker, which indicates that the *lau* is acting as a verb to some extent. As a verb, it means to **mix** here.

## 3     Preposition

Lai (2003) pointed out the polysemy of *lau* in contemporary Sixian dialect of Taiwan Hakka[10]. In fact, according to the distribution of *lau* in BHHC, as early as a hundred years ago, the *lau* sentence recorded by Basel Mission in the New Territories already presented such a feature, when *lau* was mainly used as a preposition. Lai (2003) divided *lau* sentences into five types based on the meanings of *lau*, namely, commitive, source, object, benefactive, and patient[10]. Her division is employed in this article, but with some appropriate adjustment, as the usages of object or patient cannot be found in the text, while there is an additional usage of equative comparative. Moreover, *lau* as a patient marker is more grammaticalized and can be regarded as a particle, differentiated from the above-mentioned four types (as preposition).

### 3.1     Commitive

Before the 1990s, most researchers believed that the coordinating conjunctions joining noun phrases were grammaticalized directly from verbs[11]. Liu and Peyraube (1994) were the first to point out that the diachronic change of Chinese coordinating conjunctions is composed of two stages of grammaticalization: firstly, from verb to preposition; secondly, from preposition to conjunction[12]. This conclusion has been commonly accepted and supported by evidence from many Chinese dialects, including the *lau* sentence in Taiwan Hakka. An analysis from the perspective of semantic expansion by Lai (2003) showed that the meaning of *lau* was first expanded from to mix or stir to the commitive meaning and then to the conjunct one, which is a process from notional to functional[10]. On such a basis, it can be deemed that in the process of grammaticalization and semantic expansion of *lau*, the commitive meaning served as an important bridge. Wu (2003) noted from a typological perspective that a number of Chinese

coordinating conjunctions went through a grammaticalization process of commitive verb – commitive preposition – coordinating conjunctions[13]. However, his paper with the investigation into the dialects in many parts of China did not cover NT Hakka in Hong Kong nor historical documents in dialects. Therefore, this article can make up the research gaps with the existing historical document in dialect, BHHC. Here are some examples:

(2)Danxi qv tingcong Shangdi jie hua, *lau* qi laizi Yisa qishen，qudao yizhi shan.

(But he listen to God's word, *lau* his son Isaac up body, go to one CL mountain.)

(But he listened to God and set out with his son Isaac for a mountain.)

(3)Yalahan *lau* yisa jiu qishen zhuan wujia.

(Abraham *lau* Isaac then up body back home.)

(Abraham and Isaac then set out for home.)

(4)Yage *lau* qi laizi zai Jianan defang jvzhu.

(Jacob *lau* his son in Canaan land live.)

(Jacob and his sons lived in the land of Canaan.)

(5)Yage *lau* qi yi jia ren zai Aiji guo anjvleye.

(Jacob *lau* his one family people in Egypt country live a happy life.)

(Jacob and his family lived a happy life in Egypt.)

(6)Yage *lau*  qi laizi qu Aiji guo.

(Jacob *lau* his son go to Egypt country.)

(Jacob and his sons went to Egypt.)

(7)Houlai Yuese *lau*  qi xiongdi anxin jizhu zai  Aiji   guo,

(Later Joseph *lau* his brother at ease live in   Egypt country)

zhidao  nianji  laomai  tounamao bai   zhi   shi.

(till to   age    old     hair   white PART time)

(Later, Joseph and his brothers settled in Egypt and lived till they were at an old age and their hair turned grizzled.)

(8)Yuese jiang hai  nidou shuohua, qv jiu *lau* qi laodi

(Joseph  speak-ASP these   word,   he then *lau* his  younger brother

Pengyamin, lanjin  jing   lai jiao, you *lau* qi  age      zhenzui.

(Benjamin hold-ASP neck  to cry   also  *lau*   his elder brother kiss)

(Finishing these words, Joseph and his younger brother Benjamin cried, holding each other's neck, and kissed his elder brother.)

(9)Yage si  zhi  shi, Yese   hao youchou. You jiao, you *lau*  qi aba zhenzui.

(Jacob    die PART time, Joseph very sad.    And cry  and *lau*  his father kiss.)

