

## On Time Word “Zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) in Qingdao Dialect

WANG Yan-jun

Jinan University, Guangzhou, China

In Qingdao dialect, “zan gan-er” (趱赶儿), meaning “small amount of time”, always collocates with “duo (多), yi (一), bu (不), mei (没)” etc., to form many types of quantifiers which hold the similar meaning “brief period” different in degree and which act as attributes, adverbial modifiers or objects. Due to the existence of a syntactic limitation of the “one core-verb”, in the serial-verb construction, the word “zan gan” (趱赶) gradually became an adverb, meaning “in a hurry”, and then under the analogy or derivation of the reasoning mechanism, the hidden meaning of its “temporary time” gradually became clear in daily life, and finally the word “zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) was evolved into a time word which meaning was “small amount of time”.

*Keywords:* Qingdao dialect, time word, zan gan-er, grammaticalization

### Introduction

Qingdao dialect belongs to Jiaoliao Mandarin of Northern Chinese Mandarin. In the old-style Qingdao dialect, there is a high-frequency time word “zan gan-er” [tsaŋ<sup>213</sup> kār<sup>0</sup>] which represents “temporal or brief time or period”. From the historical literature and records, the original characters of the time word “zan gan-er” [tsaŋ<sup>213</sup> kār<sup>0</sup>] are still unknown, so there are several written forms in order to represent “zan gan-er”, such as “臧干儿”, “臧干”, “臧改儿”, “争敢”, or “恁干”. Listed below:

(a) 臧干儿/臧改儿: according to *A Survey of Dialect in Qingdao Records* (青岛市志·方言志, pp. 180, 187);

(b) 臧干: according to *A Survey of Yexian Dialect in Shandong* (山东省掖县志, p. 211);

(c) 争敢: according to *A Survey of Dialect in Jiao'ao Records* (胶澳志·方言, p. 360);

(d) 恁干: according to *A Survey of Moping Dialect in Shandong* (山东省牟平县志, p. 1631).

Semantically, “zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) equals to “hui-er” or “shi hou” in standard Mandarin, which means “temporal moment” and indicates a time-point or short time interval when being used in the sentences. For example:

(1) 他在这来坐了 趱赶儿就走了。

Ta zai zhe lai zuo le zan gan-er jiu zou le.

He left after he sat here for a short moment.

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WANG Yan-jun, Doctor, Professor, College of Chinese Language and Culture, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China. Research fields: Chinese dialects, teaching Chinese as a foreign language, extraterritorial linguistics.

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(2) 也 趱 赶 儿 青 岛 还 是 个 小 渔 村 来。

Nie zan gan-er Qingdao hai sh i ge xiao yu cun lai.

At that time, Qingdao still was a small fishing village ah.

In the example sentence (1), “zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) means “a short time”; while example sentence (2), the pronoun “nie (也)” is used to define “zan gan-er (趱赶儿)”, expressing time point in the sentence, which meaning “at that time”.

This article first describes the syntactic forms and syntactic function of the word “zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) in the Qingdao dialect, and then discusses the source of the word and the mechanism and process of transforming it into a time word based on historical documents.

### Syntactic Form and Function of “Zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) in Qingdao Dialect

In Qingdao dialect, “zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) has very high frequency of useage, and usually collocates (or co-occurs) with “duo (多), yi (一), bu (不), mei (没)” etc., to form many different types of quantifiers which hold the similar meaning “brief period” different in degree and which act as attributes, adverbial modifiers or objects. Listed as below:

#### “Duo (多) + Zan gan-er” (“多趱赶儿”)

(3) 你 才 待 了 多 趱 赶 儿 就 走?

Ni cai dai le Duo Zan gan-er jiu zou?

You only stayed for a little time, and then wanted to go?

The time word “zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) being used as object in the sentence, expresses the short period of time, mostly used in rhetorical questions, with a slight complaining tone.

(4) 多 趱 赶 儿 你 能 弄 巴 利 索 了?

Duo Zan gan-er ni neng nong ba li suo le?

When can you get it all done?

The time word “Duo + Zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) used as adverbial modifier in the sentence, meaning “when”, expressing the time point, equivalent to interrogative pronouns, mostly being used at the beginning of question sentence.

#### “Mei (没) + Zan gan-er” (“没趱赶儿”)

(5) 你 怎 么 坐 了 没 趱 赶 儿 就 在 走。

Ni zen me zuo le Mei Zan gan-er jiu zai zou.

Why did you sit here a little time, and then wanted to go out?

The time word “Mei + Zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) being used as object in the sentence, expresses the short period of time, and the length of the time is shorter than that word “zan gan-er” (趱赶儿).

(6) 天 上 没 趱 赶 儿 就 出 日 头 了。

Tian shang Mei Zan gan-er jiu chu ri tou le.

