Non-Prototypical Uses of Personal Pronouns and Their Grammaticalization in Chinese

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Abstract—With an interesting typological study on the non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns, Helmbrecht (2015) demonstrates that the form-meaning mismatch with regards to personal pronouns is essentially based on discourse. It is claimed that the referents of personal pronouns dynamically keep changing with a particular context, and some kind of additional pragmatic meaning tends to be encoded into them. Based on his study, Helmbrecht proposes two hypotheses about how the phenomena at issue could be grammaticalized: (i) Plural pronouns may shift to singular ones; (ii) third-person pronouns may shift to second- or first-person ones, but not vice versa. Drawing on a more comprehensive typological perspective, this article presents various patterns in Mandarin Chinese that supplement Helmbrecht's generalization and adjust his hypotheses concerning the grammaticalization of personal pronouns (Hu, 2018).

Index Terms—Non-prototypical use, Personal pronoun, Reference, Grammaticalization

I. INTRODUCTION

Helmbrecht's (2015) typological study on the non-prototypical uses of personal pronoun is intriguing, revealing that the form-meaning mismatch involving personal pronouns is essentially discourse-based, in the sense that the referents of personal pronouns dynamically vary with a particular context, and hence some kind of additional pragmatic meaning tends to be encoded into them. For instance, a soccer fan can naturally say 'We won the game last night', though s/he is not a player of the winning team. Helmbrecht's study also reveals that at least a subset of the non-prototypical uses appears to be stabilized in the diachronic change of personal pronouns. Based on his study, Helmbrecht (2015) proposes two hypotheses about how the phenomena at issue could be grammaticalized: (i) Plural pronouns may shift to singular pronouns; (ii) third-person pronouns may shift to second- or first-person ones, but not vice versa. Based on our previous study, in this article, we present some non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns in Chinese to complement Helmbrecht's generalization as well as to modify his hypotheses of grammaticalization (Hu, 2018).

II. NON-PROTOTYPICAL USES OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN CHINESE

The issue of pragmatic referentiality in Chinese has been addressed in the literature (e.g., Chen, 2009; Chen et al., 2010). Due to the particular focus of this article, we only present the non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns in Chinese, which Helmbrecht's generalization, as given in Table 1, does not seem to apply to. The general information of Chinese pronouns is given in Table 2 (Hu, 2018).

TABLE 1
THE GENERALIZATION OF NON-PROTOTYPICAL USES OF IMPERSONAL PRONOUNS (HELMBRECHT, 2015)

| THE GENERALIZATION OF THOSE TROPOST THE COLOR OF THE RESIDENCE TO COLOR (THE MARKETT, 2013) | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-----------------|----------|-----|-----|-----------|---|-----|-----------|--|-----|
| Meaning | | impersonal uses | | 1SG | 1PL | 2SG | | 2PL | PL 3SG | | 3PL |
| Form | | | | | | l. | | | | | |
| 1 3 | | generic | specific | | | honorific | | | honorific | | |
| 1SG | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1PL | INCL | + | | | | | + | + | | | + |
| | EXCL | | | + | | | + | + | | | + |
| 2 | 2SG | | + | + | | | | | | | |
| 2PL | | | | | | + | | | | | |
| 3SG | | | | | | + | + | | | | |
| 3PL | | + | + | | | + | | | + | | |

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¹ The abbreviations used in this article is in line with those in Helmbrecht's study: 1, 2, 3 = first, second, third person; SG = singular; PL = plural; INCL = inclusive; EXCL = exclusive; > = this symbol translates as 'used as' or 'changed to'; lower case indices in Table 1 indicate the number of tokens of speech act role, e.g. $2_{2-n} = 2$ up to n hearer (Hu, 2018).

| | | | THE GENERAL INFORMATION C | OF CHINESE PRONOUNS | | | |
|--------|----|-------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------|---|--|
| Person | N | umber | Chinese pronouns Reference sets | | English counterpart | | |
| | SG | | wo | {1} | I | | |
| 1 | PL | INCL | zan/zanmen/women ² | $\{1+2_{1-n}\};\ \{1+2_{1-n}+3_{1-n}\}$ | we | Ø | |
| | | EXCL | women ³ | {1+3 _{1-n} } | | Ø | |
| | SG | | ni | {2} | | | |
| 2 | PL | | nimen | $\{2_{2-n}\};$ $\{2_{1-n}+3_{1-n}\}$ | you | | |
| 3 | | SG | ta | {3} | he/she/it | | |
| | | PL | tamen | {3 _{2-n} } | they | | |

TABLE 2
THE GENERAL INFORMATION OF CHINESE PRONOLING

A. Non-Prototypical Uses of Third-Person Pronoun

(a). 3SG > 1SG

Under the dynamic context, the 3SG pronoun *ta* 'he/she/it', which is prototypically used to refer to a third party, can be employed to mean the speaker himself or herself (which is supposed to be a 1SG pronoun) in order to enhance the objectivity of the statement expressed by some utterance. The use of *ta* in (1) below is arguably a typical case in which the speaker exploits the alienation characteristic of a 3SG pronoun to achieve her purpose (Hu, 2018).

