

Research on Two Special Types of Inverted Resultative Constructions in Chinese based on Semantic Orientation Theory

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Abstract: The Inverted Resultative Construction is a unique grammatical structure that is frequently used in daily communication in Chinese. This particular construction has gradually gained the attention of language researchers and linguists in recent years because of its frequency of usage and its complex nature. However, studying this construction is not a simple task due to its various types and complex structures, which make it a challenging topic of study. In this paper, we aim to interpret The Inverted Resultative Construction through semantic pointing analysis. We will focus on the semantic analysis of two types of The Inverted Resultative Construction syntactic structures. The first type is “The novel made Mum cry,” which indicates that the novel was the cause of Mum's tears. The second type is “A song that cried all the 80s,” which signifies that the song was so emotionally stirring that it moved people to tears throughout the entire decade of the 1980s. By analysing these two types of inverted resultative constructions, we can gain a better understanding of how this unique structure is used and interpreted in daily communication.

1. Introduction

The Inverted Resultative Construction (IRC) is a structurally and grammatically distinctive construction in Chinese ^[1-2]. It is generally considered a specific type of verbal conjugation and can take different forms, depending on the subject being the nominal phrase (NP), verb phrase (VP), prepositional phrase (PP), or a clause (S). This particular form of inverted verbal conjugation exhibiting a cause-effect relationship contradicts the assumption of consistency in the assignment of the topic element put forth by Baker (1988) ^[5]. Consequently, researchers have been drawn to investigate the Inverted Resultative Construction in Chinese from diverse angles, such as syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and other aspects.

2. Previous Studies and Some Issues

Example sentences in Table 1 are both examples given by previous researchers in the Inverted Resultative Construction, and both of them have the surface syntactic structure of NP1 + V1 + V2 + had + NP2 and both NP1 are inanimate and both NP2 are animate, i.e., the animate aspect of NPs is also exactly the same. However, if we take a closer look at the underlying semantics: in a), NP2 “mum” in the object position of the sentence is the doer of V1 in the preceding conjunctive, while in b), NP2

“all the 80s” is not the subject of the action V1, and the actual singer does not appear in the sentence. Zhang (2009) ^[1] points out that the inverted conjugation causes the giver of the verb to appear in the object position of the sentence, while the receiver appears in the subject position. This obviously refers only to the case of example a) and does not include example b). Combined with the verb copying approach used by Shi (2005) ^[7] in analyzing the integration process of verbal conjunctive argumentative meta-structures, we generate example c) and example d) in Table 2 by syntactically transforming examples a) and b), respectively:

Table 1: Example sentences a) and b)

No.	Example sentences	Translation
a)	Xiao shuo kan ku le ma ma ^[6]	The novel made Mum cry
b)	Yi shou ge chang ku le suo you 80 hou ^[3]	A song that cried all the 80s

Table 2: Example sentences c) and d)

No.	Example sentences	Translation
c)	Ma ma kan xiao shuo kan ku le	Mum reads novels and mum cries at them
d)	Suo you 80 hou chang yi shou ge chang ku le	All the 80s sang and all the 80s sang and cried

It is found that the transformed example c) is still valid and the meaning of the sentence remains unchanged, but example d) does not conform to the Chinese language conventions and partially changes the meaning of the original sentence, because the singers are not “all post-80s”. Of course, the lack of conformity to the Chinese language may be due to the influence of the additional determiners “a” and “all”, so we can get example e) in Table 3 by omitting the additional elements on the basis of example d):

Table 3: Example sentence e)

No.	Example sentence	Translation
e)	80 hou chang ge chang ku le	The 80s sang and cried

