A STUDY OF CHINESE ERGATIVE ALTERNATION

现代汉语
作格交替现象研究

作格作为一个普遍现象，在汉语中同样存在。遗憾的是，汉语的作格交替现象尚未引起足够的重视。

●倪蓉／著

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ABSTRACT

Ever since Perlmutter's Unaccusative Hypothesis, researchers have widely accepted the view that intransitive verbs are subdivided into unergative verbs and unaccusative verbs. Our discussion is restricted to those unaccusative verbs that can participate in inchoative/causative alternation, namely, ergative verbs. As a language without overt morphological change, Chinese is hard to be defined as an ergative language; however, as a universal linguistic phenomenon, ergativity also exists in Chinese. It is a pity that Chinese ergative alternation has not received adequate attention, considering its importance.

This thesis investigates Chinese ergative alternation, chiefly aiming to provide an exhaustive characterization of semantic and syntactic features that are responsible for alternation. We hope that a deeper understanding can be gained of the nature of ergativity in Chinese and its relationship with other constructions, such as the bei – construction, the middle construction, the ba – construction, the topicalized structure, the verb – copying construction and so on. Deviant from the previous literature, this dissertation attaches great significance to Chinese resultative construction, since many Chinese RVCs (Resultative Verb Compounds) exhibit ergative nature. Some answers are to be provided concerning the following questions: What is an ergative RVC? In what way can RVCs be classified? Do all RVCs participate in ergative alternation? What are the semantic and syntactic characterizations of ergative RVCs? What are the diagnostics for ergative RVCs?

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are syntax – semantics interface approach, in which both the syntax and the lexicon constrain the association of possible interpretations with possible structural positions. Following this interface approach, firstly, this dissertation gives an account of the classification of Chinese ergative verbs and RVCs respectively. The former

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are divided into four categories: verbs of change of physical state; verbs of change of psychological state; deadjectival verbs; verbs of self change. As for the latter, in light of the nature of the subjects in their corresponding causative structures, we claim that ergative RVCs fall into three groups: a) the subject is agentive causer (Group A); b) the subject can be either agentive causer, or non – agentive causer (Group B); c) the subject can be only non – agentive causer (Group C). After that, semantic features are elaborated that contribute to ergative alternation from five aspects: change of state; causativity; agentivity; telicity; and animacy of the object.

After an overview of the semantic characteristics of ergative expression, we go on to explore the workable diagnostics for ergative verbs and RVCs in Chinese. Doubtlessly, an ergative verb can enter the alternation between "$NP_1 + V + NP_2$" and "$NP_2 + V$"; at the same time, an ergative verb can appear in the periphrastic causative structure "$NP_1 + shi$ 'make' $+ NP_2 + V$" as well. As far as Chinese ergative RVCs are concerned, it is found that they can alternate between "$NP_1 + VP + NP_2$" and "$NP_2 + VP$", no matter whether V1 is transitive, unergative or adjective. However, considering that not all ergative RVCs are able to fit into the shi – construction, we, in turn, suggest that the ba – construction be used as a more favorable diagnostic. While discussing the diagnostics for Chinese ergative expressions, we differentiate intransitve ergative structures from passivization, topicalization and middle construction in the hope of having a better understanding of the attribute of ergative alternation.

Followed is the discussion on how the subjects of different attributes are selected in the derivation from intransitive ergative to causative ergative structures. Ergative RVCs are only those that can adhere to Simpon's Generalization (resultative attributes are predicated of objects, whether surface objects or underlying objects), which serves as a theoretical foundation of the Small Clause theory. In view of the inadequacy of this theory, we put forward an Improved Small Clause theory, proposing dual vP projection, including vP[CAUSE] and vP[DO]. The former indicates that

the logical subjects of V1 and V2 are different. The latter suggests that the logical subjects of V1 and V2 are the same. It is revealed that the lower vP decides the nature of the higher vP, exhibiting some complementary distribution.

In summary, the present dissertation constitutes one of the pioneering studies of Chinese ergativity and purports to supplement data from Chinese in the hope of stimulating further and more systematic study on the lexical – semantics and syntax relationship.

