

## Research on the Diachronic Semantic Map of Chinese Verbs Lian(连) and Jie(接)

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**ABSTRACT.** *In this paper, the semantic map method is adopted to investigate the diachronic evolution of the Chinese verbs with the meaning of “connect”. Firstly, the conceptual space of the verbs “Lian( 连 )” and “Jie( 接 )” is constructed according to early modern Chinese dialects. Then, the diachronic semantic map is built with the knowledge of historical corpus. Furthermore, the semantic evolution of the verbs “Lian( 连 )” and “Jie( 接 )” is analyzed, and the internal motivation for the grammaticalization of this semantic field “connect” is further explored.*

**Keywords:** Connect, Semantic Map, Diachronic Evolution, Grammaticalization

1. **Foreword.** In the history of Chinese language, there are six verbs with the meaning of “connect”, which are “Lian( 连 )”, “Jie( 接 )”, “Lian( 联 )”, “Shun( 属 )”, “Zhui( 缀 )” and “Dai( 带 )”, but only “Lian( 连 )” and “Jie( 接 )” are still used in modern Chinese. Though the two verbs are originated in different historical periods, they are still active in modern Mandarin Chinese and dialects. Considering the inheritance and common usage of the vocabulary, in this paper, “Lian( 连 )” and “Jie( 接 )” are chosen to investigate the diachronic evolution of the Chinese verbs with the meaning of “connect”.

### 2. Conceptual Space of “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)”.

2.1. **Conceptual Space of “Lian( 连 )”.** In the sixth edition of modern Chinese dictionary, the main entries of the word “Lian( 连 )” are as follows: 1) verb, to connect; 2) adverb, consecutively; 3) preposition, including; 4) emphasis preposition, used as an intensive to stress an extreme condition or instance. Jin and Wu [1] point out that, in Chinese dialects the word “Lian( 连 )” not only has the same entries as in Mandarin Chinese, such as connect, including and emphasis, but also has many different ones. These entries in Chinese dialects

are given as follows: connect verb, including preposition, emphasis preposition, comitative preposition, equative comparison preposition, human direction preposition, human source preposition, locative source preposition, via preposition, locative endpoint preposition, instrumental preposition, time source preposition, disposal preposition, and coordinating conjunction.

Based on the existing research results and the dialect survey materials, in this paper, the 16 function entries of “Lian( 连 )” are selected as follows: connect, consecutively, range, including, comitative, emphasis, equative comparison, human direction, human source, locative source, via, locative endpoint, instrumental, time source, disposal and coordinating. The semantic function of each entry with example sentences is explained as follows.

- A. Verb, to connect or link. (1)这两句话连不起来。
- B. Adverb, consecutively. Represent the state of the durability for action. (2) 我连上三天班了。
- C. Range adverb. Represent the whole extent of the durability for action. (3) 连宵宿醉。
- D. Including preposition. To take in and not exclude. (4) 连根拔。
- E. Comitative preposition. Followed by another participant of the action. (5) 你去连老五研究一下。(Shanxi Xi'an dialect)
- F. Emphasis preposition. Followed by the object that the action emphasizes. (6) 你怎么连他也不认识?
- G. Equative comparison preposition. Followed by the comparative objects, and the predicate of the sentence means “different” or “the same”. (7) 这个连兀个不一样。(Shanxi Fufeng dialect)
- H. Human direction preposition. Followed by the human object that the action points to. (8) 你连你妈说去。(Ningxia Tongxin dialect)
- I. Human source preposition. Followed by the human object that is the source of the action. (9) 你连你妈要去。(Ningxia Zhongweishapotou dialect)
- J. Locative source preposition. Followed by the locative source of the action. (10) 你连阿来来的?——连乡里。(Gansu Tongwei dialect)
- K. Via preposition. Followed by the route or place that the action passes through. (11) 你连前头过, 霎连后头走。(Gansu Bailongjiangliuyu dialect)
- L. Locative endpoint preposition. Followed by the endpoint or destination of the action. (12) 我们连屋里说话去。(Gansu Bailongjiangliuyu dialect)
- M. Instrumental preposition. Followed by the tools of the action. (13) 你连铅笔写, 霎连水笔写。(Gansu Bailongjiangliuyu dialect)
- N. Time source preposition. Followed by the starting time of the action. (14) 我连明早儿就好好儿学习呢。(Gansu Lintan dialect)
- O. Disposal preposition. Followed by the object that the action deals with. (15) 他连家具抬到楼下。(Jiangsu Xuzhou dialect)
- P. Coordinating conjunction. Represent the equal rank. (16) 我连你都是属虎的。(Ningxia Yinchuan dialect)

