

**A Semantic Analysis of 'Get' and its Acquisition by
Students of English in Macau: A Cognitive Approach**

By

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Abstract

This study is divided into two main parts. The first part examines the meanings of the English word *get* from a synchronic and diachronic perspective. I use the mechanisms of change espoused by grammaticalization theory in several theoretical paradigms to account for the variations in *get*. The second part of this study investigates the acquisition patterns of the English word *get* by secondary school students in Macau. The various senses of the word are shown to have considerable variation in recognition salience by these students and an explanation for this variation is made also based on the precepts of grammaticalization theory to account for the relationship between the senses of *get*.

To find out which senses of *get* are most salient to secondary school students, two methods were employed. First, students' unprompted writings were analyzed and all instances of *get* were recorded. These were then classified into semantic categories. Second, a test of the students' knowledge of the various senses of *get* was devised to find out which senses had been acquired most and least. The students consisted of 12 English classes of secondary school students (form 1-6) with 2 classes from each form.

The results of both experiments showed that there is considerable variation in the level of acquisition of the semantic categories of *get*. This is revealed in the frequency of use in their writings and their ability to see constructions using the word as proper or incorrect in the saliency test.

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