Key Words: ergative alternation; RVC (resultative verb compound); syntax – semantics interface; small clause; Chinese

中 文 摘 要

自 Perlmutter（1978）提出著名的非宾格动词假设（Unaccusativity Hypothesis）以来，学者们广泛赞同不及物动词实际上是不同质的，可分为两大次类：非作格动词（unergative verb）和非宾格动词（unaccusative verb）。这种对立是"跨具体语言的，是适用于各种自然语言的"（徐杰，2004：29）。本文的讨论限于狭义的非宾格动词，即能够参与起动/使动交替的动词结构，亦称作格动词。虽然汉语并未被证实属作格语言（吕叔湘，1987：5），但作格作为一个普遍现象，在汉语中同样存在。遗憾的是，汉语的作格交替现象尚未引起足够的重视。

本文研究汉语作格交替现象旨在对引起交替的语义和句法因素给予详尽的描述，并通过对作格结构与其它结构（如被动句、中动句、把字句、主题句和重动句）的比较，希望对作格的特征有个更为细致深入的认识。与以往的文献不同，本文的重心放在汉语的动结式（RVC）作格性的描述和解释，试图回答以下问题：作格 RVC 如何分类？是否所有的 RVC 都参与作格交替？作格 RVC 的语义和句法特征是什么？作格 RVC 的诊断式是什么？

本文属句法－语义界面研究，认为作格结构的解释是句法和语义互动的结果。如作格动词的致使义对结构具有依赖性，必须在带宾语时才能体现出来；另外，对同一 RVC 而言，如"吃饱"，在不同的结构下，其作格交替能力也是不一样的。在该理论基础的指引下，本文首先对作格动词和作格 RVC 分别加以了分类论述。其中作格动词分为四类：物理状态变化动词；心理状态变化动词；形容词转动词；自我变化动词。至于后者，本文发现汉语作格 RVC 根据其在使动句中主语的特征可以分为三种情况：（1）主语为施事（Agent）兼致事（Causer），即所谓的施事使因（agentive causer），V1 和 V2 的语义指向为异指（disjoint referential），可以发生交替，简称 A 类。（2）主语既可以是施事兼致事，V1 和 V2 的语义指向为异指，不可发生交替。主语也可以是独立的致事，即非施事使因（non－agentive causer），V1 和 V2 的语义指向为同指（co－referential），指向役事（causee），可以发生交替，简称 B 类。（3）主语只能是非施事使因（non－

agentive causer), V1 和 V2 的语义指向为同指(co-referential), 指向役事(causee), 可以发生交替, 简称 C 类。然后, 本文就与作格交替能力相关的语义因素从以下五个方面加以了论述: 状态变化; 使动性; 施动性; 有界性; 以及内论元的生命度。

本文并对汉语作格动词和作格动结式的诊断分别加以了讨论。对前者而言, 首先, 作格动词可以进行"$NP_1 + V + NP_2$"和"$NP_2 + V$"的交替; 同时, 作格动词所在的及物句可以转换成"使"字句, 即"$NP_1 + 使 + V + NP_2$"。但就动结式而言, 情况略为复杂。虽然不管动结式中的 V1 是及物动词、非作格动词或形容词, 所有的作格动结式都可以参与"$NP_1 + V + NP_2$"和"$NP_2 + V$"的交替, 但是我们发现并不是所有的作格 RVC 都可以转换成"使"字句, 例如 A 类中的作格动结式。因此, 我们提出相对"使"字句而言, "把"字句可以认为是更为理想的诊断式。

最后, 本文对小句理论(Hoekstra 1988; Sybesma 1999)加以改进, 将小句理论与轻动词双重投射结合起来, 试图解释施事使因和非施事使因的产生机制。根据致使结构的词汇语义表征[[x DO – SOMETHING] CAUSE[y BECOME STATE]], 功能语类轻动词发生三次投射, 分别为 vP[DO], vP[CAUSE], vP[BECOME], 其中 vP[BECOME]即对应于小句(small clause), 所以本文主要讨论前两者。当第一层投射是 vP[CAUSE], 说明 V1 的主体与 V2 的主体必须不能同一, 因而通过外层功能投射 vP[DO], 加入了外部施事成分, 即施事使因。当第一层投射是 vP[DO], 说明 V1 的主体与 V2 的主体必须只能同一, 通过外层功能投射 vP[CAUSE], 加入外部非施事性的致事成分。

关键词: 作格交替; 动结式; 句法 – 语义界面; 小句; 汉语

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Ergativity is a topic that has been attracting increasing interest since as early as the 1970s. Among typologists, languages are called ergative if "the subject of an intransitive clause is treated in the same way as the object of a transitive clause, and differently from the transitive subject" (Dixon, 1994: 1). On the other hand, among generativists, verbs are called ergative if their subject at surface structure level does not derive from an underlying subject, but instead from a direct object. This dissertation follows in the footsteps of the latter by applying the label ergative to verbs rather than languages.