(1) 凤姐道:"至今珍大哥还抱怨后悔呢。你明儿了他,好歹赔释赔释,我年轻,原没见过世面,谁叫大爷错委了**他**呢。"清代曹雪芹《红楼梦》

Fengjie "zhijin Zhendage baoyuan houhui ne. Fengjie up to now Cousin Zhen still complain regret **PAR** say jian haodai peishi ni mingge le ta, peishi, wo **ASP** 2SG tomorrow see 3SG anyhow apologize apologize 1SG nianqing, yuan mei jian guo shimian, shui iiao young originally not see **ASP** aspects of society who make daye le. ta C110 wei **ASP** Cousin Zhen mistakenly entrust 1SG PAR

'Fengjie said, "I'm sure Cousin Zhen is still regretting his rashness. When you see him tomorrow, do apologize for me. Tell him he should never have entrusted such a task to someone so young and inexperienced" (*The Dream of Red Mansions* by Xueqin Cao) (Hu, 2018).

In (1), the speaker, Fengjie, creates a fictive scenario in which the hearer, her husband, would apologize on her behalf to Cousin Zhen for her fault. Under this circumstance, the speaker directly explains why she botches up the task entrusted by Cousin Zhen, and wants the hearer to verbatim repeat what she said. During the course of her account, the speaker shifts the deictic center from herself to her husband by using a 3SG pronoun instead of a 1SG one, which is manifest in the information flow from the speaker-oriented explanation (using the 1SG pronoun wo 'I') to the hearer-oriented comment on Cousin Zhen (using the 3SG pronoun ta 'she'). Seen this way, the second 3SG pronoun is not related to Cousin Zhen, but anaphorically connected with the 1SG antecedent, namely Fengjie, the speaker herself. Due to the shift of the deictic center, each part of this excuse performs its own function, respectively: On the one hand, the speaker-oriented explanation shows that it is characteristic of her to courageously admit her own mistake; on the other, the hearer-oriented comment reveals the speaker's intention that she wants to reasonably put the blame for her own fault on Cousin Zhen (Hu, 2018).

(b). 3SG > 3PL

It has been noticed in the literature that 3SG pronoun can be intended to have a plural meaning (Xu, 1999; Wu & Matthew, 2010; Chen & Wu, 2011). As illustrated in (2), ta should be construed as a collective meaning, referring to zhe bang xiaotou 'the gang of thieves' in topic position (Hu, 2018).

₍₂₎ 这帮小偷,警处恨不得杀了**他。**

jingchu Zhe xiaotou. henbude sha le ta. bang **ASP** 3PL this gang thieves police would-rather kill

'This gang of thieves, the police would rather kill them' (Xu, 1999, p. 5).

(c). 3SG > Impersonal Generic Use

The impersonal uses of personal pronouns mean that they can be related to an indefinite referent in a particular context (see Kitagawa & Lehrer, 1990; Biq, 1991 inter alia). In terms of the degree of individuation, Helmbrecht (2015)

² Both *zan* and *zanmen* are 1INCL.PL pronouns in Chinese. However, there still exists an observable distinction between them, from a sociolinguistic viewpoint, namely, the former is popular in rural areas, whereas the latter can be regarded as a formal variant relatively (cf. Lü, 1984).

³ In Chinese, *women* can be used as 1INCL.PL pronoun as well as exclusive one, as the case may be.

categorizes this usage into two classes, viz., generic use and specific use: The former means that the personal pronoun refers to a generalized group, whereas the latter relates the personal pronoun to an arbitrary individual. In general, personal pronouns in Chinese can be impersonally used to have a generic meaning, as shown in (3) (Hu, 2018).

(3) 不管是谁,只要年满十八周岁,**他**都有选举权。

Buguan shi shui, zhivao nian man shibazhousui, no matter SHI who as long as reach 18 years old age dou xuanjuquan. ta you generalized group all have suffrage

'Whosoever is over 18 years old has suffrage.'