Based on the above definitions, the semantic functions of “Lian(连)” in 29 Chinese dialects are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1. THE SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS OF “LIAN(连)” IN CHINESE DIALECTS

dialect	semantic function															source	
	ve rb	adverb		preposition											conj unct ion		
	co nn ec t	ra ng e	co ns ec uti ve ly	in cl ud in g	co mi tat iv e	eq ua tiv e co m pa ris on	hu m an dir ec tio n	hu m an so ur ce	lo ca tiv e so ur ce	lo cat iv e en dp oi nt	ti m e so ur ce	vi a	e m ph asi s	in str u men tal	di sp os al		coor dina ting
Standard Mandarin	+		+	+									+				Modern Chinese Dictionary
Anhui Jixi	+			+									+				Zhao Rixin 2004:225
Jiangxi Nanchang	+			+									+				Xiong Zhenghui 1995:178-179
Zhejiang Hangzhou	+			+									+				Bao Shijie 1998:143
Guangdong Dongguan	+			+									+				Zhan and Chen 1997:173
Shandong Zaozhuang	+			+									+	+			Jin and Wu 2016
Hubei Xiaogan	+			+									+				Investigated by author
Hebei Baoding	+		+	+									+				Investigated by author
Henan Anyang	+		+	+											+		Liu Zhaoxin 2018.5
Huinan Qiyang	+		+	+													Wu Ying 2017
Huinan Changsha	+			+									+				Investigated by author
Huinan Shaodong	+	+	+	+									+				Sun Yelin 2004
Huinan Linwu	+		+	+									+			+	Investigated by author
Jiangsu Xuzhou	+	+	+	+									+		+		Investigated by author
Shanxi Yan'an	+	+	+	+									+				Investigated by author
Shanxi Xi'an	+		+	+	+	+							+			+	Wang Junhu 1996:225
Shanxi Fufeng	+		+	+	+	+							+			+	Wu Xiaozhi 2005:289
Shanxi Wanrong	+		+	+	+	+							+			+	Wu Yunxia 2009:135-136,Wu and Zhao 1997:294-295
Xinjiang Wulumuqi	+			+	+	+	+						+			+	Zhou Lei 1995:262 · 128; 1994,Xu and Miyata 1999:2599
Ningxia Tongxin	+		+	+	+	+	+	+					+			+	Zhang Ansheng2006:309 · 342

dialect	semantic function															source
	verb	adverb		preposition											conjunction	
	connect	range	consecutively	including	comitative	equative comparison	human direction	human source	locative endpoint	locative source	time source	via	emphasis	instrumental	dispositional	coordinating
Ningxia Yingchuan	+		+	+	+	+	+	+					+			+
Gansu Jiuquan	+		+	+	+	+							+			+
Gansu Jingyuan	+		+	+	+	+	+	+					+	+		+
Gansu Lintan	+		+	+	+	+	+		+		+		+	+		+
Gansu Huanxian	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+			+
Gansu Lanzhou	+			+	+	+	+	+	+			+	+	+		+
Gansu Tongwei	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+		+
Bailongjiang Watershed in Gansu	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+
																li and Zhang 1996:247&1995
																Sun and Liu 2013:85 · 303 · 305
																Jin and Wu 2016
																Jin and Wu 2016
																Jin and Wu 2016
																Jin and Wu 2016
																Jin and Wu 2016
																Mo Chao 2004:39&120-124

Considering the complicated and the large amount of semantic functions of “Lian(连)” in Table 1, we try to build the connection of each functional node according to the actual usage in dialects, the grammatical mechanism and the semantic evolution. The conceptual space of “Lian(连)” is built from simplicity to complexity, as shown in Figure 1.

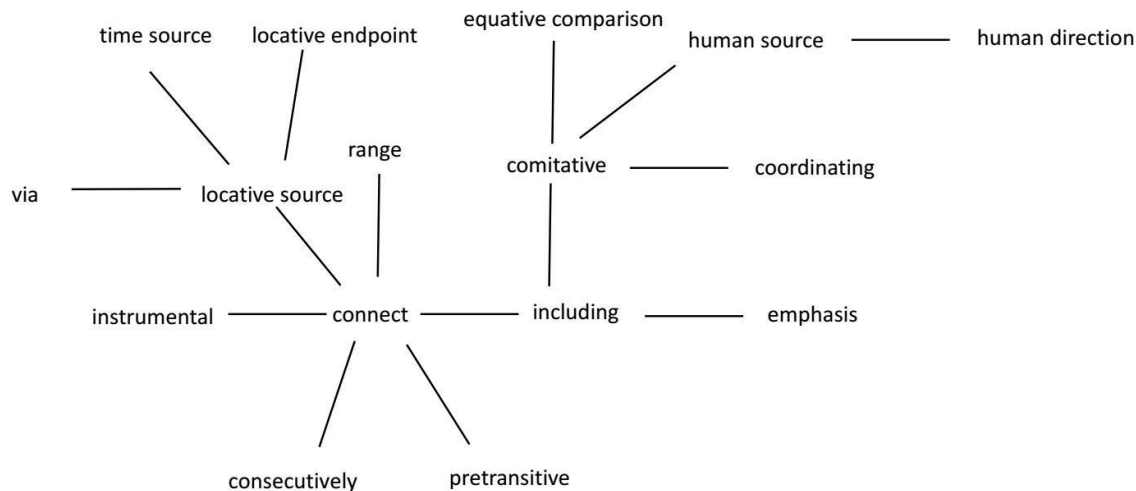


FIGURE 1. THE CONCEPTUAL SPACE OF “LIAN(连)”

**2.2. Conceptual Space of “Jie(接)”**. In the sixth edition of modern Chinese dictionary, the entries of the word “Jie(接)” are as follows: 1) verb, to move close to; 2) verb, to connect; 3) verb, to hold or support the weight of; 4) verb, to receive; 5) verb, to meet or welcome; 6) verb, to replace or take the place of. There are less research work about “Jie(接)” in academic area, and all these work talk about the diachronic evolution of “Jie(接)” with the meaning of “meet”. Without more item entries from the research work, the eight function entries of “Jie(接)” are selected according to the dictionary and dialect survey materials, which are explained as follows.

