

Literature Review of Second Language Learners' Acquisition of Chinese Resultative Construction*

Yanmei Lu

English Department, Xinxiang Medical University, China

Abstract—Chinese resultative construction was the hotspot of grammar researches and also the difficult point of second language teaching and learning. From the aspects of syntax, semantics and pragmatics, this paper analyzed the ontology researches of Chinese resultative construction, reviewed the research results of second language learners' acquisition of Chinese resultative construction and also provided some references and directions of related researches.

Index Terms—Chinese resultative construction, ontology researches, second language learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Resultative construction was also called 'predicate-complement structure' and defined as 'a sentence structure which consists a verb and a resultative complement', such as '打破', '喝醉', '洗干净', etc. The term was first described in *Eight Hundred Words of Modern Chinese* compiled by Lv Shuxiang. Some scholars called it 'verb phrase of master-slave mode' (Lv Shuxiang, 1980), 'causative form' (Wang Li, 1985), 'completive pattern' (Ding Shengshu, 1961), 'agglutinating predicate-complement structure' (Zhu Dexi, 1982). In order to simplify the term, resultative construction would be used in this paper. It was a kind of syntactic structure in Chinese and widely used. Because it had special characteristics and high frequency, it was an important research point in Chinese grammar field and, especially, a hotspot since 1980s. Besides, its internal structure was complicated and it was a difficult point in second language teaching and learning.

II. ONTOLOGY RESEARCHES OF CHINESE RESULTATIVE CONSTRUCTION

A. Syntactic Researches

As for the structure center of Chinese resultative construction, grammarians did a lot of researches. In early stage, it was regarded as a master-slave endocentric structure, with the former verb as the center and the latter complement as the subordinate. Zhang Zhigong (1952) thought that the former word which was complemented was the center and the latter complementing word was subordinate. Lv Shuxiang (1952), Zhu Dexi (1952) and Ding Shengshu (1961) had the similar opinions. But since 1980s, more and more scholars have doubts about this opinion and raised new views about the center of resultative construction. Li Lindong (1984) used the endocentric structure theory of Bloomfield and brought up a method to verify Chinese attributive structure 'As for two-member structure in a sentence, if you omit one element and reserve the other element, the reserved element does not change in syntactic function and the structure and semantic relation of the whole sentence do not change, the reserve element is the center and the omitted element is subordinate.' He gave an example "我已经吃饱了——我已经饱了? ——我已经吃". Through this identification, he regarded the center of resultative construction was the complement but not the verb. Zhan Renfeng (1989) and Ma Xiwen (1987) revised this view, but they also agreed that the complement was the structure center of Chinese resultative construction and the verb was subordinate. Fan Xiao (1985) used the method of component extension validation to identify the structure center in Chinese. Resultative construction V-R (V stands for verb, R stands for complement) could be extended as: Whether it could be inserted '得' or '不', whether it could be extended as 'V 得 R / V 不 R' and 'V 得 R / V 得不 R' etc. For example '吃饱' could be extended as '吃得饱' '吃不饱' or '吃得饱' '吃得饱'. Because extended R was a complement of V, V was the structure center and R was the subordinate in V-R structure. Fan Xiao's view was original and convincing. Yuan Minlin (2000) distinguished between syntactic center and semantic center and pointed that the syntactic center of resultative construction was the verb and the semantic center was the complement. He also said that the imbalance between structure and meaning was based on the expression function and historical origin of resultative construction. Ren Ying (2001) had similar view with Yuan and he thought that structure center included semantic and syntactic level. Both the former verb and the latter complement could decide syntactic function of resultative construction and became core element which played a leading role. Song Wenhui (2004) had different opinions and re-explored the center of resultative construction on the basis of structure and meaning. He thought that "typical center had the characteristic of structure and semantic meaning at the same time and atypical center had partial

* This research was supported by Humanities & Social Sciences Project of Ministry of Education in China (Grant No.13YJC740094).

center characteristic.”