In (3), ta does not refer to a third party but a generalized group of people meeting the condition of age. This kind of non-prototypical use has not been mentioned in Helmbrecht's study, but it is also quite common in English, especially in some idiomatic expressions, such as 'He that talks much errs much', in which he is apparently related to the generalized group of people instead of a particular third party (Hu, 2018).

B. Non-Prototypical Uses of Second-Person Pronouns

(a). 2SG > 1PL

Cross-linguistically, a 2SG pronoun is frequently used to take a 1PL reference. So it is the case with the Chinese *ni* 'you'. This referential strategy is often employed to effectively establish an intimate relationship between speaker and hearer, as illustrated by (4) (Hu, 2018).

(4) 大家一条心,死守着我们的都城。我们受平原君的惨痛教训,即使**你**投降,敌人也要把**你** 斩尽杀绝。所我们都宁肯战死,也不愿被人屠杀。郭沫若《虎符》

Dajia yitiaoxin, sishou zhe women de ducheng. 1PL DE everyone be of one mind defend to the last **ASP** capital women shou Changping de cantong jiaoxun, jishi ni touxiang, 1PL learn Changping DE plainful lesson even if 1PL surrender diren ni zhanjinshajue. women dou ye yao ba suoyi will BA 1PL kill all 1PL enemies also all SO

ningken zhansi, yebuyuan bei ren tusha. would rather die in battle than BEI someone slaughter

'Everyone should be of one mind for defending our capital to the last. We have learned more from Changping's painful lesson. Even if we surrendered, our enemy would still kill us all. So, all of us would rather die in this battle than be slaughtered by them' (*Tiger-shaped Tally* by Moruo Guo) (Hu, 2018).

In the context of (4), the speaker, a general, intends to inspire the soldiers to fight against their enemies. To dismiss the idea of surrender completely, the speaker uses the 2SG pronoun non-prototypically to refer to the whole army as an individual indivisible, showing that they are all tied together to survive the battle (Hu, 2018).

(b). 2SG > 3PL

Interestingly, the 2SG pronoun may also be used as a 3PL one, as shown in (5).

(5) 王国军心里咒骂着,"这些吃着我们的大米、穿着我们的衣服来屠杀我们的王八蛋!**你** 就是远在天边,我也要让炮弹追上**你。**"杨笑影《赤子之心》

Wang Guojun "zhexie xinli zhouma zhe. chi zhe women Wang Guojun silently **ASP ASP** swear these eat 1PL de dami chuan zhe yifu women women de lai tusha DE **ASP** 1PL DE rice wear clothes come slaughter 1PL wangbadan! de ni jiushi yuanzaitianbian, wo ye yao DE bastard 3PL even if far away 1SG also will paodan ni." rang zhuishang cannonball catch up with make 3PL

'Wang Guojun swears silently: "These bastards eating our rice and wearing our clothes come to slaughter us! Even if they are far away from me, I will make the cannonball catch up with them also" (*The Heart of A Newborn Babe* by Xiaoying Yang) (Hu, 2018).

In (5), the speaker expresses his hatred for a group of enemy soldiers who attack him and retreat safely. Because the swear is just the speaker's internal monologue, there is no specific hearer despite the use of 2SG pronoun *ni* 'lit. you' in this context. Instead, *ni* here is anaphorically connected with the constituent *zhexie wangbadan* 'these bastards' which is supposed to be referred to by a 3PL pronoun. The referential meaning of the 2SG pronoun could best explain why it is interpreted as a third party here: Using *ni* in this way, the speaker wants to construct a context in which he is roundly cursing the enemies face-to-face, expressing his hatred and wrath vividly (Hu, 2018).

(c). 2SG > 3SG

In addition to serving as a 3PL pronoun, the 2SG pronoun can also mean a 3SG one, which aims to establish a closer relationship between the speaker and the referent which is supposed to be referred to by a 3SG pronoun. This effect can be seen most clearly in examples like (6) below:

(6) 他临死前会想到什么?**你**会不会想到党?想到**你**的祖国,**你**的亲人?《人民日报》"中国人的良心"

Ta hui xiangdao shenme? ni huibuhui xiangdao 3SG on his deathbed will think of what 3SG will or not think of dang? xiangdao de zuguo, ni de ginren? party think of DE motherland 3SG DE relative

What would he think of when lying on his deathbed? Would he think of CCP, his motherland or relatives? ("The Conscience of Chinese People", *People's Daily*, Dec 19th, 1953).