- A. verb, to connect. (17) 把电线和电源接在一起。
- B. verb, to hold. (18) 小李赶快接住从桌上掉下来的杯子。
- C. verb, to receive. (19) 接到来信。
- D. verb, to meet. (20) 你去门口接一下他。
- E. verb, to replace. (21) 她的工作得有人接。
- F. adverb, consecutively. (22) 该两日人客接牢走来。
- G. Locative source preposition. (23) 接这儿数起。
- H. Via preposition. (24) 接他家门口走过。

Based on the above function definitions, the semantic functions of “Jie(接)” in 11 Chinese dialects are listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2. THE SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS OF “JIE(接)” IN CHINESE DIALECTS

dialect	semantic function								source
	verb					adverb	preposition		
	connect	receive	meet	replace	hold	consecutively	locative source	via	
Standard Mandarin	+	+	+	+	+	+			<i>Modern Chinese Dictionary</i>
Beijing	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	Investigated by author
Shanxi Yan'an	+	+	+	+	+				Investigated by author
Shanxi Xi'an	+	+	+	+	+				Investigated by author
Heibei Baoding	+	+	+	+	+				Investigated by author
Huinan Linwu	+	+	+		+				Investigated by author
Jangsu Xuzhou	+			+	+				Investigated by author
Shandong Rongcheng	+			+	+				Investigated by author
Anhui Jixi	+	+	+	+	+				<i>Modern Chinese Dialect Dictionary</i>
Guangxi Liuzhou	+	+							<i>Modern Chinese Dialect Dictionary</i>
Fujian Wenzhou	+	+	+			+			<i>Modern Chinese Dialect Dictionary</i>

The semantic functions of “Jie(接)” are less than those of “Lian(连)”, and most of them are used as verbs. The conceptual space of “Lian(连)” is built according to Table 2, which is shown in Figure 2.

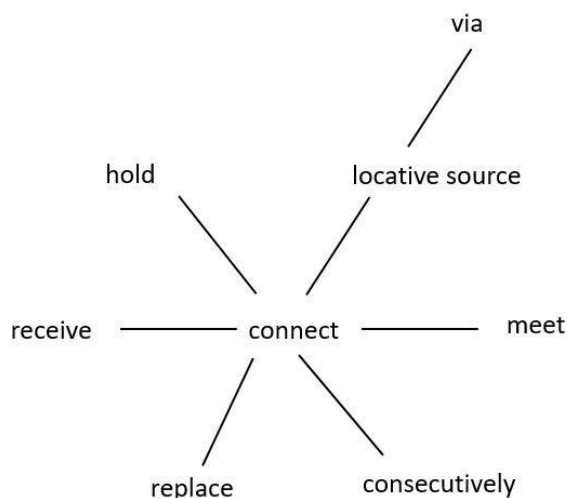


FIGURE 2. THE CONCEPTUAL SPACE OF “JIE(接)”

**2.3. Conceptual Space of “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)”.** Based on the above discussion, the separate conceptual spaces of “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)” have been built. In this paper, the two conceptual spaces are integrated with the common meaning of “connect”, and the integrated conceptual space with the core meaning “connect” is shown in Figure 3.

