

The Macro-event Hypothesis: Evidence from Resultative Constructions in Mandarin

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The resultative constructions used in contemporary Mandarin have evolved from the combination of two separate clauses in Ancient Chinese. For example, the single-clause representation of the resultative construction “dǎ pò huā píng /hit-break vase” has arisen from two separate clauses containing the verbs “dǎ /hit” and “pò/break”, which become the main verb and resultative respectively. There is a huge amount of literature on resultatives, mainly from traditional perspectives such as those of syntax, semantics, or time of historical appearance. But a recent trend has been to study these constructions from the macro-event perspective in cognitive semantics (Talmy 2000a, 2000b). Li argues that a macro-event results from the integration of two simpler events through grammaticalization in Mandarin (Li 2018), thus linking the study of grammaticalization with the formation of macro-events. He further proposes the macro-event hypothesis as follows: Language can often represent two simpler interconnected events more synthetically as a single integrated complex event, a “macro-event”, and represent them in a single clause. On this basis, languages can be divided into two major types: macro-event languages and non-macro-event languages. This dichotomy might alternatively be viewed as a continuum. With corresponding semantic gradations, there might exist syntactic gradations from a double- to a single-clause representation and, within the single clause, from less to more grammaticalization of certain constituents. A language might then progressively change from having solely a highly analytic representation of a privileged relation to also having a highly synthetic one (Li 2020, 2023). Few studies have tested the hypothesis, especially from an empirical perspective. The present paper intends to study the mechanisms of the event integration process and test the hypothesis. In particular, research questions will specifically address the continuum cited above from an event integration perspective. Data are collected for the 19 most frequently used types of resultative complement from the five most representative works representing five historical stages, ranging from 1600 BCE to the present, a span of some 3500 years, see table 1 in Appendix A. The number of occurrences in the selected works for these 19 types of resultative is listed in table 2 in Appendix B. At present, 19 resultative construction types have been identified, as listed exhaustively in table 3 in Appendix C (Shi 2018). These 19 types will be used as the basis for diachronic contrast. The evolutionary process undergone by each of the 19 resultative types will be examined individually through all five periods. And finally, some general mechanisms of event integration will be generated from the analysis.

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Appendix A: Table 1. Data collection

Stage	Period	Time span	Selected works	References	Tokens	Retrieval method
I	Archaic Chinese	BC 1600-24	Zuo Zhuan (Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals)	Zuo 2016	276707	Exhaustively searching for the occurrences of the 19 resultatives
II	Early Middle Chinese	25-618	Shi Shuo Xin Yu (A New Account of tales of the World)	Liu 2011	79093	
III	Late Middle Chinese	619-1279	The Annotation of Dunhuang Literature	Huang and Zhang 1997	319261	
IV	Early Modern Chinese	1280-1911	Yu Shi Ming Yan (Stories Old and New)	Feng 2014	139146	
V	Modern Chinese	1912-present	I Am Your Father	Wang 2004	149284	

Appendix B: Table 2. Occurrences of the 19 resultatives

	Archaic Chinese	Early Middle Chinese	Late Middle Chinese	Early Modern Chinese	Modern Chinese	
败/ bài/fail	0	28	32	11	7	78
成/ chéng/achieve	491	69	389	182	250	1381
穿/ chuān/cross	20	4	28	54	50	156
到/ dào/arrive	1	8	453	622	665	1749
掉/ diào/lose	3	0	6	3	32	44
定/ dìng/fix	124	36	219	90	132	601
动/ dòng/move	0	31	149	91	241	512
够/ gòu/reach	0	0	0	1	59	60
9. 惯/ guàn/usual	0	0	4	14	29	47
10 破/ pò/break	1	20	92	51	29	193
11. 伤 / shāng/damage	0	8	74	23	53	158
12. 胜/ sheng/win	0	51	154	47	11	263
13. 死/ sǐ/die	452	39	344	175	44	1054
14. 透/ tòu/through	1	0	16	10	29	56
15. 醒/ xǐng /wake	2	1	11	33	34	81
16. 着/ zhe/wear	0	10	212	259	1088	1569
17. 中/ zhōng/get	239	333	1330	592	244	2738
18. 住/ zhù/live	0	26	193	135	145	499
19. 走/ zǒu/walk	37	11	158	186	250	642
Total occurrences	1371	675	3864	2579	3392	11881

Appendix C: Table 3. 19 types of resultatives in Mandarin (revised from Shi 2018:96)

Focus relation		Integration type	Resultative types	Syntactic pattern
Same attributee		1. V1+R1	zhàn lèi/stand tired	S+VR
		2. V2+R1	xǐ lèi/wash tired	S+(V+NP)+VR
		3. V2+R2	tīng dǒng/hear understand	S+VR+O
		4. V2+R2	dǎo péi/reverse refund	S+(V+NP)+VR+O
		5. V3+R1	sòng yūn/send faint	S+(V+NP1+NP2)+VR
		6. V1+R3	pǎo wàng/run forget	S+VR+O
Different attributee		7. V1+R1	kū shī/cry wet	S+VR+O
		8. V2+R1	diǎn liàng/lit bright	S+VR+O
		9. V2+R1	kǎn dùn/cut duller	S+(V+NP)+VR+O
		10. V3+R1	jiāo bèn/teach stupid	S+(V+NP)+VR+O
		11. V3+R2	jiāo huì/teach	S+VR+O1+O2
Verb-focus	R ungrammaticalized	12. V1+R1	zǒu wǎn/leave late	S+VR
		13. V2+R1	chī zǎo/eat early	S+(V+NP)+VR
		14. V3+R1	jiāo chí/teach late	S+(V+NP1+NP2)+VR
	R grammaticalized	15. V1+R	zhàn zhù/stand hold	S+VR
		16. V1+R	zhuā zhù/catch hold	S+VR+O
		17. V3+R	jiāo wán/teach finish	S+VR+O1+O2
Verb as both causative and ergative	18. causative	qì sǐ1/anger dead	S+VR+O	
	19. ergative	qì sǐ2/anger dead	S+VR	