In the context of (6), the speaker tries to reason out the last thoughts of a dying soldier with *ta* 'he' at the very beginning, revealing that there is a spatial or social distance between them. Whereafter, the speak uses *ni* 'you', pretending that he is asking the soldier face to face, as with the example (5) discussed above. Thus, the 2SG pronoun is anaphorically related to the 3SG antecedent in order to bridge the given gap.

(d). 2PL > Impersonal Generic Use

There are also typical cases whereby the 2PL pronoun *nimen* 'you' can be impersonally used to convey a generic meaning.

(7) 俺就相信巡警,相信头戴警徽的人,**你们**不管什么时候都能保护老百姓。《人民日报》"110 走向成熟"

 An^4 xunjing, jiu xiangxin xiangxin toudai jinghui 1SG trust policeman trust wear police badge only de shihou ren, nimen buguan shenme DE time person generalized group no matter what douneng baohu laobaixing. protect civilian can

'I only trust the policeman. Whenever, the men wearing the police badge are capable of protecting the civilians' ("The Development of Policing", *People's Daily*, Mar 3rd, 1998).

In (7), the speaker expresses his confidence in *xunjing* 'policeman', who does not refer to any particular one, but the police as a whole. The 2PL pronoun *nimen* should thus be interpreted generically. Under this context, the impersonal *nimen* has the effect of highlighting the speaker's affection for policemen.

C. Non-Prototypical Uses of First-Person Pronouns

(a). 1EXCL.PL > 3SG

1EXCL.PL pronoun *women* 'we' in Chinese can be used to refer to a third party in a context where the speaker bears a close relationship with the intended referent, especially between parents/guardians and children, as in (8) (Hu, 2018).

(8) (王太医) 刚要告辞,只见奶子抱着大姐出来,笑说:"王老爷也瞧瞧**我们。**"清代曹雪

芹《红楼梦》

(Wangtaiyi) dajie gangyao gaoci, zhijian naizi baozhe **Doctor Wang** be about to leave just see nurse carry Dajie "Wanglaoye chulai, xiao shuo, giaogiao women." ye out simle Mr. Wang look at 3SG sav too

'Just as Doctor Wang was about to leave, Dajie's nurse carried her out and asked with a smile:

"Will Mr. Wang look at us too?" (The Dream of Red Mansions by Xueqin Cao) (Hu, 2018).

In (8), since the patient called Dajie is unable to talk, the nurse serves as her mouthpiece. On the face of it, the 1EXCL.PL pronoun refers to Dajie and the nurse herself, yet it means Dajie only (Hu, 2018).

(b). 1EXCL.PL > Impersonal Generic Use

In Chinese, it is commonplace that 1EXCL.PL pronoun can be impersonally used for a generic reference, as in (9) below.

(9) 京东客服中心特此通知您, 您的申请**我们**已受理, 请保持电话畅通, **我们**将尽快与您联系。

Jingdong tongzhi kefu zhongxin teci nin, Jingdong customer service center hereby inform 2SG.polite nin shouli, de shenging women yi

⁴ An is the dialectal version of 1SG pronoun in Sinitic languages.

application DE 2SG.polite generalized group already accept qing baochi dianhua changtong, women jiang generalized group please keep telephone in operation will jinkuai yu nin lianxi. as soon as possible with 2SG.polite connect

'The customer service center of Jingdong (an e-commence company) hereby informs you that we have accepted your application. We will contact you as soon as possible. Please keep your telephone on'.

(9) is a receipt from *kefu zhongxin* 'the customer service center' to the consumer applying for after-sale service. In this case, the pronoun *women* 'we' is an exclusive one, which is anaphorically related to the customer service center. In view of the collective meaning of its antecedent, the 1EXCL.PL pronoun here takes reference to a generalized group of staff members in the center.

(c). 1INCL.PL > 1SG

According to Helmbrecht (2015), 1PL pronoun, the exclusive one in fact⁵, can be non-prototypically used as a 1SG one with two different meanings, "majestic plural" and "editorial-we". The 1INCL.PL pronoun *zan/zanmen/women* 'we' in Chinese can also do it. Consider (10).

(10) 刘局长,我这样做也是为你着想。单位好多人住房都紧张,**咱们**孩子一下住这么大房子,

我怕有人到处告你。李唯《腐败分子潘长水》

Liujuzhang, wo zheyang ye shi wei ni zhuoxiang. zuo Director Liu 2SG considerate 1SG this way SHI for do also danwei zhufang jinzhang, haizi haoduo dou zanmen ren unit house shortage 1SG so many people all son yixia zhu zheme da fangzi, wo pa youren suddenly live big house 1SG worry someone daochu gao ni. everywhere accuse 2SG

'Director Liu, what I have done in this way is for you. So many people in our unit are faced with the housing problem. I worry that someone will accuse you everywhere, because my son is all of sudden allotted so big a house' (*The Badger Hat Changshui Pan* by Wei Li).