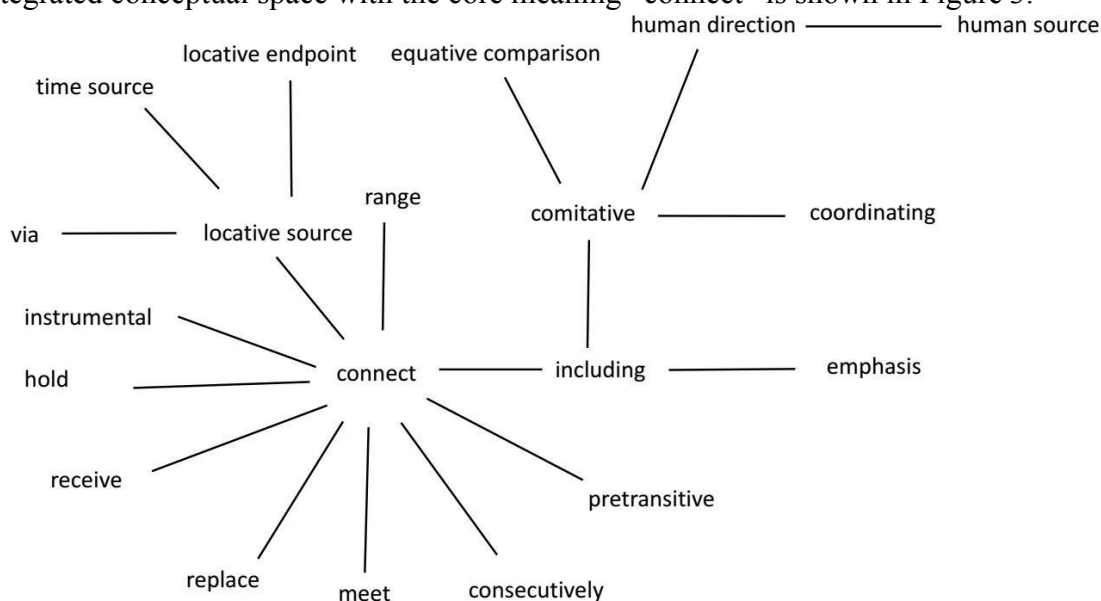


FIGURE 3. THE CONCEPTUAL SPACE OF “LIAN(连)” AND “JIE(接)”

3. **Semantic Map of “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)”**. In this section, the semantic functions of “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)” will be investigated from a diachronic viewpoint.

### 3.1. “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)” in Ancient Chinese.

3.1.1. **“Lian(连)”**. In 《说文·辵部》, “连, 负车也”. Duan Yucai notes that “连, 即古文輶也”. So the original meaning of “Lian(连)” is a vehicle drawn by man. In the period of ancient Chinese, the meaning of “connect” is first extended and is also the core meaning. The examples of “Lian(连)” with the meaning of “connect” in Pre-Qin Period are given as follows.

(25) 夙沙卫连大车以塞隧而殿。(《左传·襄公》)

(26) 主人先登, 客从之, 拾级聚足, 连步以上。(《礼记·曲礼上第一》)

In ancient Chinese, more meanings of “Lian(连)” have been further extended based on the meaning of “connect”, such as, “consecutively”, “suture: to unite, close or secure with sutures”, “entangle: to involve in a troublesome situation” and “unite: to put together to form a single unit”. The examples are given as follows.

(27) 民相连而从之, 遂成国于岐山之下。(《庄子·让王》)(consecutively)

(28) 出枵, 履蒯席, 连用汤, 履蒲席, 衣布晞身, 乃屨, 进饮。(《礼记·玉藻第十三》)(consecutively)

(29) 簪以为父, 管以为母。既以缝表, 又以连里: 夫是之谓箴理。(《荀子·赋篇》)(“suture”)

(30) 谒居病死, 事连其弟, 弟系导官。(《史记·列传·酷吏列传》)(suture)

(31) 古者使车毂击驰……约从连横, 兵革不藏。(《战国策·秦》)(unite)

In this period, “Lian(连)” with the meaning of “consecutively” usually has the sentence pattern of “NP1+V1(Lian)+V2”, and is the adverbial modifier of the syntactic component. There are five examples in this period, and two of those are as follows.

(32) 所居之吏上数选具之, 令无得擅出入, 连质之。(《墨子·号令第七十》)

(33) 项王因留, 连战未能下。(《史记·本纪·项羽本纪》)

Liu [2] points out that, “Lian(连)” in the pattern of “NP1+V1(Lian)+V2” can be considered as verbs and also as adverbs. This kind of pattern makes the original verb semantics of “Lian(连)” gradually grammaticalize, and finally the syntactic component of “Lian(连)” has changed from a predicate to an adverbial modifier of the verb. Besides, “Lian(连)” is also the noun in the sentence, which represents marriage and kinship, the name of the administrative division and so on. These noun semantics are not in the scope of this paper, so they will not be discussed again.

3.1.2. **“Jie(接)”**. In 《说文·手部》, “接, 交也”. Duan Yucai notes that “交也。交者, 交胫也。引申为凡相接之称”. So the original meaning of “Jie(接)” is “intersect”. In the period of ancient Chinese, the examples of “Jie(接)” are given as follows.

(34) 君子之接如水。(《礼记·表記》)

(35) 两君偃兵接好, 日中为期。(《国语·吴语》)

According to literature statistics, there are many extended meanings of “Jie(接)”, such as, “consecutively”, “reception, coping”, “meet”, “connect”, “receive” and so on. The original meaning is used the most, and the meanings of “consecutively” and “connect” are used



almost the same. For example,

- (36) 韩、魏父子兄弟接踵而死于秦者，百世矣。(《战国策·秦》)(consecutively)  
 (37) 其交也以道，其接也以礼，斯孔子受之矣。(《孟子·万章篇第五》)(reception)  
 (38) 今秦与楚接境壤界，固形亲之国也。(《史记·列传·张仪列传》)(meet)  
 (39) 右军代为郡，屡言出吊，连日不果。(《世说新语·仇颉第三十六》)(consecutively)  
 (40) 大喜、大怒、大忧、大恐、大哀，五者接神则生害矣。(《吕氏春秋·季春纪第三》)(meet)

Just like “Lian(连)”, the meaning “consecutively” of “Jie(接)” is first extended with the pattern of “NP1+V1(Jie)+V2”. Due to the semantic relation and the “V1V2” syntactic structure, “Jie(接)” has changed from a predicate to an adverbial modifier of the verb “V2”.