(When Jacob died, Joseph was very sad; he cried and kissed his father.)

(10)Shangdi zhufu Nuoya, *lau* qv jie yue, zai tianding li xian yitiao tiangong.

(God bless Noah, *lau* he establish a covenant, in the sky show one CL rainbow.)

(God blessed Noah and established a covenant with him, with a rainbow showed in the sky.)

(11)Yuese kandao   qi xiongdi, qv  jiu  hao huanxi, yong cihe  jie

(Joseph  see-PART his brother, he once very happy, use   soft-PART)

shuohua，*lau* qv tanjiang.

(words, *lau*  he  talk)

(Once Joseph saw his brother, he was very happy and talked to him in a soft tone.)

(12)Yage *lau* huangdi tanjiang，you zhufu qv.
(Jacob *lau* Pharaoh talk, and bless he.)
(Jacob talked to Pharaoh and blessed him.)

## 3.2    Source:

(13)Guci   you   ren    you yuan you jin  haoduo   ren    lai
  (so    have people from far   from near   many people come)
  falaowang mianqian, *lau*   qv  qiu   kouliang.
  (Pharaoh's face    *lau*  he  beg   food.)
  (Therefore, many people from far and near came to Pharaoh and begged for food from him.)

## 3.3    Benefactive:

(14)Huangdi jiu han haoduo you zhihui jie ren lai *lau* qv jiemeng.
  (Pharaoh then send for many wise-PART men to *lau* he interpret dream.)
  (Pharaoh then sent for many wise men to interpret dreams for him.)
  (15)Yuese   tingdao fen Huangdi  zhao,     qv jiu han    titou
  (Joseph   hear    be Pharaoh  send for, he so call    barber)
       shifu lai    *lau*  qv jianmao.
  (Joseph hear be Pharaoh send for, he so call barber to *lau* him cut hair.)
  (Joseph heard Pharaoh sent for him, so he had a barber shave for him.)
  (16)Falaowang jinxia zai Yuese   manqian   ye   jiangchu     qi
  (Pharaoh    now in Joseph's face      also   tell out     his )
  meng,   Yuese jiu *lau*  qv jie.
  (dream,   Joseph and *lau*   he interpret)
  (Pharaoh now in Joseph's face also tell his dream, Joseph and *lau* he interpret.)
  (Pharaoh now told Joseph his dream, and Joseph interpreted it for him.)

## 3.4    Equative Comparative:

(17)Fan   you   ren   zengnao   qi xiongdi, xi *lau* sharen yiyang.
  (If anyone detest his brother, be *lau* murder the same.)
  (Detesting one's brother is the same as murder.)
  It is evident from the text that co-agent is an important usage of *lau* as a commitive preposition (e.g. Examples 9 and 10). As indicated by its name, co-agent refers to that the NP1 in front of and NP2 behind *lau* jointly complete a certain action, each of which is necessary. For example, in (9), the action of kissing requires two agents to complete it together; with either of the two missed, it cannot be called kissing. Haspelmath (2003) constructed a grammaticalization path of commitive case – co-agent – allative case, but without support of any perfect cross-linguistic examples[14]. Lai (2003) noted from a perspective of semantic expansion that the allative case (object) is a metonymy from the commitive case; the ablative case (source), on the contrary, refers to a context of taking away, where the sentence is interpreted as ablative; in the case of appearance or

disappearance of participant roles in an event frame, the ablative case and the allative case were jointly expanded to the benefactive case[10]. Chen (2010) proved that the benefactive case is grammaticalized only from the allative case in the typological methodology. Li (2014) investigated historical documents to identify the time when the three cases of the Cantonese preposition *tong* first appeared and found that the benefactive case (1841) appeared much earlier than the allative case(1877) and the ablative case(1877) [9]. In fact, in different research approaches, these researchers investigated the same question. By now, it has been commonly accepted that the allative case is grammaticalized from the commitive case, while the relations between the benefactive case, the allative case, and the ablative case are not clear.

The Hakka *lau* from the critical period of the 1860s may serve as side evidence: the *lau* in BHHC is never actually used in the allative case. Considering the time of first appearance of the Cantonese benefactive preposition *tong*, in this article, it is concluded that the benefactive case appeared earlier than the allative case.