In (10), the hearer, Director Liu of the unit in a shortage of houses, takes bribes from the speaker and wants to illegally allot the speaker's son a big house in return. Despite some degree of unease, the speaker signals an intimate relationship to the hearer by means of using *zanmen*, which assumes that the speaker's son has a quite close relationship with the hearer, as with the kinship, with the intent to get a house. In fact, *zanmen* refers to the speaker only.

(d). 1SG > 1PL

In view of the use of the singular pronoun with a plural meaning in the discussions above, it is no surprise at all that the 1SG pronoun *wo* 'I' can be non-prototypically used in a plural way, as shown in (11), which is taken from a government report (Hu, 2018).

(11) 伯承同志是我党我军的大知识分子,大军事家。《邓小平文选》第三卷

Bocheng tongzhi da shi wo dang wo jun de Bocheng comrade party SHI 1PL 1PL army DE noted zhishifenzi, da junshijia. intellectual noted strategist

'Comrade Bocheng is the noted intellectual and strategist of our party and army' (*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, vol. 3).

In (11), wo should be construed as having a collective reading, in the sense that it refers to all members of the party and the army as an impartible entity (Hu, 2018).

(e). 1SG > Impersonal Generic Use

In the particular construction where the 2SG and the 1SG pronouns co-occur, the generic interpretation of both them is allowed as in (12).

(12) 战士们**你**一言**我**一语,说着陇东的高原,陕北的大山,黑压压的森林和富丽的河川。杜鹏程《保卫延安》

Zhanshimen **ni** yi yan **wo** soldiers generalized group one word generalized group yi yu, shuo zhe long dong de

⁵ Although Helmbrecht does not clearly mark the concrete class of the 1PL pronoun taking a 1SG reference in his study, we can reason out that the hearer is excluded out of the referents of the 1PL pronoun discussed in his examples (23) and (24).

| one | word | talk about | | ASP | Gansu p | rovince | east | DE |
|---------|------|-----------------|------------|-------|---------|----------|---------|----|
| gaoyu | ıan, | shan | | bei | de | dashan, | heiyaya | de |
| plateau | | Shanxi province | | north | DE | mountain | dark | DE |
| senlin | 1 | he fuli | | de | hechi | uan. | | |
| forest | | and | magnificen | t DE | river | | | |

^{&#}x27;All soldiers are talking about the plateaus in eastern Gansu, the mountains in northern Shanxi,

the dark forest and the grand river' (Defend Yan'an by Pengcheng Du).

In (12), neither *ni* 'you' nor *wo* 'I' refers to any specific interlocutor, but the generalized group of soldiers. It may thus be interpreted as 'All soldiers are talking about something' rather than as 'Both you and I, as soldier, talk about something'. The expression is often employed to effectively describe a situation in which all participants do the same thing or take the same attitude.

Non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns as presented and discussed above demonstrate that the construal of a personal pronoun as having the meaning of another one is essentially pragmatic-oriented, as Helmbrecht correctly points out. On the one hand, the from-meaning mismatch involving the use of Chinese personal pronouns provides supportive evidence for Helmbrecht's study, and on the other, complements his generalization. A comprehensive description of non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns in Chinese is given in Table 3.

TABLE 3
NON-PROTOTYPICAL USES OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN CHINESE (Hu, 2018)

| Trent The Fer Title E College of This best The Trent College (Tre, 2010) | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|-----------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| M | Meaning | | impersonal uses | | 1PL | 2SG | 2PL | 3SG | 3PL |
| Form | | generic | specific | | | | | | |
| 1 | SG | + | | | + | | | | |
| 1PL | INCL | + | | + | | + | + | | |
| IPL | EXCL | + | | + | | | | + | |
| 2 | 2SG | + | + | + | + | | | + | + |
| 2 | 2PL | + | | | | + | | | |
| 3SG | | + | | + | | + | | | + |
| 3PL | | + | | | | | | + | |

So far, we have discussed the inadequacies of Helmbrecht's typological generalization on European languages. In what follows, we take issue with his argument on the use of 1PL pronoun taking a 2SG reference in terms of the pragmatic function (Hu, 2018).

As has been stated in Helmbrecht (2015), "this use of the 1PL is patronizing and can be very offensive for the hearer/addressee in certain contexts, because it is implied that the speaker has some authority over the hearer/addressee" (p. 183). We find his argument unconvincing. Consider (13) (Hu, 2018).