The adverb “Jie(接)” is used as follows:

- (41) 接祭而已矣。如牲至未杀，则废。(《礼记·曾子问第七》)

3.13. **Summary.** In ancient Chinese, “Lian(连)” is the dominant word that represents “connect”, however, “Jie(接)” is increasingly used. In addition, there are one case of “Lianjie(连接)” and one case of “Jielian(接连)” in this period. In our opinion, “Lianjie(连接)” is treated as two words “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)”, and “Jielian(接连)” is also the same.

- (42) 天浮，三十二具，以环络连接。(《六韬·虎韬第四》)  
 (43) 十曰陈车，谓接连前矛，马冒其目也。(《尉繚·兵教下第二十二》)

Base on these analysis, the semantic map of “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)” in the period of ancient Chinese is drawn as follows:

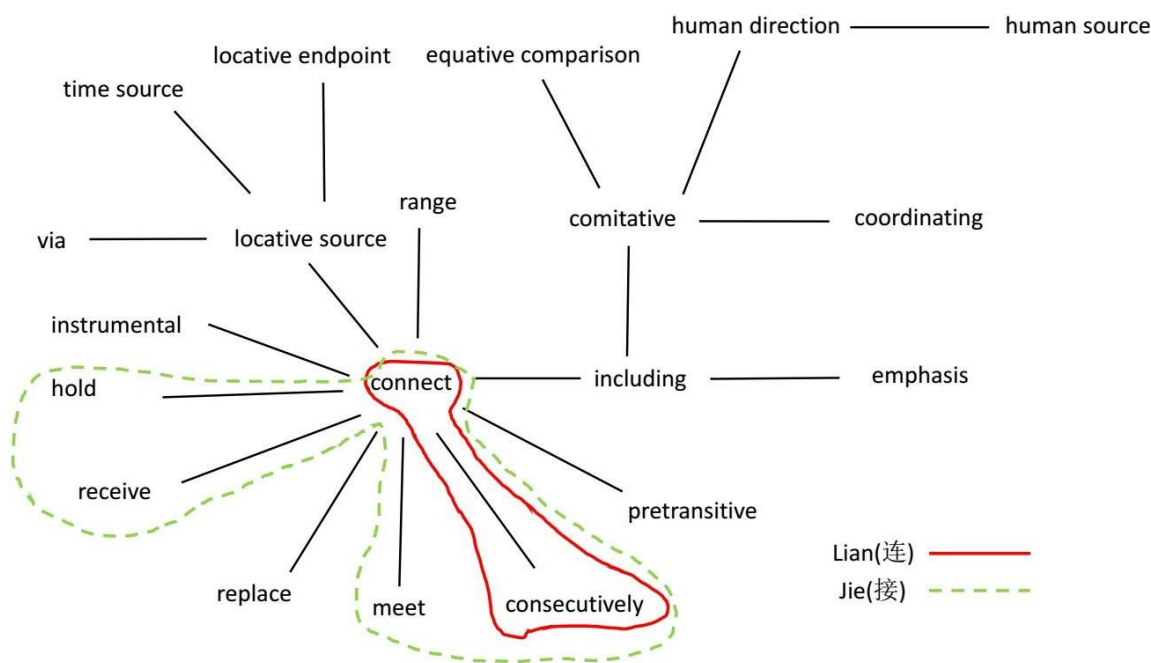


FIGURE 4. THE SEMANTIC MAP OF “LIAN(连)” AND “JIE(接)” IN ANCIENT CHINESE



### 3.2. “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)” in Middle Chinese.

321. “Lian(连)”. In the period of middle Chinese, the semantic function of “Lian(连)” has changed a lot. The main meaning of “Lian(连)” is still “connect”, yet the adverb use with the meaning of “consecutively” is more frequently used. For example,

(44) 夫指既斩而连之, 不可续也; 血既洒而吞之, 无所益也。(《抱朴子内篇·对俗卷三》)(connect)

(45) 生高数寸, 夏连雨时, 可移之。(《齐民要术·卷四种椒第四十三》)(consecutively)

Just as the adverb grammaticalization of “Lian(连)” in ancient Chinese, in this period the verb meaning “connect” of “Lian(连)” has been extended in the pattern of “NP1+V1(Lian)+V2+O”. Due to the dual influence of semantics and syntactic structure, the verb “Lian(连)” in the sentence is gradually grammaticalized as the prepositions “including”. In this period, there are two cases of “Lian(连)” with the meaning of “including”, such as,

(46) 尝发所在竹篙, 有一官长连根取之, 仍当足, 乃超两阶用之。(《世说新语·政事第三》)(including)

(47) 连筋断节。(《生经·卷第二》)(including)