The sun comes out in a minute.

The time word “Mei + Zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) being used as adverbial modifier in the sentence, emphasizing that “very short time”. Although “Zan gan-er” also means the period of time, but it can't being

used as adverbial modifier. For example,

(7)\* 天 上 趲 赶 儿 就 出 日 头 了。<sup>1</sup>

Tian shang Zan gan-er jiu chu ri tou le.

The sun comes out in a minute.

**“Bu (不) + Zan gan-er” (“不趲赶儿”)**

(8) 这 个 笔 不 好 用, 写 不 趲 赶 儿 就 坏 了。

Zhe ge bi bu hao yong, xie Bu Zan gan-er jiu huai le.

This pen doesn't work, It was broken soon enough.

(9) 不 趲 赶 儿 他 骑 着 车 子 又 回 来 了。

Bu Zan gan-er Ta qi zhe che zi you hui lai le.

Before long, he came back on his bike.

The time word “Bu + Zan gan-er” (不趲赶儿) used as object after the verb (such as sentence 8), or used as time adverbial at the beginning of the sentence (such as sentence 9), expressing the short period of time. Its meaning is a very short time, which reflects the speaker's point of view, attitude, or judgment, and expresses a small amount of subjectivity. It is a manifestation of linguistic subjectivity.

**“Yi (一) + Zan gan-er” (“一趲赶儿”)**

(10) 天 儿 一 趲 赶 儿 晴, 一 趲 赶 儿 阴 的。

Tian er Yi Zan gan-er qing, Yi Zan gan-er yin de.

Sometimes it's sunny, sometimes it's cloudy.

(11) 就 那 么 一 趲 赶 儿 功 夫, 钱 包 就 没 有 了。

Jiu na me Yi Zan gan-er gong fu, qian bao jiu mu you le.

In a few minutes, the wallet was gone.

The time word “Yi + Zan gan-er” (一趲赶儿) being used as adverbial modifier or as attribute in the sentence, expresses the short period of time, while the time word “Zan gan-er” (趲赶儿) mostly being used as object in the sentence. Both are exactly complementary in syntactic positions. Try to compare them:

(12) 手 表 驻 趲 赶 儿 就 修 巴 好 了。

Shou biao zhu Zan gan-er jiu xiu ba hao le.

The watch will be fixed in a minute.

In example (10), “Yi (一) + Zan gan-er” (“一趲赶儿”) is used as an adverbial, in example (11), being used as an attribute. While in example (12), the time word “Zan gan-er” (趲赶儿) is used as object. The two are syntactically complementary. In addition, from the perspective of the length of time, “Yi (一) + Zan gan-er” (“一趲赶儿”) represents a more brief moment than “Zan gan-er” (趲赶儿), emphasizing the meaning of “very short time, so that there is no response”.

**“Lao (老) + Zan gan-er” (“老趲赶儿”)**

(13) 他 都 起 来 老 趲 赶 儿 了。

Ta dou qi lai Lao Zan gan-er le.

<sup>1</sup> An asterisk (\*) indicates that the syntactic combination is non-syntactic standard.

He has been up for a long time.

(14) 我 都 在 这 来 等 你 老 趱 赶 儿 了!

Wo dou zai zhe lai deng ni Lao Zan gan-er le!

I have been waiting for you for a long time.

The time word “Lao + Zan gan-er” (老趱赶儿) being used as time adverbial after the verb (such as “wait”), expresses the short period of time. Judging from the length of time, the time span expressed by this word is longer than that of word “Zan gan-er” (趱赶儿), and its modifier “old” (老) still has the semantic characteristics of the degree adverb. Therefore, the meaning of the word is “a longer period of time”.

### The “Zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) in the Literature of Ming and Qing Dynasty

According to “Han Ji Full-Text Search System” (version 4.2), the word “zan gan” (趱赶) appeared quite late until Ming Dynasty, including twice in literature in Ming Dynasty and 90 times in Qing Dynasty. “Zan gan” means “speed up in order not to delay or lose time”.

By the analysis of 97 examples extracted from the system, there are only twice when “zan gan” as transitive verbs have the objects; that is to say, in most cases, it was used as an intransitive verb acting as predicate. For example:

(15) 和氏又限他夜中趱赶多少。(《醒世恒言》第19卷, p. 369)

Heshi you xian ta ye zhong zan gan duoshao. (*Xingshihengyan*, 19th juan, p. 369)

Heshi also forced her to work in progress on night.

(16) 日则兼程趱赶,夜方屯扎。(《万花楼》28回, p. 193)

Ri ze jian cheng zan gan, ye fang tun zha. (*Wanghualou*, 28th hui, p. 193)

The army chased during the day and stationed at night.