At this point, the post 80s in the sentence can only be valid if it refers specifically to a specific post 80s sentence, otherwise it is not semantically explainable. But all in all, whether it is Example d) or Example e), the sentence formed after copying through the verb is partially distorted from its original meaning. It can be seen that sentences of the type of example b) are indeed different from the typical inverted verb conjugation. Why then does Peng (2017) ^[3] also regard the sentence in example b) as the Inverted Resultative Construction? Because they analyzed it from the perspective of event semantics, they proposed that the cause-effect semantic association is achieved through the association between predicate theorists and event participants, and argued that the event participants in example b) have a presupposed co-reference relationship, i.e., the topic component of V2, “all the 80s”, is the non-title participant component of the event scenario activated by V1, “a song was sung”, “the audience of this song performance”. However, this interpretation also ignores a problem. Firstly, the most crucial non-thematic participant in the event should be the person who sings the song, which is not mentioned in the sentence, followed by other components; secondly, the fact that “all the 80s” cried after listening to the song does not only involve the action of “listening”, but also emotional cognitive factors such as the resonance of the lyrics and melody of the song with the listener's mind. Secondly, the fact that “all the 80s” cried after listening to the song is not only related to the action of “listening”, but also to the emotional cognitive factors such as the resonance of the song's lyrics and melody with the listener's mind.

In addition, Xie (2019) ^[8] dealt with the Inverted Resultative Construction from the perspective of

cognitive semantic construction using the mechanism of metonymy, arguing that in the semantic structure, the subject is the giver and the object is the receiver. However, this paper argues that its explanation of atypical the Inverted Resultative Construction is not perfect. We can use the example sentences in Table 4 to analyze it:

Table 4: Example sentences f) and g)

No.	Example sentences	Translation
f)	Fei zao shui xi gan jing le yi fu ^[2]	Soapy water cleans the clothes
g)	Zhe ben shu xie bai le Zhang San de tou fa ^[4]	This book has greyed Zhang San's hair

Firstly, in the semantic construction of sentence example f) and g), Xie (2019) ^[4] argues that “washing” and “writing” contain a series of event-action processes such as “washing, rubbing, wringing, drying” and “writing, revising, and embellishing” respectively, which produce the resultant outcomes of “clean” and “white”, and that, under the principle of linguistic economy and the will of individual expression, “washing” and “writing” metaphorically replace the whole resultant relation. However, this does not apply to the Inverted Resultative Construction such as example b), because although “singing” also requires a series of actions such as “moistening the voice, setting the tone, and changing the breath”, it is not as complicated as “washing” and “writing” in examples f) and g), because the action behavior “singing” does not need to go through the complicated process in order to emphasize the result of “crying”. On the contrary, to highlight the result complement “crying” in example b), it would be more reasonable to analyze it from the perspective of the emotional resonance it brings to the audience of “all 80's generation”. Secondly, from the point of view of the two events of cause and effect, the song is sung by a certain person, which is the doer of the surface structure of the cause-effect clause, but it is also the recipient of the cause event of the clause “(the singer) sang a song”. If the scope of the agent and object are not clearly defined, it would increase the difficulty level of analyzing the Inverted Resultative Construction in Chinese.

Furthermore, some researchers have analyzed the Inverted Resultative Construction from the perspective of generative grammar, such as Li (2012) ^[9], which interprets verbal passives from the perspective of lexical mapping theory, Sun (2014) ^[6], which analyses “V2+R1” the Inverted Resultative Construction by using the light verb theory, and Xiong and Wei (2014) ^[2], which analyses the Inverted Resultative Construction from the perspective of internal causation relations. However, most of them are only for typical the Inverted Resultative Construction, i.e., the type of example a) in this paper, and not much research has been done on atypical the Inverted Resultative Construction types. Moreover, there is some irrationality in classifying the Inverted Resultative Construction types only by the valence markers V and R, as in Example h) and Example i) in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Example sentences h) and i)

No.	Example sentences	Translation
h)	Na ping jiu zui dao le Zhang San ^[2]	The bottle of wine made Zhang San drunk
i)	Hao jiao chui xing le zhan shi	The horn woke up the warriors

“Drunk” and “blowing” belong to the one-price verbs, which can be denoted as “V1” because they can only accept one thematic role “Zhang San” and “The horn”. It should be noted that “blowing” cannot accept the thematic role “soldier”. Because we need to fully consider its deep semantic information: it is not the soldier who wakes up from sleep and performs the action “blowing”. Instead, “toppling” and “awakening” are also one-price verbs, which can be denoted as “R1” because they can only accept one thematic role “Zhang San” and “soldier”. If analyzed in this way, then examples h) and i) would both belong to the type of inverted transitive constructions. However, upon careful observation of the thematic roles that these two verbs can accept, we can see that in example h), the cause verb “V” and the result verb “R” both receive the arguments “Zhang San” from the back, while

in example i), the cause verb “V” receives the argument “The horn” from the front, and the result verb “R” receives the argument “soldier” from the back. Thus, although their syntactic structures are the same, the semantic orientations of their verbs are inconsistent. Therefore, it is not entirely rational to categorize inverted transitive constructions solely based on the thematic roles of the cause and result verbs.