322. “Jie(接)”. In the period of middle Chinese, the usage of the original “intersect” meaning of “Jie(接)” has rapidly reduced due to the change of the document content. The original meaning is mostly used in historical books to describe wars and confrontation of two armies, however, in middle Chinese most of the document are Buddhist sutras, agricultural books, novels, etc. The main meanings of “Jie(接)” are verb “connect” and adverb “consecutively”. For example,

(48) 但知承上接下, 积财聚谷, 便云我能为相。(《颜氏家训·勉学第八》)(connect)

(49) 天帝来下稽首供养, 四王接身置金机上, 九龙浴体。(《佛说普曜经·第四卷》)(consecutively)

323. **Summary.** In the period of middle Chinese, the dominant word with the meaning of “connect” is still “Lian(连)”, and the preposition use has been derived. With the usage reduction of the original meaning of “Jie(接)”, the dominant meanings become verb “connect” and adverb “consecutively”, and the semantics are relatively stable. In this period, there are no use cases of “Lianjie(连接)” or “Jielian(接连)”. Based on the above analysis, the semantic map of “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)” is drawn as follows,

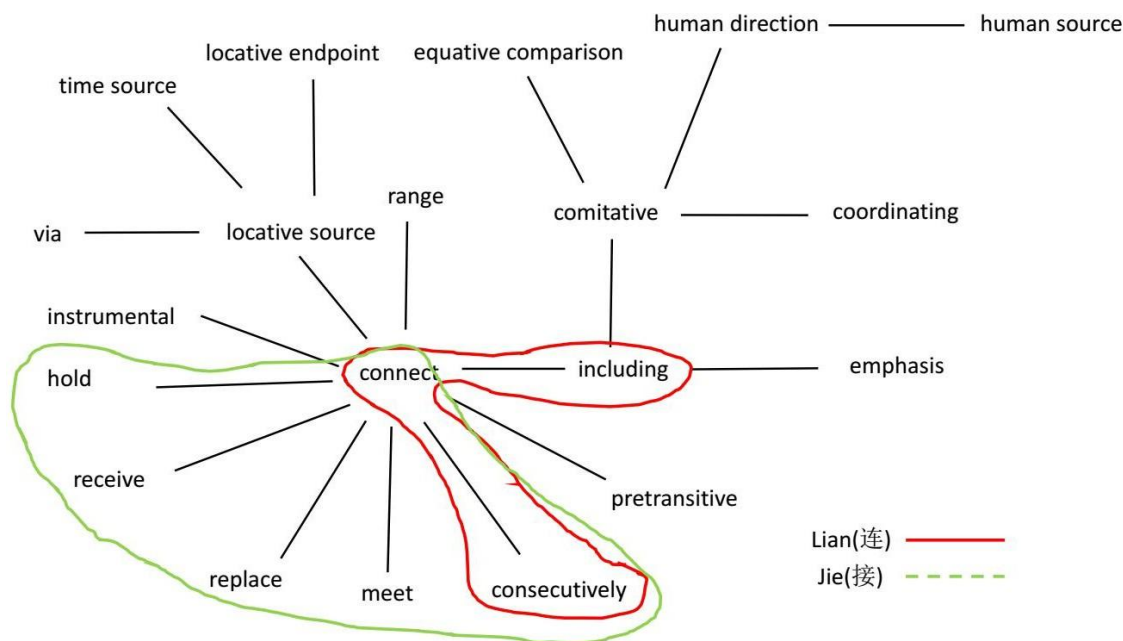


FIGURE 5. THE SEMANTIC MAP OF “LIAN(连)” AND “JIE(接)” IN MIDDLE CHINESE

### 3.3. “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)” in Early Modern Chinese.

331. “Lian( 连 )”. In the period of early modern Chinese, the semantic function of “Lian( 连 )” has changed a lot. From the statistical results of use cases, Tang and Song Dynasty and Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasty of this period are separately discussed.

In Tang and Song Dynasty, the main meanings of “Lian( 连 )” are verb “connect” and adverb “consecutively”. For example,

(50) 鼓山云: “若不然者, 髑髅遍野, 骨连山。” (《祖堂集·长庆和尚》) (connect)

(51) 善友既被签目损, 连唤恶友名字。 (《敦煌变文集新书·双恩记》) (consecutively)

There is no preposition use of “Lian( 连 )” in the literature of Tang Dynasty. In Song Dynasty, “Lian( 连 )” appears not only as including preposition, but also as emphasis preposition. For example,

(52) 全忠被克用搏倒, 有黑蛇将全忠脑上啣吃, 连心腹, 因此觉来。 (《五代史平话·五代唐史平话卷上》) (including)

(53) 状元是谁敢覆, 连它发怒直是毒。 (《永乐大典戏文三种·张协状元》) (emphasis)

In the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasty, “Lian(连)” is used more as including preposition and emphasis preposition. For example,

(54) 这孩儿差讹了一个字千般儿见责, 着五个指十分便掴, 打的孩儿连耳通红了半壁腮。 (《元刊杂剧三十种·看钱奴买冤家债主》) (including)

(55) 今行者既不曾拿得, 连宝贝都不见了。 (《西游记·第三十四回》) (emphasis)