The word “Zan gan-er” (趱赶儿), in *Chinese Dictionary* does not appear. *Guangyun* (广韵): “散走。藏早切”。From the perspective of *Guangyun* (广韵) Fanqie sound<sup>2</sup>, the word “Zan gan-er” (趱赶儿) is interpreted in Putonghua as \*[tsan<sup>51</sup>kan<sup>214</sup>]. The tone of the first word (趱) is [qùshēng] (去声), and the second word is [shǎngshēng] (上声). Its meaning is “hurry (road)”; “Catch (work)” is still used in the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China.

However, in today’s Qingdao dialect, there is no use of verbs; it only is used as a time word to indicate “a short time”. Its pronunciation has also undergone a linguistic change, being read as [tsaŋ<sup>213</sup>kār<sup>0</sup>]. The tone of the first word (趱) is [yīnpíng] (阴平), and the second word is soft voice (轻声).

Among them, the vowel of “zan” (趱) is followed by the word “gan” (赶) which roots consonant [k]. The effect of inverse assimilation is changed from the front nasal vowel [an] to the rear nasal vowel [ang], and at the same time, the word “gan” (赶) which vowel is Erhua (儿化), and which tone is also weakened from the [shǎngshēng] (上声) to the soft voice (轻声).

The words that are read as [qùshēng] (去声) in Putonghua are read as Yinping (阴平) in the Qingdao dialect. Therefore, the pronunciation of the word in the Qingdao dialect today is completely in line with the

<sup>2</sup> A method of demonstrating the pronunciation of a Chinese character, by using two other Chinese characters, the first with the same initial consonant and the other with the same final vowel as the character. *Guangyun* (广韵) represents the voice system of the Tang and Song dynasties.

pronunciation of the word “Zan gan-er” (趲赶儿) in the literature of Ming and Qing dynasty.

However, in terms of usage, “Zan gan-er” (趲赶儿) is converted from a verb to a time word; it no longer means “accelerating the speed to shorten the time”, but means “a short time” that represents the completion or continuation of the action.

### The Mechanism and Process of Translating Into Time Words

Judging from the use cases in the Ming and Qing literature, “Zan gan-er” (趲赶儿) is generally used as an imperfect verb. Of the 97 use cases we have retrieved, only three have objects behind them, and most of the remaining use cases do not have objects. It acts as a predicate in the sentence. For example:

(17) 这一日, 沿途趲赶, 直奔京中。(《七剑十三侠》126回, p. 565)

Zhe yi ri, yan tu zan gan, zhi benjing zhong. (*Qijianshisianxia*, 126th chapter, p. 565)

One day, they sped along the road and directly run to Beijing. (extracted from *The Seven Swords and Thirteen Warriors*, 126th chapter, p. 565)

In this example sentence (17), “V<sub>1</sub>”, that is Zan gan-er” (趲赶儿), is the time-premise and movement way of “V<sub>2</sub>P”, that is “zhi ben jing zhong” (直奔京中), therefore, the both generally connected by a conjunction “er” (而). Such as:

(18) 在 小 弟 之 意, 以 三 路 取 早 道 趲 赶 而 进,

Zai xiao di zhi yi, yi san lu qu han dao zan gan er jin,

似 更 神 速。(《七剑十三侠》169回, p. 763)

Si geng shen su. (*Qijianshisianxia*, 169th chapter, p. 763)

In my opinion, taking the three roads to fast march by the land, it seems faster.

In this circumstance, “V<sub>1</sub>” (Zan gan-er 趲赶儿) still has its verbal characteristics, but it has the tendency of indicating “the way and the state”. Therefore, syntactically speaking, it has features as both verbs and adverbs.

For the need of precisely expressing the meaning and language economy, in most cases from the literature in Qing Dynasty, there are more “V<sub>1</sub> (zan gan)” directly combining with “V<sub>2</sub>P” without any connectors; as a result, they are easily incorporated into the same time-level. By this time, the semantic orientation of “zan gan” (趲赶) is no longer pointing to the entity (such as journey), but to the way and state of another verb or verbal phrase. For example:

(19) 李 自 然 闻 报, 即 速 催 督 各 将 兵 趲 赶 前 往 各 门

Li ziran wen bao, ji su cui du ge jiang bing zan gan qian wang ge men

阻 住。(《七剑十三侠》157回, p. 711)

Zu zhu. (*Qijianshisianxia*, 157th chapter, p. 711)

LI Ziran heard the report, immediately pushed his men led the army to the gates hurriedly for blocking the enemies.