## 4    Coordinating Conjunction

The *lau* as conjunction and the *lau* as preposition are not easy to distinguish as they can appear in the same pattern (NP1 + *lau* + NP1 + VP). To define *lau* as a preposition or conjunction, the interchangeability principle is applied in this article, the specific practice of which is as follows:

(18)Yuese  *lau*  qi  aba  zhenzui.

(Joseph    *lau* his father  kiss)

(Joseph kissed his father.)

Example sentence (18) can be analyzed in two ways: If *lau* acts as a preposition, *Joseph* will be the *agent* of *kissing* in the sentence, in which case if Joseph is swapped with his father, the meaning of the sentence will change and *father* will be the *agent* of *kissing*. With *lau* as a conjunction, the swapping of *Joseph* and *his father* will have no effect on the meaning of the sentence, as neither of them is the agent of the action. Next is the outline of the usage of *lau* as conjunction in NT Hakka over a century ago.

Though BHHC, *lau* is the most significant coordinating conjunction. With a meaning similar to and in English, it can join not only animate nouns (Example 21) but also inanimate ones (Example 20). The nouns joined by *lau* can act as both the subject (Example 22) and the object (Example 20 and 21).

(19)Nidou xiongdi hao dai aba  lai niding,  ni  *lau* aba  jin

(You    brother shall take Father to here,  you  *lau*  Father all)

douhao  tongxia  lai  niding  xue.

(all good  together come  here  settle)

(You brothers should take Father to here; you and Father should settle here together.)

(20)Disanri  Shangdi fenchu  shui *lau*  ludi.

(third day  God  separate out  water *lau*  land)

(On the third day, God separated the water and the land.)

(21)Diwu ri  Shangdi zao  yu  *lau*  niaoque.

(fifth day God  create fish  *lau*  bird.)

(On the fifth day, God created fishes and birds.)

(22)Yalahan *lau* qi laopo Sela     haolao    dou mao   laizi.

(Abraham *lau* his   wife Sarah   very old   have no    son)

(Abraham and his wife Sarah had no sons till a very old age.)

It can join not only two nouns (e.g. Example 20 and 21) but also three (Example 23 and 24):

(23)Ni     hao     fenfu      re    xiongdi, ai      dai laopo、 zinv 、

(You shall    command    your brother   should take wife,      child)

*lau*    aba        lai        niding.

(*lau*    father    come      here)

(You should command your brothers to take their wives, children, and father here.)

(24)Diliu ri   Shangdi zaohua si jiao      jie          chusheng、

(sixth day  God    create quadrupedal  PART      livestock)

        yeshou *lau* geyang  jie        chong.

        (beast    lau  all kinds  PART   insects)

(On the sixth day, God created quadrupedal livestock, beasts, and all kinds of insects.)

(25)Shangdi dading      zhuyi,  ai  luoxia da     shui  lai jin     si

(God    make up    mind, want  bring  great  rain   to  drown dead)

        shijian ren *lau* hunxia jie    chusheng qinshou.

        (world  man lau all-PART    livestock   beast)

(God made up His mind to bring a flood to destroy men under heaven and all livestock and beasts.)

(26)Zuozheng  jiu     daijin      qi laopo *lau* sanjie      laizi

(Complete        once    bring-ASP his wife  *lau*  three CL    son)

Sanjie       xinjiu,          tongxia   luo    jietiao chuan    li   qu.

(three CL daughter-in-law, together   go down   this   ark    inside go)

(Once completing [the ark], [he] brought his wife and three sons and three daughters-in-law and entered this ark together.)

The year 1868, when BHHC was published, was far from the start of the New Culture Movement (a movement in China in the 1910s and 1920s that promoted vernacular literature), when classical Chinese was common in writing. However, it was nearly impossible for BHHC, as a translated biblical reading in dialect, to be free from any influence from the source language. As Wang (1980) mentioned in his Draft History of the Chinese Language, in the case of three or more people or objects joined together, the traditional Chinese style is to divide them into two or three groups before inserting a conjunction in between any two of these groups[15]. … Since the May Fourth Movement (an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement which grew out of student protests in Beijing on May 4, 1919), under the influence of Western grammar, it has become a norm to set the conjunction between the last two people or objects.

