

ON RESULTATIVE *DE* CONSTRUCTION in MANDARIN CHINESE

高 岩
GAO Yan

Abstract

In this paper, we will compare two proposed in the literature analyses about the structure of resultative *de* construction such as (1)-(3) in Mandarin Chinese. According to one analysis, the V2 in a NP1...V1 *DE* (NP2) V2 construction is treated as the main verb of the sentence; According to the other, the V1 is treated as the main verb of the sentence, and the clause containing NP2 and V2 is defined as the complement of the V1. Here we will raise two questions. The first question is which is the main verb of the sentence with resultative *de* construction, V1 or V2? The second one concerns the property of NP2 when V1 is transitive verb: Is NP2 the object of V1 or the subject of NP2 V2 clause?

Key word:

[X'-理論] X'-theory · [“~得”結果補語] resultative *de* construction
[否定] not: *bu* and *mei(you)* · [BA 構文] *ba* construction

1. Introduction

One of much discussed topics in Mandarin Chinese syntax has been to determine the structures of resultative *de* constructions like (1),(2),and (3):

- (1) Ta lei de yun dao le.
he tired DE dizzy down LE
'He was so tired that he became dizzy.'
- (2) Ta han de sangzi ya le.
he shout DE voice hoarse LE
'He shouted much so that his voice was hoarse.'
- (3) Ta qi de wo fadou.
he annoy DE I shudder
'He annoyed me so that I shuddered.'

Each of these sentences has two predicates. I will refer to them as V1 and V2. V1 is the stative verb *lei* 'tired' in (1), the action verb *han* 'shout' in (2), and the action verb *qi* 'annoy' in (3).

in (3) respectively. V2 is the stative verb *yun* 'dizzy' in (1), the stative verb *ya* 'hoarse' in (2), and the action verb *fadou* 'shudder' in (3). In addition, there are two NP, NP1 and NP2 in (2) and (3). NP1 is *ta* 'he' and NP2 is *sangzi* 'voice' in (2). NP1 is *ta* 'he' and NP2 is *wo* 'I' in (3).

Concerning this resultative *de* construction, there are two topics that have been discussed: one is the relationship between V1 and V2, in particular whether V1 is the main verb of this resultative sentence, or whether V2 is the main verb; the other is the property of NP2 in (3), that is, whether it is the object of V1 or the subject of V2. Here we will show two competing hypotheses about the first topic. According to Chao 1968, Huang and Mangione 1985, V2 that has the ability to take V-not-V form and aspect markers is treated as the main verb. Li 1990 and Huang 1988 suppose that V1 is the main verb and V2 is the main verb of the result clause. On the property of NP2, Li's (1990) idea is in contrast to Huang 2009. The former regards NP2 as the subject of the result clause, as the object of V1.

In this paper, we will argue for the hypothesis that V1 is the main verb of the sentence with resultative *de* construction. In section 2, we will review two competing arguments on which is the main verb, whether V1 or V2. In section 3, we will show two different arguments on the property of NP2, Li 1990 and Huang 2009. In section 4, we will closely examine V-not-V question form by addressing the difference between two negations *bu* 'not' and *mei/mei you* 'not' in Mandarin Chinese. In section 5, we will concern the property of NP2 by applying *ba* construction. Finally, we will give our conclusions in this paper.

2. Previous analyses

In this section, we will review two approaches to the question which is the main verb of the resultative *de* construction, V1 or V2?

2.1 Chao 1968

Chao's (1968) argument, one of the well-known analyses, is that V1 is the main verb. There are two important facts to support this analysis: one is that only V2 can take V-not-V question form; the other is that V2, not V1, has the ability to take the aspect marker *le*.

2.1.1 V-not-V Questions. In general, whether a verb can take a V-not-V question form has been accepted as a criterion for the verb's main-verb-hood, as in (4):

- (4)a. *Ta chi fan.*
he eat meal
'He eats a meal.
- b. *Ta chi bu chi fan?*
he eat not eat meal
'Does he eat a meal?'
- c. **Ta pao bu pao de hen lei?*

he run not run DE very tired

d. Ta pao de lei bu lei?

he run DE tired not tired

'Did he get tired from running?' (Did he run till he became tired?)