(13) 老支书:"喜旺啊,你就别推辞了,大伙选咱,那是信任咱。"邵力《李双双》

lao zhishu, "Xiwang ni iiu bie tuici branch secretary **PAR** 2SG refuse old Xiwang should not zan." le. dahuo xuan zan. shi xinren na ASP we all 2SG SHI 2SG elect that trust

'The old branch secretary said, "Xiwang, you should not refuse. We elect you, because we trust you' (*Li Shuangshuang* by Li Shao).

In the context of (13), there is a clear gap of authority, as Helmbrecht argues, between the speaker, the old branch secretary, and the hearer, a common villager named Xiwang. To persuade the hearer to accept the election results, the speaker closes the relationship between them by using 1INCL.PL pronoun *zan*, which actually does not refer to the two interlocutors here but to the hearer only. Contrary to Helmbrecht's claim, this kind of use effectively eliminates the gap between the interlocutors in order to develop a close relationship. Consider Helmbrecht's examples (20) and (21), repeated here as (14) and (15) (Hu, 2018).

(14) Wie fühlen wir uns denn heute?

'How do we feel today?'

(15) Welches von den beiden TV-Geräten nehmen wir denn?

'Which of the two TV-sets do we buy, now?'

(Helmbrecht, 2015, p. 183)

(14) is an utterance in the context of medical consultation whereby he speaker, doctor or nurse, shows that the patient is not a stranger that he or she is responsible for temporarily but a familiar member of their own group. Seen this way, the patronizing and offensive implication claimed by Helmbrecht seems untenable. In (15), which is an utterance between a vendor of TV set and a customer, the use of 1PL pronoun could possibly improve the vendor's chance to make a sale through closing their relationship (Hu, 2018).

To sum up, both Helmbrecht's generalization based on European languages and our supplement from Chinese evidence point to the pragmatic-oriented nature of non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns. Nevertheless, there seem to exist some differences between the Chinese language and European languages (Hu, 2018). Specifically, the

non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns in European languages mainly involve the form-meaning mismatches among them, whereas apart from various form-meaning mismatches among personal pronouns, they tend to be used impersonally in Chinese as well. This difference serves as supportive evidence for Helmbrecht's pragmatic-oriented claim and in the meantime counter-evidence against his argumentation on grammaticalization of non-prototypical uses, an issue we will address in the next section.

III. GRAMMATICALIZATION OF NON-PROTOTYPICALLY IMPERSONAL USE

The other problem with Helmbrecht's study, as mentioned earlier, is his argumentation on grammaticalization of non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns. Based on his generalization, Helmbrecht (2015) proposes two hypotheses of grammaticalization about the phenomena at issue, "The first hypothesis-the Category Extension and Shift Hierarchy I: Number-Only those non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns may ultimately become a historical category shift that obeys the number hierarchy, i.e. *plural pronouns may shift to singular pronouns historically*, but not vice versa. The second hypothesis-the Category Extension and Shift Hierarchy II: Person-Only those non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns may ultimately become a historical category shift that obeys the person hierarchy, i.e. *pronouns of a third person may shift to the second or first person*, but not vice versa" (p. 185).

Consider, again, the non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns. These uses can be classified into two categories roughly: the form-meaning mismatch among personal pronouns and the impersonal extension with an indefinite referent. Seen this way, the form-meaning mismatch does not have any direct influence on the original referential function of personal pronouns, referring to a definite person, despite the fact that their referent is not the original one. On the contrary, the impersonal extension shifts the originally specific reference of personal pronouns to a general one unrelated to a specific entity. Helmbrecht's hypotheses, either the person value shift or the number value shift, are apparently based on the form-meaning mismatch among personal pronouns.

A question naturally arises with respect to Helmbrecht's hypotheses presented above: would the use of personal pronouns as impersonal reference possibly become grammaticalized?

In the literature on grammaticalization, the most classical claim is perhaps that grammaticalization sets in with the semantic generalization of the lexical items (Hopper & Traugott, 2003). In other words, the meanings of lexical items subject to grammaticalization are usually quite general: The more specific a lexical item's meaning is, the more difficult the item would become grammaticalized. Thus, from a theoretical viewpoint, it does not seem wrong to say that the impersonal extension can become grammaticalized as well, perhaps even more easily, which can be evidenced by the uses of Chinese 2SG and 3SG pronouns.