Transitive or intransitive was another focus in syntax. Zhu Dexi (1982) said that “Like verbs, resultative construction with result complement was also transitive or intransitive”, “Transitive and intransitive of resultative construction had no direct connections with that of the predicate verb” For example, “买” was a transitive verb, while resultative construction “买贵了” was intransitive. On the contrary, “哭” was intransitive and resultative construction “哭哑” was transitive. Li Xiaorong (1994) distinguished carefully and solved the problem of transitive and intransitive better. She said that transitive and intransitive of resultative construction were connected with its category and divided it to two categories on the basis of the complement traits. Transitive of Category A was decided by the grammar quality of the predicate verb. If predicate verb was transitive, resultative construction could have objects, such as “七点钟我们吃完了饭”. If predicative verb was intransitive, resultative construction could not have objects, such as “笑完了”. Sometimes. On the other hand, if the complement of resultative construction was transitive, it could have objects, such as “他跑丢了一只鞋”, and the resultative construction was also transitive. If the complement was intransitive, some of resultative construction could have objects, such as “孩子哭醒了妈妈”; some of it could not have objects, such as “他挖浅了一个坑”, which was ungrammatical in Chinese.

Resultative construction could form many kinds of sentence pattern and some scholars probed into the basic sentence patterns of it. Li Linding (1980) described five sentence patterns of resultative construction in detail. (1) SVC (你长胖了) (2) SVOVC (他喝酒喝醉了) (3) SVCO (他听懂了我的意思) (4) SVO₁VCO₂ (你写通知写落了一个字) (5) S把O₁VCO₂ (钉子把我的衣服划破了一条口子). Fan Xiao (1987) thought the basic sentence patterns with “V-R” (R was result complement) as predicate were “S-VR-O” and “S-VR” and they could be transformed to other sentence patterns of ten kinds. Wang Hongqi (2001) analyzed the distribution of resultative construction in Ba-sentence and verb-coping sentence. In Ba-sentence, resultative construction whose semantic meaning of complement pointed towards objects distributed identically with that whose semantic meaning of complement pointed towards helper. In verb-coping sentence, the distribution of these two kinds of resultative constructions was opposed with each other and the distribution was closely related with the semantic meaning of complement. But he didn't solve some problems well. For example, in the ungrammatical sentence “*他把菜买贵了” and grammatical sentence “他买菜买贵了”, the complement “贵” of “买贵” pointed towards patient and also implied the judgment of the action but the resultative construction could only be incorporated into verb-coping sentence instead of Ba-sentence. Song Wenhui (2004) made further investigation on it by using Talmy conceptual system structure and analyzed the distribution of resultative construction in core sentence, verb-coping sentence, Ba-sentence, Bei-sentence and topic sentence.

B. Semantic Researches

With the development of semantics, grammarians had more researches on resultative construction in aspect of semantics. Fan Xiao (1985) divided semantic meaning of resultative construction into four kinds: (1) result of action, such as “逗笑了” (2) tendency of action, such as “走进来” (3) degree of action, such as “衣服穿少了” (4) state of action, such as “哆嗦起来”. Li Xiaorong (1994) divided the results of resultative construction' complement into three kinds: (1) expected result, such as “煮熟一锅饭” (2) diverged results, such as “这件衣服买贵了” (3) natural results, such as “天慢慢的亮了, 黎明染白了窗子”. Wang Hongqi (1996) made further explanations and pointed out that result complement had three kinds of meaning: (1) state complement of five small kinds: external state of human or things, such as “逗笑”; mental feelings of human, such as “打疼”; vanishment of human or things, such as “扫净”; competition of result, such as “比输”; new state of actions, such as “说好” (2) evaluation complement, such as “卖贱了” (3) result complement, such as “钓到”. Ma Zhen and Lu Jianming (1997) made further researches and divided semantic meaning of resultative construction into four kinds: (1) realization of respected result, such as “洗干净了” (2) appearance of non-ideal result, such as “搞坏了” (3) appearance of natural result, such as “长高了” (4) divergence of respected result, such as “挖浅了”.