Li Yong found:

in the syntactic plane of Chinese, there is a syntactic limitation of “one core-verb”. According to the principle of syntactic restriction of the “one core-verb”, a sentence with serial verb phrasing is an important syntactic environment that induces the grammatization of Chinese verbs. The accompanying verbs before and after the core-verbs are often

unstable in semantics, and under certain conditions, the meaning of words may occur virtualization. Then it causes grammaticalization at the grammar level. (2003, pp. 53-56)

That is to say, syntactic limitation of “one core-verb” leads directly to the disintegration of the sentence with serial verb phrasing, and promotes the evolution of binuclear verbs in Chinese to mononuclear verbs.

From the perspective of syntactic functions, the word “zan gan” (趲赶) in sentence (19) is equivalent to the word “hurry” (赶快) in Putonghua and serves as an adverbial in the sentence, expressing the time premise or accompanying method of “V<sub>2</sub>P” (such as “Go to the doors to block enemies”).

Therefore, the word “zan gan” (趲赶) here can be reanalyzed as an adverbial phrase which modifies the verb phrase, that is, it has gradually become an adverb from the verb. We found that such use cases were more commonly used in the late Qing dynasty, with a total of 53 cases. This also shows that this process of grammaticalization was completed in the late Qing Dynasty.

As an adverb of time, the word “zan gan” (趲赶) means “and hurry up”. The duration of the modified action is always very short. For example, in example examples (19), the word “zan gan” (趲赶) modifies the serial verb phrase “go to the door to block” (前往各门阻住). Because it is necessary to “block the enemy”, the action of “going to the gates” must be rapid, and the time spent on the action must be brief. In this way, the hidden meaning of “short time” gradually appears in people’s minds. By analogy or derivation, this hidden meaning of “zan gan” (趲赶) has gradually become clear and solidified. In everyday pragmatic use, it is gradually converted from adverbs to time words, indicating “a very short time”.

In this process of transformation, the reasoning mechanism plays a decisive role. Just as the conversion of adverb “just” (只是) to conjunction “just” (只是) in modern Chinese, “it is because the implicit meaning of sentences is fixed in a certain context. In this transformation process, the reasoning mechanism plays a decisive role” (Zhang, 2000, p. 373).

In addition, from the perspective of the semantic structure, both also have a clear semantic relationship:

{verb: zan gan (趲赶)} = [-time word, +action mode, +shorten time, +time smaller]

{adverb: zan gan-er (趲赶儿)} = [+time word, +action result, +short time, +time smaller]

In daily life, accelerating the speed to “catch up (趲赶)” (distance or duration) naturally causes people to have associations that shorten the time and reduce the amount of time. There is a cognitive basis for the transformation of the word “zan gan” (趲赶) from adverbs to time words, especially the core element of [+small amount of time] (时量小) makes that both exist a certain similarity between the semantic components of the two, and this similarity is the realization condition of metaphor from adverbs to time words.

Chen Youxuan and Zheng Ying (2006, p. 67) further pointed out: “The change of pronunciation is often accompanied by the evolution of grammaticalization, so the weakening of speech sound is also one of the characteristics of grammaticalization”.

Corresponding to this, the word “zan gan-er” (趲赶) is also accompanied by the phenomenon of the phonetic changes during the process of grammaticalization. In particular, the front nasal vowel [an] of the former word “zan”(趲) was changed to the rear nasal vowel [ang] by the effect of inverse assimilation of the initial consonant [k] of the followed word “gan” (赶). And at the same time, the tone of the word “gan” (赶) was also weakened from the [shǎngshēng] (上声) to the soft voice (轻声), and the form of Erhua (儿化) of its was evolved in pragmatics, to reinforce the implied meaning “small amount of time” of the word “zan gan-er” (趲赶儿).

Owing to the phonetic mutation, there is no literature clearly point out which written word is the origin of “zan gan-er” (趲赶) in Qingdao dialect, while this paper presents that the original word may be “趲赶” supported by several linguistics evidences. At present, this word only exists in the old-style Qingdao dialect used by old generation.

### The Conclusion

In modern Chinese, the word “zan gan” (趲赶) is generally a zero-valence verb, which doesn't have any argument, However, the word “zan gan” (趲赶) in the Qingdao dialect has grammaticalized driven by its non-typical usage as an intransitive verb. The motivation for grammaticalization stems from the atypical syntactic function of its intransitive verb. Due to the existence of a syntactic limitation of the “one core-verb”, in the serial-verb construction, the word “zan gan” (趲赶) gradually became an adverb, meaning “in a hurry”, and then under the analogy or derivation of the reasoning mechanism, the hidden meaning of its “temporary time” gradually became clear in daily life, and finally the word “zan gan-er” (趲赶儿) was evolved into a time word which meaning was “small amount of time”.

However, at present, the time word “zan gan-er” (趲赶儿), which is quite characteristic in Qingdao dialect, only exists in the old-style Qingdao dialect and has already disappeared in the new-style Qingdao dialect.

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