As (4c) shows, V1, the verb *pao* 'run', does not occur in V-not-V question form. In contrast, V2, the stative verb *lei* 'tired' in (4d), does. The opposition between (4c) and (4d) suggests that V2, but not V1, is the main verb of the sentence.

2.1.2 Aspect Markers. Verbal aspect is another general test for whether a verb is the main verb of the sentence or not, as in illustrated by perfective *le* in (5):

(5) a. Ta chi le fan.

he eat LE meal

'He ate a meal.'

b. *Ta pao le de hen lei.

he run LE DE very tired

c. *Ta pao de le hen lei.

he run DE LE very tired

d. Ta pao de hen lei le.

he run DE very tired LE

'He got very tired with running.' (He ran till he became very tired.)

As (5b,c) indicate, V1, the verb *pao* 'run' cannot take the aspect marker *le*. In contrast, V2, the stative verb *lei* 'tired' in (5d) can. This also supports that V2 is the main verb of this sort of sentences. Li & Thompson 1978 give the same argument to show that V2 is the main verb.

2.2 Huang 1988

In Huang 1988, the claims made in Chao and elsewhere are argued against by seriously further checking facts about V-not-V question forms and aspect markers.

2.2.1 Embedded V-not-V Questions. A clear counterexample to Chao's assumptions is the case of the embedded clause like (6):

(6) Ni renwei tamen hui-bu-hui lai?

you think they will-not-will come

'Do you think that they will come or do you think they won't? (Huang 1988:279)

Crucially, the sentence (6) has V-not-V form in the embedded clause, not in the main verb. Therefore, he argues that it does not necessarily follow that a verb is not the main verb if it cannot take V-not-V form. V-not-V form as a test for the main-verb-hood should be considered more closely.

2.2.2 Aspect Marker The claim that V2 is the main verb because only V2 may be suffixed with *le* is also argued against by the facts based on the embedded clause(7), stative verb *xihuan* 'like'(8) and the semantics of *le*.

(7)a. Lisi tou le qian.

Lisi steal LE money

'Lisi stole money.'

b. Ta renwei Lisi tou le qian.

he think Lisi stole LE money

'He thinks that Lisi stole the money.'

(7a,b) denote that *le* can appear in the embedded clause under the verb *renwei* 'think' in (7b) as well as in the main verb *tou* 'steal' in (7a).

The second fact against Chao's assumption is the case of stative verbs as *xihuan* 'like' in (8):

(8)* Ta xihuan le gou.

he like LE dog

Although some verbs including stative verbs are main verbs in sentences, they cannot be suffixed with the aspect marker *le* like (8).

Thirdly, let us turn to the aspect marker *le*. As Li & Thompson have argued, a central requirement for the use of aspect marker *le* is that the verb to which it is attached must be one that denotes a 'bounded event' (1981:185-202). As for the resultative *de* constructions in (1-3), not V1 itself but V1 and V2 together mean the bounded event. Therefore, V1 does not take *le*.

3. Previous analyses on NP2

Here we will introduce two different hypotheses on the property of NP2: Is NP the object of V1 or the subject of [NP2 V2]?

3.1 Li1990. The scope of the emphatic marker/negation/modal/adverb in the relevant sentences as shown in (9):

(9)a. Ta [[shi] {dou de wo hen kaixin}].

he be make fun DE I very happy

'He made fun of me so much that I became happy.'

b. Ta [[meiyou] {dou de wo hen kaixin}].

he not make fun DE I very happy

'He did not make fun of me that I became happy.'

c. Ta [[hui] {dou de wo hen kaixin ma}] ?

he will make fun DE I very happy PAR

'Will he make fun of me that I become happy?'

d. Ta [[changchang] {dou de wo hen kaixin}].

he often make fun DE I very happy
 'He often makes fun of me that I become happy.'

If NP1 *ta* 'he' in and V1 *dou* 'make fun' make the matrix clause of the sentence, then we would expect that the scope of emphatic, negation, modal and adverb would not extend to the resultative *de* construction. Clearly, the facts in (9) are not this case. Therefore, we would suppose that [(NP2) VP2] is a subordinate clause. That is to say, NP2 is the subject and V2 is the predicate of this clause.