As for the expression object and semantic relation of resultative construction, Zhan Renfeng (1989) made some researches based on the words of result complement. He pointed out that in resultative construction with both subject and object, R (resultative) expressed subject when R was transitive verb and expressed object when it was intransitive verb or adjectives. From the aspect of semantics, Mei Lichong (1994) discovered some rules of expression objects of resultative construction' result complement: in resultative construction with subject and object, expression object of complement was related with semantic characteristic of objects, predicate and complement and semantic relation between verb and complement. Guo Jisong and Wang Hongqi (2001) the expression differences between cohesive resultative construction and combinative resultative construction were different degrees of highlighting. Results showed by cohesive complement were low degree of highlighting, while results showed by combinative complement were high degree of highlighting. In semantics, cohesive complement was fit for conventional results, such as “撕开, 摔倒, 吸进” and combinative complement was fit for accidental result, such as “哭得眼睛都肿成烂桃了/笑得都岔气了” etc. Xiong Zhongru (2004) thought resultative construction was a kind of causative expression which reflected causing event and caused event. Causing event was a kind of activity and the activity could be causing event directly in

language expression, such as “洗衣服洗累了妈妈” and the participant of activity could be causing event metonymically, such as the sentence “张三打破了玻璃” in which “张三” was the metonym of “张三打破玻璃”.

C. Pragmatic Researches

Resultative construction researches in pragmatics were not as effective as that of syntax and semantics. While discussing Chinese Weibu Word, Liu Danqing (1994) pointed out that “Chinese result complement and possible complement were always the focuses of sentences, but main verbs of resultative construction and possible complement were always presupposed”. For instance, in the sentence “他喝酒了吗”, “喝” was the doubt. But in the sentence “他喝醉了吗”, we already knew he drank wine and the doubt was he was drunk or not. Wang Hongqi (1995) thought that in pragmatics the action or state of predicate was presupposed by resultative construction and transferred given information. But the action or state of complement predicate was new in this presupposed condition and transferred new information, it was the focus of resultative construction’s semantic meaning. For instance, in the sentence “老张喝醉了”, “喝(老张喝酒)” was presupposed but “醉(老张喝醉了)” was the focus. From them on, resultative construction researches in pragmatics were few and far between and lack of systematic research.

On the whole, ontology researches of Chinese resultative construction had a lot of changes and breakthrough which were listed as following: (1) The center problem of resultative construction was discovered from both syntax and semantics; (2) The transitive and intransitive of resultative construction were discussed in detail and so was the sentence distribution of resultative construction which was transferred from the distribution of basic sentence pattern to the confinement of incorporating into certain sentence pattern; (3) Semantic research was transferred from description into explanation of rules; (4) Pragmatic study had some development but was lack of systematicness. Ontology researches of resultative construction provided more stable basis for second language teaching.

III. SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION RESEARCH OF CHINESE RESULTATIVE CONSTRUCTION

Although Chinese second language acquisition research did not have a long history, it developed quickly and emerged many related researches. Some of them focused on Chinese ontology researches, while some of them focused on acquisition errors or reasons. Among them, there were some researches related to acquisitions of Chinese resultative construction.

Zhao Jinming (1994) raised principles of teaching foreigners Chinese. He pointed out that resultative construction was a simple sentence in syntax but had two expressions in semantics, for instance, “他喝醉了酒——他喝酒+他醉”; Pragmatic element could influence the correct usage of resultative construction. Lu Jianji (1994) pointed out that while learning resultative construction foreigners always missed some elements (verb or result complement), such as “记[住], 听[到]”. Complement was always missed by them, which was influenced by characteristic of thought and mother tongue interference. Li Dazhong (1996) classified students’ errors of learning resultative construction into several kinds: the lack of complement; the lack of verbs; verbs with two complements; some other forms between verb and complement; the denial of resultative construction with the Chinese word ‘不’. Shi Jiawei (1998) put forward that among 22 modern Chinese sentence patterns there were four kinds with result complement which belonged to BA sentence (T7, T8) and BEI sentence (T9, T10).

T7 S+把+O+V+RC, such as “他把我打哭了”.

T8 S+把+O1+V(在/到/给)+O2, such as “我把书放到桌子上”.

T9 S+被/叫/让/给+O+V+RC, such as “我被他打哭了”.

T10 S+被/给+V+RC, such as “我被打哭了”.

And towards the learners with Chinese and English as mother tongue, they were among the latter part of the second acquisition grade (three grades in total). Their acquisition sequence was T8, T10, T9, T7. From the direction of the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, Lv Wenhua (1999) considered dividing resultative construction and directional complement from verb-complement structure and classifying into phrase-word which was the transitional unit between phrase and word. The classification of phrase-word simplified complement system of original grammar pattern, provided convenience for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language and connected international Chinese teaching. Based on the comparison between Chinese and English, Quan Huiyu (1999) analyzed error types and reasons of resultative construction acquisition among learners whose mother tongue was English. As for the ineffective teaching of directional complement and object after verb in teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, Lu Jianming (2002) made a faithful description of their sequence and explained their position rule, which provide new reference for teaching of Chinese as a foreign language.