Since Ming Dynasty, the use of “Lian(连)” in emphasis sentence pattern has gradually increased, and “Lian(连)” is sometimes followed by the adverb “Ye(也)”, “Dou(都)” or “Hai(还)”. By the mid-Qing Dynasty, the combination use of “Lian(连)” and “Ye(也)”,

“Dou(都)”, “Hai(还)” is a pervasive phenomenon. And, according to the literature, this phenomenon has been used for a long time in this period, such as,

(56) 要这样起来, 连平安都不能了。(《红楼梦•第三十四回》)

(57) 共该银五百九十七两, 如今剩下三两, 连成色我也不看。(《岐路灯•第五三回王中毒》)

In addition, other preposition usages of “Lian(连)” has been extended since Yuan and Ming Dynasty, such as comitative preposition and time source preposition. For example,

(58) 我连真带草, 一划数黑论黄, 写仿描朱。(《元刊杂剧三十种•李太白贬夜郎》) (comitative)

(59) 再烦刘兄休辞生受, 连夜去北京路上, 探听起程的日期。(《水浒传•第十五回》) (time source)

332 “Jie(接)”. In the period of early modern Chinese, the main meaning of “Jie(接)” is “meet”, and the second one is “receive”. There are few cases of original meaning “intersect”, and the verb meaning “connect” has more cases in this period than the ancient and middle Period. For example,

(60) 知远接了书看, 那孩儿命名做承义。(《五代史平话•五代汉史平话卷上》) (receive)

(61) 丞相亦行上马, 众军前接袁绍军。(《全相平话五种•三国志平话》) (meet)

(62) 这段话下来, 接着再说: .....(《水浒传•第四十四回》) (consecutively)

(63) 是晚起身, 来与辽兵相接, 一字儿摆开阵势。(《水浒传•第八十九回》) (intersect)

333. **Summary.** In the period of early modern Chinese, there is no cases of “Lianjie(连接)”, but 24 cases of “Jielian(接连)”. In these cases, three cases mean “connect”, and other 21 cases mean “consecutively”. Based on the above analysis, the semantic map of “Lian(连)” and “Jie(接)” is drawn as follows,

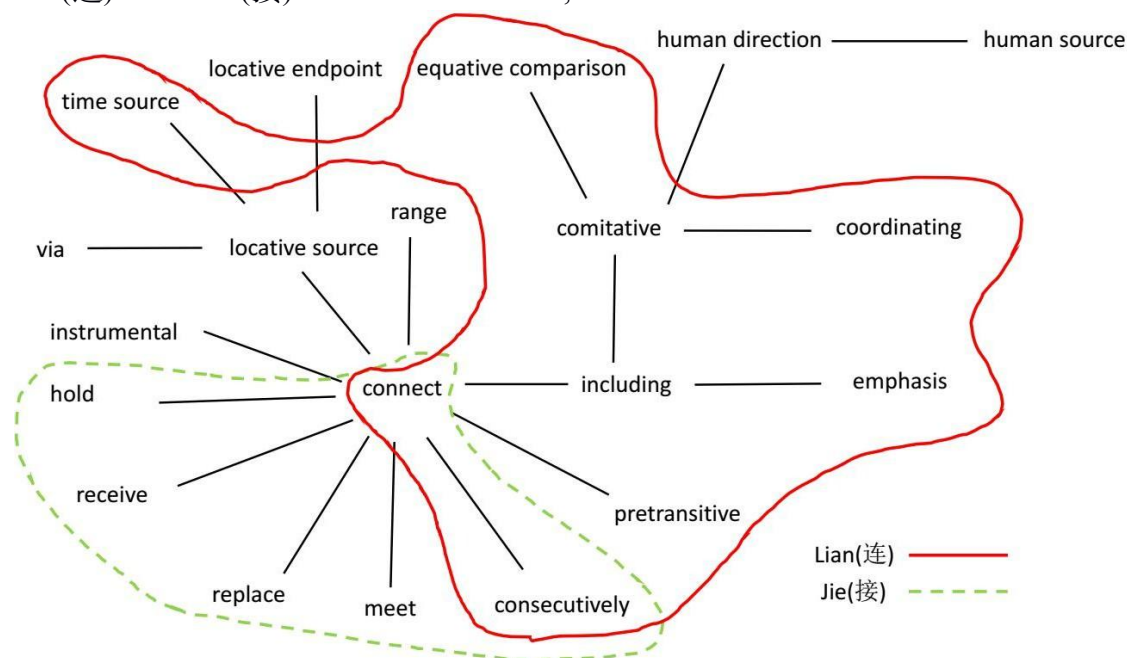


FIGURE 6. THE SEMANTIC MAP OF “LIAN(连)” AND “JIE(接)” IN EARLY MODERN CHINESE

According to the semantic map of “Lian( 连 )” in early modern Chinese, there is no connection between time source node and other functional nodes, which violates semantic map continuity criterion. When the conceptual space is first formed, the connection between the locative source and time source function is built according to the actual usage of dialects. However, from the specific cases of ancient Chinese, time source function of “Lian(连)” has only the case of “Lianye(连夜)”, and the word formation of “Lianye(连夜)” should be a copy of the lexical pattern of “Lianri(连日)” rather than a derivation of locative source function as we have considered before. Therefore, the connection between locative source and time source is removed, and the connection between time source and consecutively function is added. The revised semantic map is shown in Figure 7.