The above-mentioned conclusion by Wang (1980) is effective for the analysis of traditional Chinese texts[15]. However, a work by missionaries such as BHHC, it is more complicated to determine whether the Westernized grammar is followed, as BHHC inclines be a Chinese-Western intermediate state. Examples (23) and (24) appear to follow the Western grammar, as the *lau* joins the last two nouns. However, in (26), it is

obvious that the traditional Chinese style is employed, i.e. to divide the nominal constructions to be joined into two groups, namely, *wife* and *sons* and *daughters-in-law*, before inserting the conjunction *lau* in between. In other words, the three group are still in a coordinating relation without the *lau* in between the last two groups.

However, in (23) and (24), the *lau* in between the last two items is insufficient for the conclusion that the two sentences follow the Western grammar, although the possibility of influence from the Western grammar cannot be easily eliminated due to the source text. It is also reasonable to regard (23) as a traditional Chinese sentence, as *wives*, *sons,* and *daughters-in-law* belong to one category and *Father* to another. So is (24), where *livestock* and *beasts* belong to one category (quadrupedal creatures) and *insects* to another, while the joining with *lau* makes only a formal Western pattern of NP1 + NP2 + *lau* + NP3. In (25), there are also *livestock* and *beasts*, which belong to the same group, and men under *heaven* to another. Joined with the conjunction, they make a formal traditional Chinese pattern of NP1 + *lau* + NP2 + NP3.

Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the Westernized grammar did not form in a day. BHHC is valuable as it reflects the intermediate state in the formation of the new conjunction. In the first few years after Western texts were introduced into China, their Chinese translations were under the subtle influence of the source texts. As pointed out by Zhou Zuoren, (The Chinese translation of) The Gospel of Matthew was indeed the first text in Westernized Chinese in China. Foreseeably, it will have a great and profound relation with Chinese journalism. The period of since the May Fourth Movement in the conclusion of Westernized grammar by Wang (1980) may be inaccurate, considering that in the early 19th century, missionaries were active in China and carried out translation of religious texts, which already had influence on the local grammar to some extents [15].

As mentioned above, *lau* is the most significant coordinating conjunction in BHHC. Different from typical Chinese functional words represented by *he*, in BHHC there cannot be found any *lau* joining verbal constructions to act as a predicate in a sentence nor joining adjectives or clauses. The inability to join adjectives proves the grammaticalization path of coordinating conjunction proposed by Chen (2010), verb – commitive preposition – coordinating conjunction (for animate noun) – coordinating conjunction (for all nouns) – coordinating conjunction (for all nouns and adjectives), which should be applicable in the evolution of Hakka. BHHC reflects the specific usage of the *lau* that was just grammaticalized into coordinating conjunction (for all nouns).

More examples of *lau* as conjunction are as follows:

(27) Shangdi dou zaohua  ren, yizhi    nanren  *lau* yizhi    funv.
(God    also create  man, one CL  man    *lau*      one CL woman)
(God also created men, a man and a woman.)
(28) Ni   hao zuo    yitiao dachuan, bao ni  *lau*  re       yijiaren jie ming.
(You shall make one CL  ark,       save you  *lau*  your  family's  life)
(You should make an ark to save the lives of you and your family.)
(29) Nuoya *lau* qi yijia    ren   luo         hai chui yihou, Shandi
(Noah    *lau*  his  family people  go down  in    ark after  God)
jiu   luo   sishi ri     shui   nen jiu.
(just   drop   forty day    rain    this long)

(After Noah and his family went into the ark, God caused it to rain for as long as forty days.)

(30)Shijian suoyou jie    wu, *lau*  zhigao jie      shan fen shui

(world    all  PART house, *lau*  highest-PART mountain be water)

mo kai，ren *lau*   chusheng  you fen shui jin  si.

(cover,  man *lau*   livestock  and be water drown dead)

(All houses and the highest mountains under heaven were covered by water; all men and livestock were drowned in water.)

(31)Ai  zuo  huochang, yong shiyou lai zuo  hui,    qi zhi cheng

(must make commander, use  tar  to make mortar  build CL  city)

*lau*  yi zuo ta，tading    ai  ding dao tian   nen gao.