A. Grammaticalization of Chinese 2SG Pronoun

In general, Chinese 2SG pronoun, as is pointed out in the literature (Chao, 1968; Lü, 1985; Biq, 1991), is semantically generalized to the extent that it can take reference to an indefinite group in addition to a specific hearer, in the following two conditions. First, consider the impersonally semantic generalization within a construction. "Grammaticalization frequently involves a trend for an item to turn into part of a paradigm of fixed semantic and structural function" (Eckardt, 2012, p. 2677). The impersonal use of 2SG pronoun origins from a particular construction appearing in Tang Dynasty, where it is placed after a set of verbs meaning 'no matter' (henceforth NMV), such as ren/cong/ping/rao/sui in Chinese (cf. Chen, 2009).

As far as the [NMV + ni 'you'] construction is concerned, it is necessary to spell out the structural context in which the pronoun's impersonal use occurs. Based on the authentic data, the distribution of this construction can be classified into three patterns: [NMV + ni + VP] (ni serves as the subject of the verb, referring to either the hearer or a generalized group), [NMV + ni + NP] (ni is related cataphorically to the noun phrase) and [NMV + ni + clause] (ni refers to the propositional content of the clause), as exemplified by (16) - (18), respectively.

(16) 任你横说竖说,未是宗门苗裔。南宋赜藏主《古宿尊语录》

shu ren ni heng shuo generalized group in this way no matter explain in that way shi zongmen miaoyi. shuo, wei SHI religious sect descendant explain not

'No matter how you explain, it is unchanged that you are not the descendant of this religious sect' (*Quatation from Gusuzun* by Ze Cang Zhu, Southern Song Dynasty).

(17) 任你英雄好汉,不能插翅飞腾。明代施耐庵《水浒传》

ren **ni** yingxionghaohan, bu neng chachi no matter cataphora heroes not able to with wing feiteng.

fly

'No matter what the heroes they are, nobody is able to escape' (*Outlaws of the Marsh* by Naian Shi, Ming Dynasty).

(18) 任你白云朝岳顶,争奈青山不展眉。南宋普济《五灯会元》

yueding baiyun chao zhengnai qingshan ren ni no matter cataphora cloud call on hilltop mountain yet bu zhanmei.

not beam with joy

'No matter how the cloud wants to call on the hilltop, yet the mountain is completely uninterested in it' (*The Collection of Five Chan Biographies* by Pu Ji, Southern Song Dynasty).

In (16), the 2SG pronoun, despite its indefinite reference to a generalized group, apparently serves as the subject of the following verb phrase *heng shuo shu shuo* 'explain exhaustively'. A cataphoric relation presented in (17) between *ni* 'you' and *yingxionghaohan* 'heroes' is licensed by the appositive structure constructed by them. (18) shows that the 2SG pronoun, cataphorically related to the propositional content of the subsequent clause *baiyun chao yueding* 'the cloud wants to call on the hilltop', does not take reference to any specific entity as in (17) and thus does not have any lexical content at all.

Sentences like the above show that 2SG pronoun functionally extends from the deictic category to the cataphoric one, with its semantic bleaching from the specific hearer to an unfixed referent. This extension embodies in two specific aspects: On the one hand, morphosyntactically, it is a clause (rather than a noun or noun phrase as shown in (18)) that 2SG pronoun establishes the appositive relation with; on the other hand, semantically, 2SG pronoun takes reference to either human or inanimate entities, as can be seen in the example below:

(19) 任你山根石脚,都要凿开。明代褚人获《隋唐演义》

ni shan ren gen jiao dou zaokai yao all chip out no matter mountain stone foot need cataphora root 'All of them, no matter what they are, even the hardest part of mountain and stone, need be chipped out' (Romance of the Sui-Tang Empires by Renhuo Chu, Qing Dynasty).

(19) looks similar to examples like (17) in that they both have the same postpositive constituent. As has been discussed above, the 2SG pronoun in (19) could thus be analyzed in a similar way, that is, *ni* 'you' is related to the subsequent noun phrase *shan gen shi jiao* 'the hardest part of mountain and stone'. However, the dissimilarity between them is striking: the constituent *yingxionghaohan* 'heroes' in (17), in spite of the indefinite referent, semantically remains the animate property of the pronoun, while what *ni* 'you' refers to in (19) deviates substantially from its original value.

Second, apart from the impersonal use within the construction discussed above, 2SG pronoun can mean an indefinite referent (see, e.g., Chao 1968), as in (20).

(20) 那些孩子闹得叫你不能专心做事。

naxie haizi naode jiao **ni**

those children make such a noise make generalized group

buneng zhuanxin zuoshi. unable to concentrate on work

'Those children make such a noise, it makes you (me, one) unable to concentrate on your (my, one's) work' (Chao, 1968, p. 659).