In summary, although current researchers' studies on the Inverted Resultative Construction have involved multiple analyses from multiple perspectives, there are still some issues. In this paper, we aim to apply the theory of semantic pointing analysis to reinterpret the Inverted Resultative Construction in order to better distinguish the differences between the categories of the Inverted Resultative Construction in examples a) and b).

3. The semantic orientation and distribution of the Inverted Resultative Construction

3.1. Semantic pointing analysis theory

Xu (2008) ^[9] conducted a comprehensive review of previous studies on syntactic directionality and its language facts. The contents are no longer repeated here, but the following points need to be clarified:

First, this article accepts the definition of Zhou (2006) ^[10] on syntactic directionality. “Syntactic directionality refers to the semantic connection between syntactic constituents within the syntax structure with a certain directionality and a certain target. The direction of the semantic connection between syntactic constituents is called ‘direction’, and the target of the semantic connection of syntactic constituents is called ‘item’.” Secondly, some scholars have very strict limitations on the definition of syntactic directionality, such as Shen (1996) ^[11] and Wang (1997) ^[12], who believe that predicate verbs are within the scope of research on syntactic directionality. However, some scholars believe that the possibility of verb semantic directionality research should be judged according to the specific research issue, such as Hu (1992) ^[13] and Ma (1997) ^[14]. This article prefers the latter view, so in the following analysis, we will also conduct a semantic directionality analysis of the causative verb V1 in the Inverted Resultative Construction that has causative meaning. Finally, it should be especially noted that the issue of predicate verb semantics in this paper is not equivalent to the issue of case relationship, because in the case relationship, the grammatical meaning is a radiation-type connection and does not distinguish between ante- and post-referential meaning. However, in the issue of predicate verb semantics, there are not only unidirectional and bi-directional connections, but also specific divisions of ante- and post-referential.

3.2. Explain the Inverted Resultative Construction based on the theory of syntactic directionality analysis

This article will analyze the Inverted Resultative Construction from the perspective of the principles of semantic directionality proposed by Zhou (2006) ^[10]. It will focus on the analysis of the vocabulary semantic compatibility and subcategory semantic association relationships. Looking back at examples a) and b), we can see that the resultative complement is “cry”, and both sentences have “cry” as the V2, and can only take one argument after it. Analyzed semantically, it is “Mother” and “all the 80s” who perform the action “cry”, so it starts from the argument after the verb and points to the complement “cry”, that is, “Mum → cry” and “all the 80s → cry”. In summary, the resultative complement verb in both sentences is monosyllabic and points to the back, as shown in the Figure 1 below:

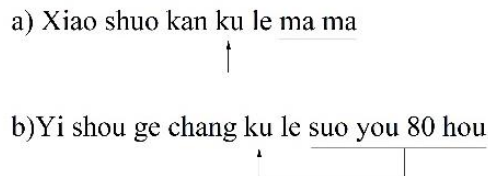


Figure 1: The semantic directionality of the complement in examples a) and b).

Next, let's analyze the causative predicate verb in the sentence “The novel made Mom cry one sentence”. The V1 is “read”, which corresponds to two directions. One is “The novel”, which is located at the subject position, and the other is “Mom”, which is located at the object position. From a semantical perspective, it should be “Reading the novel” and “Mom reading (the novel)”, where the first arrow starts from the “see” and points to “the novel”, and the second arrow starts from “Mom” and finally points to the predicate verb “see”. Therefore, the predicate verb “see” has double-directionality and the directions it points to are “see→the novel” and “Mom→see”. In example b), the predicate verb V1 is “sing”, which has only one direction, because “sing” is definitely not the action behavior of all 80 after generation. Semantically, it is only related to “a song” which is located at the subject position of the sentence, so the meaning of the event clause is “sing a song”, and the semantic direction is “sing→a song”, which is a single-point. To better and more clearly see the semantic orientation of V1 in examples a) and b), please refer to the attached Figure 2:

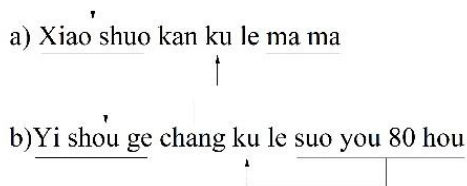


Figure 2: The semantic directionality of the verb in examples a) and b).