There were some acquisition researches of resultative construction among students with specific mother tongue. Qian Xujing (1997) analyzed the accuracy rate of directional complement among Japanese students in elementary, intermediate and high stages and discovered the acquisition sequence of Chinese directional complement of Japanese students. The sequence was: simple directional complement of verb without object; compound directional complement of verb without object; simple directional complement of verb with ordinary object; directional complement of verb with location object; compound directional complement of verb with ordinary object and direction complement of verb

with location verb. Liu Xun (2000) pointed out that the main reasons of resultative construction errors were negative transfer of mother tongue, negative transfer of target language, negative transfer of culture, influence of learning and communicating strategies and influence of learning environment. Shi Jiawei (2002) made a seven-month tracking study of an elementary-level foreign student. She divided the study into three stages and found high accuracy of sentence pattern in second stage while there was low accuracy of T8, T9 and T10. From the angle of semantic relations between Chinese predicate verb and result verb, Cheng Yanyan (2002) analyzed error type and reason of Kazak students while learning Chinese resultative construction: When the verb used as result complement, the students usually used two sentences to express the meaning, such as “*他哭了, 眼睛都肿了”; When Chinese complement was adjectives, the students usually used adverbial to replace the result complement, such as “他栓结实了一*他结实地栓了”; When expressing mental feelings and cognitive activities of human, the students could not grasp the context; Chinese result complement often implied causal relationship, but Kazak didn't have result complement and often used causal compound sentence to express, such as “他累得吃不下饭了一*他因为累了, 所以吃不下饭” etc.

Based on error analysis theory, Zhang Na (2006) analyzed common incorrect sentences of students from English-speaking countries and classified error types into missing error, wrong sequence error and wrong complement error. Through collecting linguistic data, Jin Zongyan (2006) and Che Hui (2006) analyzed common error types and reasons of Chinese resultative construction among Korean students and proposed corresponding teaching suggestions. Through contrastive analysis and linguistic data collecting, Yang Chenyong (2005) summarized common errors of Chinese resultative construction made by Vietnamese students. Hu Faxuan (2008) and Wang Jiaojiao (2010) analyzed error types of Thailand students while learning Chinese resultative construction and proposed corresponding teaching strategies. Through the comparison between English resultative construction and Chinese resultative construction, Yuan Boping (2009) pointed out that the object of English resultative construction was the patient of activity predicate and result predicate. However, in thematic relation of Chinese resultative construction, the object was not always the patient of activity predicate and result predicate. After the research, he discovered that the learners with English as mother tongue relied on it to deal with the thematic relation of Chinese resultative construction so that they could not reconstruct the argument structure of Chinese resultative construction, which might be the important reason of their acquisition errors. Chen Manhua (2009) and Zhang Yichuan (2009) proposed that while teaching students certain resultative construction, the teachers could let students remember the form and meaning as a whole even taking speech sounds, syntax and semantics into consideration. For instance, Chinese words “张” and “开” both had the meaning of “open”, so the corresponding translation “open open mouth” of “张开嘴” was incorrect. If the teachers taught “张开嘴” as a whole (a construction) to the students, the students would not doubt about it and remember it quickly. With the help of Construction Grammar, regarding Chinese resultative construction as a whole was helpful for the understanding and usage of resultative construction of learners. Based on an empirical study, Lu Yanping (2012) concluded major error types committed by foreign students and summarized two main sources of these errors—transfer and intralingual interference with the help of Construction Grammar. She suggested that negative language transfer and intralingual interference should be minimized and Construction Grammar be emphasized in teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

Although there were more and more researches on Chinese resultative construction acquisition, special experimental researches on foreign learners with specific mother tongue were rare and most of them were among other researches.