Based on the impersonal generalization, 2SG pronoun in Sinitic languages, such as Beijing Mandarin dialect, has been further grammaticalized as a discourse marker (Zhang & Fang, 1996), which is called "metalinguistic use" in the literature (cf. Biq, 1991). Consider (21), where *ni* 'you' refers to neither a specific referent, nor any cataphoric content.

(21) 你比如说,中国的过去就有这个问题。

nibirushuo,Zhongguodeguoqujiuyounon-referentialfor exampleChinaDEpastjusthave

zhege wenti. this-CL problem

'For example, in the past China had this problem' (Biq, 1991, p. 315).

The 2SG pronoun in this case performs the vocative function, in the sense that omitting it here has nothing to do with the propositional content of the whole sentence. However, *ni* 'you' performs some particular pragmatic function, like catching the hearer's attention and showing the speaker's emphasis (Biq, 1991) or introducing new content to explore a previous topic (Fang, 2009), in everyday conversation.

B. Grammaticalization of Chinese 3SG Pronoun

Let us now turn to the grammaticalization of 3SG pronoun *ta* 'he/she/it'. In Chinese, *ta* is more widely used than *wo* 'I' and *ni* 'you' in that it can refer to person, object and event, indicating that its referential function becomes more generalized than a typical third-person pronoun referring to a third party only (Zhang & Fang, 1996).

Moreover, 3SG pronoun, as has been pointed out in Lü (1985), can be used impersonally as in the [V + ta] construction, and its structural context can be spelt out as follows:

- a) [yu/gei 'give' + ta + CL + N]: ta seemingly refers to a person, but it is difficult to determine who he/she is;
- b) [monosyllabic V + ta + (NUM) + CL (especially ge) + N]: ta does not have any lexical content, but performs an

emphatic function;

c) [NMV + ta + Clause]: ta is cataphorically related to the event conveyed by the clause.

Consider the examples below. (22) represents the first construction, with *ta* construed as taking an indefinite reference. (23) shows that *ta* is related to nothing at all. (24) exemplifies the third one in which *ta* refers to the event of *linye luo* 'leaf falls' in effect.

(22) 给他个见道就走。

Gei **ta** ge jian dao jiu zou. give indefinite CL see road just walk

'Walk by all means in the sight of road.'

(23) 把荷花画他几枝。

Ba hehua hua **ta** ji zhi.
BA lotus draw non-referential some CL

'Draw a picture of lotus.'

(24) 秋到任他林叶落,春来从你树开花。

Oiu dao linye lai ren luo. chun fall autumn arrive no matter cataphora leaf spring come cong shu kaihua. ni no matter cataphora tree bloom

'No matter that the leaf falls in autumn as well as the tree blooms in spring'

(Lü, 1985, p. 18-24).

The examples presented above reveal the extent to which 3SG pronoun becomes grammaticalized within these constructions. Precisely, *ta* serves the structural function as an auxiliary, without any specific content. Note that 3SG pronoun, despite previous discussions, can still be construed as a specific third party in the first two patterns, that is, it depends on the particular context whether *ta* serves as a personal pronoun or a grammatical constituent.

Like *ni* 'you', *ta* can also function as a discourse marker in Beijing Mandarin dialect. Consider (25), where the 3SG pronoun is not intended to have any referent at all, anaphorically or cataphorically, but to construct a new topic opposed to the previous one.

(25) 您瞧我这小辫不顺眼,他我还不顺心呢。老舍《茶馆》

nin qiao wo zhe xiaobian bu shunyan, 2SG.polite 1SG this plait pleasing to the eye see not ta wo hai bu shunxin ne. discourse marker 1SG **PAR** also not satisfactory 'Not only you but I feel annoyance about my plait' (*Teahouse* by Lao She).

The observation and discussion presented above so far points to the conclusion that the impersonal uses of personal pronouns, at least in Chinese, can gradually become grammaticalized as well, which runs contrary to Helmbrecht's hypotheses.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this article we have shown that Chinese personal pronouns can be non-prototypically used beyond Helmbrecht's typological generalization on European languages. We have addressed the potential problems with Helmbrecht's grammaticalization hypotheses (which are based on the form-meaning mismatch among personal pronouns only), pointing out that non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns with impersonal meanings can become grammaticalized both in theory and practice. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that we have no intention of devaluing Helmbrecht's study which has not only broadened our perspective on non-prototypical uses of personal pronouns, but redefined the research direction of grammaticalization (Hu, 2018).

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