As has been stressed by Chafe (1970: 165) , "the verb is the control center of a sentence, determining by its own internal specification what the rest of the sentence will contain—not completely, of course, but to a significant degree" (cited from Miu Jinan 1990). Traditionally, verbs are classified into two major kinds: transitives and intransitives. However, it has long been observed cross-linguistically that intransitive verbs show some heterogeneous behaviors. Ever since Perlmutter's Unaccusative Hypothesis, later researchers have widely accepted the view that intransitive verbs are subdivided into unergative verbs, such as laugh and swim, and unaccusative verbs, such as break and arrive.

Most linguists equate unaccusative with ergative. But we have to acknowledge that there still exist some subtle differences. Not all unaccusative verbs participate in the ergative alternation (or ergativity alternation). In other words, only a subset of unaccusative verbs can alternately occur in causative

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constructions, with the same morphological form.

Therefore, Haegeman (1994) and Radford (1997) make a distinction between unaccusative verbs and ergative verbs: the former refer to verbs like arrive and happen, whereas the latter refer to verbs like break and open which have causative alternant. But these two subclasses of verbs are both called ergative verbs by Burzio (1986). Here, we will follow Haegeman and Radford, limiting our discussion to ergative verbs and ergative alternation.

As far as Chinese is concerned, can we separate from the so-called intransitives a class of ergative verbs? Huang (1991) has provided a positive answer to this question, arguing that in Chinese ergatives are distinguishable from unergatives. This thesis investigates ergative alternation in Chinese, mainly aiming to provide an exhaustive characterization of semantic and syntactic features that are responsible for alternation. We hope that a deeper understanding can be gained of the nature of ergativity in Chinese and its relationship with other constructions. For instance, an ergative construction in Chinese seems to have very complicated relations with the passive structure, the middle construction, the ba-construction, the topicalized structure and so on. How should these relationships be properly understood, and what are the differentiating features behind these relationships?

1.2　Basic Properties of Ergative Alternation

1.2.1　Defining Ergativity

In 1978, Perlmutter proposed that intransitive verbs do not constitute a homogeneous group but instead consist of two distinct types of verbs: unergative and unaccusative verbs. Under the theory of the Unaccusative Hypothesis, Perlmutter maintained that the arguments that are subjects of unaccusative verbs are in fact objects at the initial level of representation.

The basic idea of the Unaccusative Hypothesis has been adopted within the Government-Binding (GB) framework and further developed by Burzio (1986), among others. Burzio (1986:178) defines that "all and only the

verbs that can assign theta-role to the subject can assign (accusative) case to an object."

Ergative verbs are verbs that can operate as transitives or intransitives without morphological change. But just as has been observed by Hoekstra (1988:113), there are two classes of intransitive verbs that have a transitive counterpart. The first is related to their transitive counterpart by what used to be called Unspecified Object Deletion (e. g. eat). The second involves such verbs as break, melt, which have a causative transitive counterpart. Obviously, ergative verbs belong to the latter type.

Given this feature, ergative verbs are also called mutative verbs by Hoekstra (1988), labile verbs by Haspelmath (1993) and Li & Thompson (1994), or "causative alternating unaccusative verbs" by Zhao Yang (2006).

We must reiterate that in order to avoid confusion, this dissertation adopts the term ergative or ergativity throughout. When it comes to the citations, however, we will make no change for their terminologies. Though traditionally speaking, unaccusative and ergative are simply referred to as two terminologies under different theoretical frameworks, Relational Grammar and Government-Binding Theory, with closer scrutiny, significant differences can still be observed.

In summary, ergative verbs have both transitive and intransitive variants, and the transitive one can be roughly paraphrased as "cause to V-intransitive" (Goddard 1998: 277). The intransitive ergative verb and its causative counterpart form an inchoative/causative pair, both of which express a change of sate, and differ only in that "the causative verb meaning includes an agent participant who causes the situation, whereas the inchoative verb meaning excludes a causing agent and presents the situation as occurring spontaneously" (Haspelmath 1993:90).

1.2.2 Ergative Alternation

In a broad sense, the ergative alternation is classified under the macro-category called diathesis alternation. Diathesis alternations are concerned with "alternations in the expression of the arguments of verbs" (Levin 1993:80),

subsuming, in addition to the ergative alternation, other types of alternations such as locative alternation and dative alternation. Among that, the ergative alternation is observed cross-linguistically and has been extensively investigated in languages such as English, French, Japanese, and Korean, among others.

One characteristic that differentiates the ergative alternation from the dative and locative alternations is a change in valency. Ergative alternation is a process of valency shift observed cross-linguistically in which verbs alternate in transitivity with no change in form, but it is necessary to first distinguish genuine ergative verb pairs from verbs which undergo the so-called unspecified object alternation (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995, henceforth L & R).

The transitive ergative predicate typically occurs with two arguments (i. e. dyadic), whereas the intransitive ergative predicate occurs with a single argument (i. e. , monadic).

