Diachronic Evolution Continuum of Macro-event Reflected by Resultative Verb Complement in Chinese

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In modern Chinese, the verb-complement structure is mainly divided into two basic constructions: the verb-directional construction and the verb-resultative construction (Shen 2003)(see 1a-1b).

(1) a. The verb-directional construction: 瓶子　　漂出　　岩洞。
The bottle　floated out　the cave.

b. The verb-resultative construction: 你　捡　不捡？　　不捡　我　就　打死　　你！
You　pick　not pick?　Not pick　I　will　beat die　you!

Both the verb-directional construction and the verb-resultative construction are often used to express macro-event. Macro-event can be regarded as a basic and recurring semantic category of complex events, which can be conceptualized as two relatively simple events and the relations between them. The two relatively simple events tend to fuse into a unitary event at the conceptual level and be expressed by a single clause at the formal level (Talmy 1985, 2000: 216; Li 2018). During this process, humans either analytically cognize macro-event as two discrete and relatively simple events and the relations between them, or comprehensively conceptualize macro-event as a single and integrated complex event (Li 2020).

Specifically, the verb-directional construction can be described as "verb + directional verb(motion verb)" and the verb-resultative construction can be described as "verb + resultative verb/adjective".

After decades of research, studies on the verb-directional construction have been quite sufficient (Tatsuo 1957/1987; Liu 1992; Liu 1996; Wu 1996, 2010; Jiang, Wu 1997; Liu 1998; Liang 2007; Li 2018, 2019). For the verb-resultative construction, the resultative adjective complement has already been explored by some scholars (Zhu 1982/2000: 126; Du, Li 2021).

However, few studies focus on the resultative verb complement. Based on the macro-event theory and the macro-event hypothesis, this paper is determined to conduct an empirical study to fill the research gap of macro-event's diachronic evolution continuum reflected by the resultative verb complement.

The verb-resultative construction is a distinctive syntactic construction in Chinese, which is used to express the semantic relation between action and result (Hu 2005). Nevertheless, not until the Early Middle Chinese did the verb-resultative construction first appear (Shimura 1984; Mei 1991; Jiang 1999; Wu 1999; Zhao 2000). Before the Early Middle Chinese, people used causative usage and double clauses to express the semantic relation between action and result. How did the causative usage and double clauses evolve into the verb-resultative construction? What kind of diachronic patterns can be concluded from evolution?

This paper is intended to propose two diachronic evolution continua of macro-event: the syntactic form continuum and the semantic event integration continuum.

The syntactic form continuum:

causative usage → double clauses → coordination → serial verb construction → verb-resultative construction

The semantic event integration continuum:

single caused event(cause or manner implied)→two discrete events→two coordinate events→primary and secondary events→macro-event

Selecting 5 most representative works representing 5 periods in the history of Chinese evolution (see Table 1), this paper builds a corpus to support research, whose total characters are 1,181,180. With the help of corpus research tools, this paper selects "死/sǐ/die, 中/zhòng/hit, 成/chéng/achieve, 透/tòu/penetrate" 4 representative resultative verb complements (see Table 2) from the 5 most representative works to explore the two diachronic evolution continua of macro-event.

Table 1. Five different Chinese historical periods and their representative works

Stage	Period	Time span	Selected work	Authors	Tokens
I	Archaic Chinese	BC 1600-24	Zuo Zhuan (Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals)	Zuo (2016)	276,709
II	Early Middle Chinese	25-618	Shi Shuo Xin Yu (A New Account of Tales of the World)	Liu (2011)	79,093
III	Late Middle Chinese	619-1279	The Annotation of Dunhuang Literature	Huang and Zhang (1997)	319,276
IV	Early Modern Chinese	1280-1911	Yu Shi Ming Yan (Old and New Stories)	Feng (2014)	355,901
V	Modern Chinese	1912-present	I'm Your Father	Wang (2004)	150,201

Table 2. Four representative resultative verb complements and their occurrences in the five representative works

	Archaic Chinese	Early Middle Chinese	Late Middle Chinese	Early Modern Chinese	Modern Chinese	Total
死/sǐ/die	452	39	344	175	44	1054
中/zhòng/hit	28	3	6	20	9	66
成 /chéng/achieve	491	69	389	356	250	1555
透 /tòu/penetrate	0	0	16	20	29	65

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