3.2 Huang 2009. To determine the property of NP2, Huang chooses the interjection *ya* test as shown in (10):

- (10)a. Ta gaosu pengyou ya, [s Pro qu touben qinqi].
 he tell friend YA go seek.refuge.with relative
 'He told his friend,um,to go to the relatives for shelter.'
- b. *Ta gaosu ya, pengyou [sPro qu touben qinqi].
 he tell YA friend go seek.refuge. with relative
 *'He told,um,his friend to go to the relatives for shelter.'
- c. Ta shou ya, [s pengyou qu touben qinqi le].
 he say YA, go seek.refuge.with relative LE
 'He said,um,that his friend went to the relatives for shelter(Huang 2009:85)

Based on the facts in (10), he claims that the interjection *ya* has the following property: it is possible to be inserted between a verb and its clausal objects as in (10a), but not between a verb and its postverbal NP as in (10b).

Applying *ya* to the (3) yields the following contrast:

- (11)a. Ta qi de wo ya, fadou.
 he annoy DE I YA shudder
 'He annoyed me so much that I shuddered.'
- b. ?Ta qi de ya, wo fadou.
 he annoy DE YA I shudder
 'He annoyed me so much that I shuddered.'

The acceptability of (11a) is the result of inserting *ya* between the verb *qi* 'annoy' and its clausal object [s Pro *fadou*]. In contrast, *ya* in (11b) insert between the verb *qi* 'annoy' and its postverbal NP *wo* 'I', and the interpretation of (11b) becomes a little strange. Hence, Huang concludes that NP2 *wo* 'I' is the object of the V1 *qi* 'annoy'; and the resultative phrase is considered as a clause with Pro as its subject.

4. V-not-V Questions

Recall the problem regarding V-not-V question form as shown in (4c). V1 *pao* 'run' cannot take the V-not-V question form *pao-bu-pao* in (4c). However, is the unacceptability of the sentence due to the verb *pao* 'run' not being able to take V-not-V form? In order to find the

answer for this question let us consider the negations in Mandarin Chinese.

Originally, there are two negation forms in Mandarin Chinese: *bu* and *mei (you)*. *Bu* provides a neutral negation, and *mei(you)* negates the completion of an event (Li & Thompson 1981:421). The examples are shown below:

- (12)a. Ta hen congming.
he very smart
'He is very smart.'
- b. Ta bu congming.
he not smart
'He is not smart.'
- c. Ta congming bu cong ming
he smart not smart
'Is he smart?'
- d. Ta chi fan le.
he eat meal LE
'He had a meal.'
- e. Ta mei chi fan.
he not eat meal
'He did not eat meal.'
- f. Ta chi mei chi fan?
he eat mei eat meal
'Did he eat a meal?'

Bu cong ming (12b) is the neutral negation of the adjective *congming* 'smart' in (12a). In contrast, *mei chi fan* in (12d) means the event *chi fan* 'have a meal' has not completed. According to the distinction between *bu* and *mei(you)*, we would expect that *mei(you)* should be used when we refer to the incompletion of an action. This means that, since the resultative *de* construction involves the bounded event in meaning, it naturally appears with *mei(you)*, not *bu*.

Therefore, we will propose that the V-not-V question should be divided into two forms in Mandarin Chinese: V-*bu*-V form and V-*mei(you)*-V form. V-*bu*-V is applied to neutral negation for adjectives or stative verbs for example: *hao-bu-hao* 'good or not good' (hao 'good'), *lei-bu-lei* 'tired or not tired' (lei 'tired'). In contrast, the case of action verbs including the completion should take the form V-*mei(you)*-V such as *chi-mei-chi* (chi 'eat')(Did eat?), *pao-mei-pao* (pao 'run')(Did run?).

Chao 1968 points out that *de* in resultative *de* construction could be considered as *dao* 'arrive;reach'. This means the *de* construction could imply the notion of completion. Hence, we propose that V in resultative construction should take the form V-*mei*-V as in (13) and (14):

- (13) Ta han-mei-han de shangzi ya le ?
he shout-not-shout DE voice hoarse LE

'Did he shout to his voice become hoarse?'