Most researchers assume that the events denoted by intransitive ergatives occur with no intervention of an Agent. Owing to this spontaneous nature of intransitive ergatives, they are often referred to as 'inchoative'. On the other hand, the transitive version of the verb almost always means "to cause to V-intransitive", so Pinker (1989) and L & R (1995) refer to ergative alternation as "causative/inchoative alternation". Usually, alternating verb pairs denote two different types of events: one that merely specifies a change of state, and the other explicitly attributing a cause to the change of state.

In addition to the valency-shift nature, ergative alternation also involves a change in the arrangement of verbs'arguments. In process, the object or "internal argument" of the transitive alternant should generally be realized as the subject of the intransitive alternant. In the meantime, the object of the transitive alternant and the subject of the intransitive alternant should have an identical thematic role.

Accordingly, Toru Matsuzaki (2001:14) schematizes ergative alternation as follows:

a) NP_1 V_{tr} NP_2 (transitive construction)

b) NP_2 V_{intr} (intransitive construction)

In short, the process of ergative alternation will be summarized as: a) a

shift in valency of the verb; b) parallelism between the subject of the intransitive construction and the object of the transitive construction with the preservation of the thematic role. Last but importantly, in an ergative alternation, both sentences contain the same verb in the same form.

To sum up, ergative alternation is also referred to as causative alternation (Haspelmath 1993, L & R 1995), transitivity alternation (Hale & Keyser 1987), or valency-shift alternation. Ergative pairs are characterized by change in argument structure. The syntactic object of the ergative transitive corresponds to the syntactic subject of the ergative intransitive.

1.2.3   Ergative Diagnostics

As has been emphasized, ergative verbs are virtually a subset of unaccusative verbs. Unaccusative verbs can be divided into three subclasses, which are verbs of change of state, verbs of change of location and verbs of existence and appearance (L & R 1995). To be more exact, change-of-state verbs like break are externally caused verbs, which usually participate in causative alternation; verbs of change of location like arrive are inherently directed verbs, which specify a direction of motion; verbs of existence and appearance like happen mainly occur in locative-inversion and there-insertion constructions.

There have been heated discussions on unaccusative diagnostics. For example, in Germanic and Roman languages, auxiliary selection has been considered as an unaccusative diagnostic. To illustrate, unaccusatives select the auxiliary verb essere in Italian, whereas unergatives select avere (Burzio 1986; Perlmutter 1989) ; In Dutch, unaccusatives cannot be passivized as opposed to unergatives. Another diagnostic in Italian to distinguish unaccusatives from unergatives is the possibility of ne-cliticization. Some linguists claim that locative inversion is a valid unaccusative diagnostic.

In keeping with the view that unaccusativity is observed cross-linguistically, several diagnostics have been proposed in English (L & R 1995). In particular, the resultative construction is considered in the literature to be a diagnostic, which provides evidence that the surface subject of unaccusative verbs is in fact the underlying object. It is well known that

unaccusative verbs can occur in the resultative construction, whereas unergative verbs cannot. In addition, causative alternation has been claimed to be an unaccusative diagnostic (Burzio 1986, Rosen 1981, L & R 1995, Arad 1998, among others).

One problem with unaccusative diagnostics has to do with inconsistency with respect to the selection of unaccusative and unergative verbs. L & R (1995:13) suggest that different unaccusative diagnostics may bring about a conflicting result as to whether a given verb is unergative or unaccusative. Moreover, they realize that not all unaccusative verbs are expected to pass all unaccusative diagnostics. For example, the typical unaccusative arrive cannot be causativized, thus failing to pass the inchoative/causative alternation.

Therefore, among three subcategories of unaccusative verbs, we focus on verbs of change of state, those that can enter ergative alternation, during which the subject of the intransitive variant and the object of the transitive variant bear the same thematic role.

1.3 The Main Issues of the Dissertation

1.3.1 Different Understandings of Ergativity

As a universal phenomenon, Chinese ergative alternation has not received enough attention, considering its importance. Cross-linguistic researches have shown that the apparent idiosyncratic ergative pair is practically a widely distributed construction among the world's languages. As a language without overt morphological change, Chinese is hard to be regarded as an ergative language. But as has been noted, ergativity can be addressed from two perspectives: ergative languages or ergative verbs. Does Chinese have ergative verbs? Some linguists, such as Huang (1990), Xu Liejiong (1990), Xu Jie (2001), give a yes answer. Some come to accept Chinese verbs'ergative nature, and many more have remained skeptical of, and unconvinced by this view.

The main problem involves the criteria for ergative verbs. Some scholars