(*lau* one CL tower, tower top shall reach  to heaven  as   high)

([I] would like to be a commander, to use tar for mortar to build a city and a tower; the top of the tower should reach up to the heavens.)

(32)Nenyang  jiu ting gong, zuo cheng *lau* ta     wu cheng.

(This way just stop work, build city  *lau*  tower not successful)

(They just stopped and did not completed building the city or the tower.)

(33)Yalahan *lau*   Luote；Suodun *lau*   Gemola；

(Abraham *lau* Lot;   Sodom  *lau* Gomorrah)

Yalahan   *lau* Yisa；Yage *lau*   Yishao

(Abraham *lau* Isaac;  Jacob *lau*  Esau)

(Abraham and Lot; Sodom and Gomorrah; Abraham and Isaac; Jacob and Esau)

(34)Yalahan   *lau*   Luode liang zishu dou wei haoduo chusheng.

(Abraham *lau* Lot two nephew uncle both raise many livestock.)

(Abraham and Lot, the uncle and the nephew, both raised many livestock.)

(35)Luode jiu daijin    qi laopo , *lau*   liang zhi meizi

(Lot  so bring-ASP  his  wife *lau* two CL  daughter)

kuaikuai   chu Suodun   cheng.

(quickly   leave Sodom   city)

(Lot quickly fled from Sodom with his wife *lau* two sisters.)

(36)Shangdi jiuci tianding luoxia   huo *lau*   liuhuang lai,

(God  then heaven  fall down fire *lau*  sulfur    PART)

jiaomie  suodun  gemola    cheng.

(overthrow  Sodom  Gomorrah  city)

(God then rained down fire and sulfur from the heavens and overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.)

(37)Yuese lingzi song  dou  hao paichang jie shan   *lau*   baobei,

(Joseph extra send  some fine      -PART garment *lau*  treasure)

en  qi xiongdi    *lau*  Aba

give  his brothers   *lau*  father.)

(Joseph presented some extra fine garments and treasure to his brothers and father.)

(38)Jian Falaowang, Yuese jiu anzhi qi Aba *lau* xiongdi,

(Meet Pharaoh     Joseph just settle his  father *lau*  brother)

fen dou  tiandi、chusheng、migu  qv.

(give some  land,  livestock,  rice  he.)

(After the presence before Pharaoh, Joseph settled his father and brothers and provided lands, livestock, and food for them.)

(39)Yage zhufu kai yuese gai laizi yihou, you zhufu Yuese *lau*   qi xiongdi.

(Jacob bless-ASP Joseph's PART son after, then bless Joseph *lau* his brother.)

(Jacob blessed Joseph's sons and then blessed Joseph and his brothers.)

(40)Houlai Yuese *lau*   qi   xiongdi   jiao qi   Aba shishou   qu jianan

(Later Joseph *lau* his brother   carry his father's remains to Canaan

jie     defang, zai gaiding maizang.

PART   land   in   there     bury)

(Later, Joseph and his brothers carried the remains of his father to the land of Canaan and buried him there.)

(41)Wo hui fen ni *lau*   Aba jvzhu，you shi you shi.

(I will make you *lau* father live, with food with appliance.)

(I will make you live with your father, without worrying about food.)


# 5      Diachronic and Synchronic Comparisons

## 5.1      Diachronic Comparison

### a. Preposition of Object:

The comparison with contemporary NT Hakka shows that the contemporary *lau* retains the three meanings above, when its meaning of object (which cannot be found in BHHC) is widely used, for example:

(42)Qv   *lau*   xiaoxue laoshi xie xin.

(He *lau* primary school teacher write letter.)

(He wrote a letter to his primary school teacher.)

(43)Qv   *lau*     biaojie jianghai   yizhi       mimi.

(He *lau*     cousin tell-ASP   one CL     secret.)

(He told a secret to his cousin.)