(14) Ta qi-mei-qi de ni fadou?

he annoy-mei-annoy DE you shudder

'Did he annoy you so much that you shuddered?'

(13) and (14) denote two things : one is that V1 is really the main verb of the sentence. The other is that V1 can take the form V-not-V, but in this case, V-*mei*-V because of the implication of completion of the action denoted by the verb.

Li 1990 suggests that V-not-V form can not apply to the resultative compounds verb (Li 1990:55).

(15)a. *Ta kan(dong) bu kandong nide xin?

he read-understand not read-understand your letter

b. Ta kan(dong) mei kandong nide xin?

he read-understand mei read-understand your letter

'Did he understand your letter?'

The above examples show us that even resultative compound verbs also can take the form V-not-V. However, it should be realized as V-*mei*-V form, not V-*bu*-V.

5. Ba Construction

Concerning the structure of resultative *de* constructions when V1 is a transitive verb as in (3) below, the analyses of Li 1990 and Huang 2009 are incongruous.

(3) Ta qi de wo fadou.

he annoy DE I shudder

'He annoyed me so that I shuddered.'

According to Li 1990, NP2 *wo* 'I' in (3) is the subject of the result clause *wo fadou* 'I shuddered'. However, for Huang 2009 this NP2 *wo* 'I' is the object of V1 *qi* 'annoy'. Here we will argue for Huang's claim by applying *ba* construction.

Ba construction has an important structural point that the direct object is generally placed immediately after *ba* and before the verb *xihuan* 'like' (16) (cf. Li & Thompson 1981):

(16) subject *ba* NP verb

Let us look at the sentences without *ba* construction and with *ba* construction in the following:

(17)a. Ta he shui le.

he drink water LE

'He drank water.'

b. Ta ba shui he le.

he BA water drink LE

'It's he who drunk that water /What he drunk is that water.'

(17a) predicates a fact that he drank water. However, (17b) stresses the subject *ta* 'he' or the direct object *shui* 'water'. The distinction between (17a) and (17b) implies that *ba* construction serves some kind of communicative function. Leaving the meaning of *ba* construction aside, here we will focus on the structural position of the direct object.

To determine the property of NP2 in (3), let us apply the *ba* construction to it and the result is as below:

- (18) Ta ba wo qi de fadou.
 he BA I annoy DE shudder
 'He annoyed me so much that I shudder.'

As (18) indicate that *wo* 'I' immediately occur after *ba* and before the transitive verb *qi* 'annoy'. In terms of the structure of *ba* construction, we could propose that NP2 in (3) is the object of the transitive V1, not the subject of the result clause.

6. Conclusions

In this article, I have tried to argue for the following two points on the resultative *de* construction : one is that V1, not V2, is the main verb of these sentences; the other is that NP2 is the object of V1 when V1 is a transitive verb based on the evidence using *ba* construction in addition to what is pointed out by Huang.

References

- Chao, Yuen-Ren (1968) *A Grammar of spoken Chinese*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Huang, C.-T. James (1982) *Logical Relations in Chinese and the Theory of Grammar*. Doctoral dissertation, MIT.
- Huang, C.-T. James (1988) "WO PAO DE KUA I AND CHINESE PHRASE STRUCTURE" *Language* 64, 274-311.
- Huang, C.-T. James, Y.-H. Audrey Li, Ya-Fei Li (2009) *The Syntax of Chinese*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Iwada, Noriyuki (2001) *Anshoshitemanabu Chugokugo (shukyuhen)* (Chinese by reciting) Tokyo: Hakuteisha.
- Li, Charles N and Sandra A. Thompson (1981) *Mandarin Chinese: a functional reference grammar*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Radford, Andrew (1988) *Transformational Grammar: A First Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sybesma, Rint. (1999) *The Mandarin VP*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Tang, C.-C. Jane (1990) *Chinese Phrase Structure and the Extended X'-theory*. Doctoral dissertation, Cornell University.