We mentioned above that merely counting the number of arguments immediately following a verb cannot well distinguish the underlying syntactic structure of different inverted verb structures. To illustrate this, we cited examples h) and i). Can the theory of semantic directionality explain the differences between these two sentences? First, consider example h). The causative verb “drunk” is singular, and “Zhang San” is its target of semantic direction. According to semantics, it should be “Zhang San → drunk”. The resultative verb “turn over” is also singular, followed by the argument “Zhang San”, and according to the semantics of the result event, it should be “Zhang San → turn over”. Now consider example i). The verb “wake up” is singular, followed by the argument “cannon”, and according to the semantics of the wake up event, it should be “cannon → wake up”. The resultative complement “wake up” is also singular and points to the argument “soldier”, that is, “soldier → wake up”. The semantic directions of the two sentences are shown in the Figure 3 below:

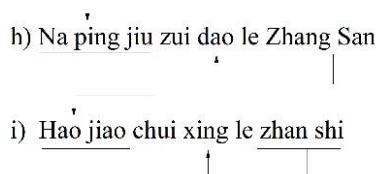


Figure 3: The semantic directionality of examples h) and i).

In addition, other atypical the Inverted Resultative Construction can be analyzed using semantic pointing. As in the following examples j) “VP+V1+V2+NP”, k) “PP+V1+V2+NP” and l) “S+V1+V2+NP” type sentences in Table 6:

Table 6: Example sentences j), k) and l)

No.	Example sentences	Translation
j)	Xi tou chong po er mo, mei rong dian pei si wan	Hair wash ruptures eardrums, beauty salon pays ¥40,000
k)	Kan shou suo li pao chu le yi ge fan ren ^[15]	A prisoner escaped from the guardhouse
l)	Tong xue ju hui kuang pin jiu he si le ren ^[16]	A class reunion drinking binge killed a man

The above three sentences in Figure 4 can be diagrammed below for understanding according to the principle of semantic pointing analysis:

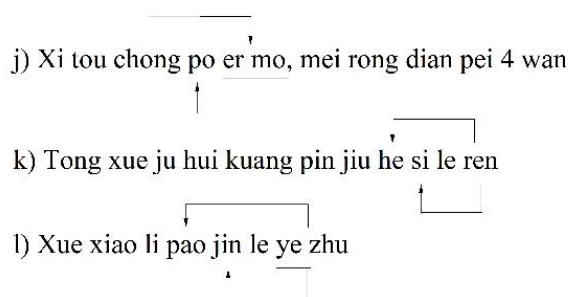


Figure 4: The semantic directionality of examples j), k) and l).

In conclusion, due to the complex and diverse semantic connections in the syntactic structure, using the theory of semantic directionality to explain the Inverted Resultative Construction in Chinese has more advantages than grammatical analysis, making the syntactic structure analysis of its sentence clearer and more explicit.

4. Conclusion

the Inverted Resultative Construction in Chinese, as a special form of verb conjugation, has many types, the most typical of which is “The novel made Mum cry”, where the agent is in the object position and the recipient is in the subject position. In addition, there are many other special types of the Inverted Resultative Construction, such as “There's a cow in the house” whose subject is a place phrase, “watch TV and strain one's eyes” whose subject is a verb-object phrase, and “A class reunion drinking binge killed a man” whose subject is a clause. In this paper, we focus on the two types of the Inverted Resultative Construction, “The novel made Mum cry” and “A song that cried all the 80s”, which are extremely similar in surface form according to the semantic pointing theory, and we also briefly analyse other atypical the Inverted Resultative Construction, so as to show the semantic connection of their syntactic structures more clearly.

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