Object and source are in opposite directions. For the *lau* of source, it is inward, as in (14), the ownership of food moves from NP2 to NP1 via the action of begging. On the contrary, the *lau* of object is outward, as in (42), the letter moves from NP1 to NP2. As mentioned above, Lai (2003) analyzed from a semantic perspective and draw the conclusion that the benefactive case is the outcome of the expansion from source and object in the same manner; as an outcome, the benefactive case should appear later than source and outcome[10]. However, also based on historical documents, the conclusion of this research agrees with that of the research on the grammaticalization of the Cantonese tong (Li, 2014), i.e. the benefactive case appeared earlier at least than the allative case [9].


### b. Particle of Patient and Emphatic

Moreover, as mentioned above, it is commonly agreed in the academic community that the Chinese functional words represented by he went through a grammaticalization path of verb – preposition – conjunction. Chappell (2000) advanced the path with the

discovery of the wide usage of gong (共) in Min Chinese as a mark of patient and noted that from a typological perspective, this is rare in Chinese dialects, where most patient markers were grammaticalized from verbs meaning to hold, to carry, and to support, such as ba in modern Chinese Putonghua, 將 in Cantonese, and扌戒 in early Cantonese[16]. However, in a semantic investigation into African and European languages from a typological perspective, Haspelmath (2000) discovered that it is common for commitive, source, benefactive, coordinating, and patient to share one functional word[14]. Although the material of this article contains no examples of *lau* of patient, the investigation into the *lau* in contemporary NT Hakka supports the existence of this usage. For example:

(44)Maogong   *lau*   wu xianyu shiqiu hai.

(Cat *lau* my salty fish eat-ASP.)

(The cat ate up my salty fish.)

Lai (2003) believed the *lau* of patient went through two grammaticalization paths; one is from the meaning of source and the other from the benefactive case[10]. The material of this article basically agrees with the above-induced grammaticalization path. The *lau* used as a marker of patient should appear later.

Besides as a marker of patient, the *lau* in contemporary Hakka can be used in a more grammaticalized manner. For example:

(45)Fan *lau*   ya shi qiu qv！

(Food *lau* I eat-ASP he!)

(Eat up the food (for me)!)

(46)*Lau*     ya fan shiqiu qv！

(lau I food eat-ASP he!)

(Eat up the food (for me)!)

The *lau ya* (the first-person pronouns in Hakka) is more like a fixed expression. The second and third person pronouns do not combine with *lau*, like *lau ni* (second person singular), *lau qv* (third person singular), or *lau nidouren* (second person plural), to form an emphatic marker.

## 5.2    Synchronic Comparison

Search in the Early Cantonese Tagged Database shows that the most frequent single-syllable conjunctions are tong, gong, and ji. Further statistics indicates that before 1900, jiwas a dominating conjunction in Cantonese; from 1900 to 1931, the dominance gradually moved to gong; while the usage frequency of tong saw few changes. At present, tong is the most important coordinating conjunction in contemporary Cantonese, while gong is hardly used except in lyrics.

However, NT Hakka, which is highly exposed to HK Cantonese, does not show such significant changes. After over one hundred years, *lau* is still frequently used, without any signs to be replaced or influenced by Cantonese. It indicates that even in the exposure to a dominating language, the functional words of a language can hardly be changed.

A comparison of the two dialects indicates that different from its equivalents in Cantonese, *lau* went through significant grammaticalization in the past century and has

become a functional word that is extremely highly grammaticalized with an abundance of meanings. In contemporary Cantonese, there is the *lau* as verb equivalent to that in NT Hakka (pronounced as lou1 and usually written as 捞), which has only notional meanings, among which the basic one is to mix. One of its features is that it is hardly used with human, for example, lou1 mian (mixed noodles). The meaning of to mix of *lau* in Meixian Hakka has generates a meaning of to wander, for example, *lau* jie (to wander on streets / hang out) via semantic expansion. It has also grammaticalized into a vague usage of preposition-verb, meaning with, for example, I *lau* A-ying together had a meal. (I had a meal with A-ying.) The *lau* in NT Hakka is the most grammaticalized, which can act not only as verb and preposition but also as conjunction and particle.

In conclusion, the synchronic comparison of contemporary NT Hakka, contemporary Meixian Hakka, and HK Cantonese indicates that the *lau* in NT Hakka is the most grammaticalized, followed by that in Meixian Hakka, while the *lau* in HK Cantonese has not been grammaticalized.

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