Lexical-syntactic Approach to Argument Realization in Mandarin Resultative V-V Compounds

Basically, there are two different views on resultative V-V compounds in Mandarin Chinese. One derives the compounds in the lexicon, such as Li’s (1990, 1995, 1997, 1999), and the other in syntax, such as Huang’s (1989, 1992), Gu’s (1994), Sybsema’s (1999), Lin’s (2001), Sybsema & Shen’s (2007), among others. The following data 1-4, however, illustrates that there are crucial problems remained unanswered or unclear either in pure lexical analysis or in pure syntactic analysis, such as 1) where the causative sense comes from in Mandarin resultative V-V compounds and where and how to locate it in syntax; 2) how to account for the contrasts in sentence 4 below; and 3) where the ambiguities come from in a resultative V-V compound, like the canonical data “zhui-lei” with 5 different readings, of which I attempt to contribute to the understanding in this paper.

Briefly, sentences like 1-2 strongly challenge Li’s lexical approach to the theta role assignment in resultative V-V compounds in Mandarin Chinese, since the thematic frame in sentence 1 apparently violates the thematic hierarchy, as well as the causative hierarchy (actually there is no causative involved in my analysis); rather, there is no theta role identification realized at all in sentence 2(Cheng (1997)). Lin (2001), then, proposed a light verb hypothesis to argument realization in Mandarin Chinese which says that both subject and object arguments in Chinese are introduced and licensed by a light verb, such as CAUSE in 3b-c, but has no relationship with the root verb. Such predication, however, is bored out at least in Mandarin (3).

In this paper, I argue that the contrasts in 1-3 mentioned above can be accounted for in terms of Hale and Keyser (1993, 2002)'s lexical-syntactic approach to argument structure: subject NPs are external to VP/AP which gets its semantic role through the predication relationship that holds between a root verb and a little v phrase as a whole. Moreover, following the suggestion by Pan 1998, Huang & Lin 1992, among others, that the interpretation of a resultative V-V compound in Mandarin depends on the property of V2, I, then, proposed that the fact whether there is causative sense involved or not in a resultative V-V compound in Chinese, as indicated in sentences 4 below, is resulted from two distinguishable types of little v entailed in the lexical content of V2s: BECOME and BE, both of which are reported to be responsible for introducing a state (Lin 2004). In detail, a V2, headed by the little v Become, potentially can be projected into a CAUSE projection further under certain conditions, or a DO projection, simply; while in a non-causative compound headed by the little v Be, it has no more higher projection of CAUSE else, but only a DO projection. This so-called condition deciding either a CAUSE or DO projection will be projected into further mentioned above, is proposed to be named with the CAUSER-CAUSEE Restriction which says causers and causes can not be identified with each other syntactically in causatives (partly in sense of Rappaport & Levin (2001)'s Argument-per-subevent condition). Under this assumption, therefore, the ambiguities in resultative V-V compound like “zhui-lei” with 5 different readings, are predicated naturally.

1 Within H&K (1993, 2002)'s framework, external subject NP is restricted to unergative verbs, this assumption, however, will be tested further in Mandarin in detail in this paper.
1. Baoyu wen wenti wen-fan-le Daiyu                                            <1, 3, 2-1'>
   Baoyu ask question ask-bored asp Daiyu
   Baoyu asked Daiyu questions to the extent that Daiyu became bored

2. Ta yinwei tiantian tiqiu, ti-po-le ta-de qiuxie                                      <       ?      >
   He because day day kick soccer, kick-break asp his snaker
   he kick-break his sneaker because he plays soccer everyday (Cheng, 1997)

3. a *zhe naifen zhang-gao le xiaobaobao
   this milkpowder grow-high asp little baby
   This milkpowder makes the little baby grow up

   b zhe naifen Shi xiaobaobao zhang-gao le hendo
   this milkpowder Shi little baby grow-high asp very much
   The little baby grows up very well because of being feded this kind of milkpowder

   c. zhe naifen chi-pang le xiaobaobao
   this milkpowder eat-fat asp little baby
   The little baby got fatter from being feded this kind of milkpowder

4. causative-resultative                                                          non-causative-resultative
   a. Zhangsan chang-fan le Lisi
      Zhangsan sing-bored asp Lisi
      Zhangsan caused Lisi to get bored by singing

   a’. Zhangsan chang-de Lisi fan-le
      Zhangsan sing-de Lisi bored-asp
      Zhangsan sang Lisi to get bored by singing

   b. Ta ting-guan le wo de shengyin
      He listen-costumed asp my voice
      He got costumed to my voice

   b’. *Ta ting-de wo de shengyin guan-le
      He listen-de my voice costumed-asp
      He got costumed to my voice

Selected reference:
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