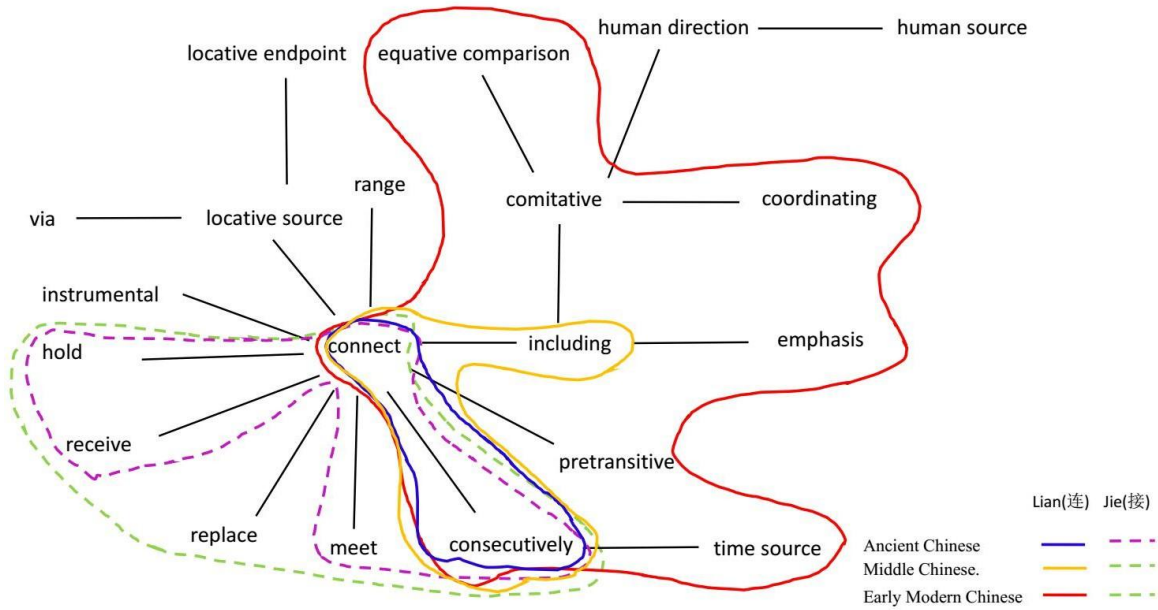


FIGURE 7. THE REVISED SEMANTIC MAP OF “LIAN(连)” AND “JIE(接)”

**4. Conclusions.** The semantic field of verb meaning “connect” is relatively stable from ancient Chinese to middle Chinese. In early modern Chinese, the semantic functions of “Lian(连)” have increased steadily, and the “connect” semantic function of “Jie(接)” has more cases than those of “Lian(连)”. The semantic function of “Jie(接)” is relatively stable from ancient times to today, and there are only verbal and adverbial function. However, “Lian( 连 )” can be used as a verb, adverb, preposition or conjunction, and there are nine different preposition semantic functions.

To summarize, the dominant word with the meaning of “connect” is still “Lian( 连 )” in early modern Chinese because of the following facts: 1) There are many verb semantic functions of “Jie( 接 )”, and most of them are “meet” and “receive”; 2) The main semantic function of “Lian( 连 )” is preposition. The detailed analysis is further given below. Ming and Qing Dynasty is an important stage for the development of early modern Chinese preposition. In this period, the semantic functions of most prepositions have increased, and some semantic functions of the prepositions with many different functions have been

replaced by new prepositions. From the view of language development, the clear division of preposition functions coincides with the trend of increasingly more precise Chinese semantics. From the view of language economic principle, the verb function and the preposition function of “Lian(连)” are easily distinguished, yet the different verb functions of “Jie(接)” are not. From the view of modern Mandarin Chinese, the meaning of “Lianjie(连接)” is “connect”. For example, the sentences “把一样的水果连接起来” and “把一样的水果连起来” have the same meaning, however, it cannot be said that “把一样的水果接起来”. The meaning of “Jielian(接连)” is “consecutively”, such as “接连出了两次事故”.

In this paper, the diachronic evolution of the Chinese verbs with the meaning of “connect” is investigated based on the semantic map method. The contribution of the paper can be concluded as follows: From the perspective of the grammaticalization process and mechanism of “Lian(连)”, its change from a verb to a preposition is due to the change of the sentence structure. When the verb is in the pattern of NP1 + V1 + NP2 + V2 + (O), the verb V1 becomes the second primary verb rather than the main verb, and the semantic of this verb is extended, which motivates the increase of its semantic function. The new semantic functions of “Lian(连)” such as comitative and including are derived, and the verb function is gradually weakened and even completely grammaticalized.

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