REFERENCES

- [1] Chen Hui. (2006). Error Analysis of Chinese Complement Acquisition of Korean Students. Master's Thesis of Liao Ning Normal University.
- [2] Chen Manhua. (2009). Construction Grammar's Enlightenment of Second Language Teaching. *Language Teaching and Research*, 4, 64-70.
- [3] Ding Shengshu. (1961). Lectures on Modern Chinese Grammar. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- [4] Fan Xiao. (1985). A Brief Review of V-R Grammar Research and Probe. Beijing: Peaking University Press.
- [5] Guo Jisong and Wang Hongqi. (2001). Cognitive Analysis of Expression Differences between Cohesive Complement and Combinative Complement. *International Chinese Teaching*, 2, 14-22.
- [6] Gu Yang. (1994). An Introduction of Argument Structure. *Foreign Linguistic*, 1, 1-11.
- [7] Hu Faxuan. (2008). Chinese Complement Acquisition Research of Thailand Students. Master's Thesis of Guangxi University for Nationalities.
- [8] Jin Zongyan. (2006). An Investigation of Chinese Result Complement of Korean Overseas Students. Master's Thesis of Beijing Language and Culture University.
- [9] Li Linding. (1984). Which complement which—Reconsideration of Case Relations. *Chinese Learning*, 2, 1-10.
- [10] Lin Huang. (1998). Literature Review of Resultative Construction from 1980s. *Journal of Shaanxi University (Social Sciences)*, 2, 68-73.
- [11] Liu Danqing. (1994). First Exploration of Weibu Word. *Chinese Learning*, 3, 23-27.
- [12] Liu Xun. (2000). An Introduction to pedagogy of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press.
- [13] Li Xiaorong. (1994). Observation of Resultative Construction' Object Function. *Chinese Language*, 5, 32-38.
- [14] Lu Jianming. (2002). The Location Problem of Directional Complement and Object after Verb. In Lu Jianming (Ed.), *Chinese Teaching in the World*. Beijing : Beijing Language and Culture University Press, 49-64.

- [15] Lv Wenhua. (2001). The Meaning of Division of Phrase Word in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. *Language Teaching and Research*, 3, 78-83.
- [16] Lv Shuxiang. (1980). Modern Chinese Eight Hundred Words. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- [17] Ma Xiwen. (1987). Some Sentence Patterns Related with Resultative Construction. *Chinese Language*, 6, 43-48.
- [18] Ma Zhen and Lu Jianming. (1994). Observations of Adjectives as Resultative Construction. *Chinese Learning*, 4, 14-18.
- [19] Mei Lichong. (1994). Re-analysis of Expression Object of Complement. *Language Teaching and Research*, 2, 79-89.
- [20] Qian Xujing. (1997). Acquisition Sequence of Chinese Directional Complement of Japanese Overseas Students. *International Chinese Teaching*, 1, 95-102.
- [21] Song Wenhui. (2004). Re-discussion of Syntactic Center of Modern Chinese Resultative Construction. *Modern Chinese Quarterly*, 5, 163-172.
- [22] Wang Hongqi. (2001). The Distribution of Resultative Construction in Ba Sentence and Verb Repeating Sentence. *Chinese Research*, 1, 6-11.
- [23] Wang Hongqi. (1995). Valence Research of Resultative Construction, Valence Research of Modern Chinese. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- [24] Wang Li. (1985). Chinese Modern Grammar. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- [25] Wang Jiaojiao. (2010). Error Analysis of Chinese Result Complement of Thailand Students. Master's Thesis of Southwest University.
- [26] Yang Chunyong. (2005). Error Analysis of Chinese Result Complement of Vietnamese Students. Master's Thesis of Yun Nan Normal University.
- [27] Zhang Na. (2006). Error Analysis of Chinese Result Complement of Overseas Students from English Countries. *Modern Chinese*, 9, 97-99.
- [28] Zhang Yichun. (2009). Construction Theory and Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. *Journal of Yan Cheng Normal University*, 6, 66-69.
- [29] Zhan Renfeng. (1989). The Expression Problem of Resultative Construction. *Chinese Language*, 2, 44-48.
- [30] Zhu Dexi. (2001). Eight Great grammarians of Modern Chinese in 20th Century, Selections of Zhu Dexi. ShenYang: Northeast Normal University Press.

Yanmei Lu was born in Ji Yuan City of Henan, China. She received the Master's degree in English Language and Literature in 2010. She is now a lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages, Xinxiang Medical University. In recent years, she published more than 3 academic papers in key journals. She has also finished 2 research projects. Her academic interests include language acquisition and applied linguistics.