CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
香港城市大學

A Qualitative and Quantitative Study of the Verb-Copying Sentence in Modern Chinese
現代漢語重動句的定性與定量研究

Submitted to
Department of Chinese and History
中文及歷史學系
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
哲學博士學位

By

XIE Fu
謝福

September 2014
二零一四年九月
Abstract

Based on Construction Grammar, this dissertation systematically investigates the verb-copying construction in Modern Chinese by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Although verb-copying sentences have been extensively studied, certain issues about their syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects, especially those concerning their usage still warrant further study. Moreover, Verb-copying sentences have been largely studied in isolation, with no regard to the effect of the context of the language environment. Such a lack of attention to contextual factors has led to significant limitations in current research methodologies. Therefore, a re-examination of the verb-copying construction considering contextual factors is necessary.

In addition, with China’s rapid socio-economic development and rising international status, the study of Chinese as a second language has become increasingly important. From the perspective of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the languages such as English, French and Japanese have no syntactic equivalents of verb-copying sentences as identified in Chinese, rendering it difficult for non-native speakers to master the verb-copying construction. Therefore, a study on the acquisition of verb-copying sentences is valuable to the teaching of Chinese as a second language.

In this dissertation, five major issues and findings about verb-copying sentences are put forward. First, verb-copying sentences are analyzed in terms of their syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and functional aspects, exploring their constructional senses. Second, the contextual usage of verb-copying sentences in specific language environments is investigated using three corpora of 800 million words, with an in-depth, quantitative study on verb-copying sentences. The discourse functions of verb-copying sentences are explored. Third, questionnaires about linguistic awareness for 200 undergraduate students from Hong Kong are administered to investigate the characteristics of verb-copying sentences by comparing with non-verb-copying sentences and to reveal the motivation of mandatory and optional use of verb-copying sentences. Five tendentious rules of the use of verb-copying sentences have been deduced. Fourth, based on an SLA-oriented theoretical analysis of a four-million-word inter-language corpus, the study examines the sequence of acquisition, types of error and reasons for the occurrence of verb-copying sentences. The settings of verb-copying sentences in textbooks are also investigated, with a view to propose some teaching strategies in teaching Chinese as a second language. Fifth, the reflections of this dissertation to the theory of Construction Grammar are summarized.

With the proposal of noteworthy improvements on existing work on verb-copying sentences in the framework of Construction Grammar, this dissertation has presented several key findings. It is believed that these findings will enhance our understanding of the pedagogy of Chinese not only as a first language, but also as a second language for non-native Chinese learners.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................... ii
Table of Contents ......................................................................................................... i
List of Tables .................................................................................................................. ix
List of Figures ............................................................................................................... xi
Abbreviations .............................................................................................................. xii

## Chapter 1 Introduction .................................................................................................. 1

1.1 About This Dissertation .......................................................................................... 1
  1.1.1 The Definition of the Verb-copying Sentence .................................................... 1
  1.1.2 Motivation for this Study ................................................................................... 5
  1.1.3 The Research Questions of the Dissertation .................................................... 6
  1.1.4 Outline of the Study .......................................................................................... 6
1.2 Theoretical Background and Research Method ...................................................... 8
1.3 Data Sources ........................................................................................................... 10

## Chapter 2 Literature Review ......................................................................................... 12

2.1 The Historical Study of the Verb-copying Sentence ............................................... 12
2.2 The Analysis of the Various Approaches on the Verb-copying Sentence ................. 17
  2.2.1 Functional Approach ....................................................................................... 17
  2.2.2 Government and Binging Theory ..................................................................... 18
  2.2.3 Pragmatic Approach ....................................................................................... 23
  2.2.4 Cognition-based Functional Approach ............................................................. 25
  2.2.5 Construction Grammar .................................................................................... 31
2.3 The Study of Various Parts of the Verb-copying Sentence ....................................... 32
  2.3.1 The Verb of the Verb-copying sentence ............................................................ 32
  2.3.2 The Object of the Verb-copying Sentence ......................................................... 35
2.4 The Unresolved Issues of the Verb-Copying Sentence and the Dissertation Objectives 38
Chapter 3  The Verb-Copying Construction and Constructional Analysis ..................42
3.1 The Basic Idea of the Construction-Chunk Analysis Approach .................................................43
3.2 Analysis of Each Chunk of the Verb-Copying Construction ........................................................44
  3.2.1 The verb of the verb-copying sentence .................................................................................45
  3.2.2 The nominal object of the verb-copying sentence .................................................................49
3.3 The Analysis of the Verb-Resultative Complement Verb-Copying Sentence from the Perspective of the Construction ................................................................................52
  3.3.1 The verb-complement structure and the verb-resultative construction ..................................53
  3.3.2 Research methods and theoretical framework .......................................................................56
  3.3.3 The V-R verb-copying sentence corpus and the existing motivation ....................................60
  3.3.4 Research on the V-R verb-copying sentence .........................................................................62
  3.3.5 The constructional sense of the verb-resultative complement verb-copying sentence ............97
  3.3.6 Conclusion ..............................................................................................................................101
3.4 The Analysis of the Measurement Complement Verb-copying Sentence from the Perspective of the Construction .................................................................................................102
  3.4.1 The characteristics of the component ....................................................................................103
  3.4.2 The polysemy and analogy effect of the measurement complement verb-copying sentence .110
  3.4.3 Conclusion ..............................................................................................................................113
3.5 Summary ..................................................................................................................................114

Chapter 4  The Analysis of the Discourse Function of the Verb-copying Sentence 115
4.1 Discourse Construction Grammar Theory ..................................................................................115
  4.1.1 Research methodology .............................................................................................................115
  4.1.2 Introduction of the theory ..........................................................................................................116
4.2 The analysis of “in-context features” and “out-of-context features” of the verb-copying sentence ..........................................................................................................................117
  4.2.1 The analysis of “in-context” and “out-of-context” on the verb-copying sentence in which the semantic meaning of the complement points to the subject ..........................................118
  4.2.2 The analysis of “in-context” and “out-of-context” on the verb-copying sentences in which the semantic meaning of the complement points to the object .................................................119
  4.2.3 The analysis of “in-context” and “out-of-context” on the verb-copying sentence in which the semantic meaning of the complement points to the verb ........................................................................120
  4.2.4 The analysis of “in-context” and “out-of-context” on the verb-copying sentence in which the semantic meaning of the complement points to the noun and the verb ......................................................................121
4.3 The Discourse Function Understanding of the Verb-copying Sentence ........................................... 122
  4.3.1 The first functional construal of the V-R verb-copying sentence ........................................... 123
  4.3.2 The second functional construal of the V-R verb-copying sentence ........................................ 137
  4.3.3 The third functional construal of the V-R verb-copying sentence ........................................... 143
  4.3.4 The fourth functional construal of the measurement complement verb-copying sentence .... 148
4.4 The Topicality of the Verb-copying Sentence.............................................................................. 164
  4.4.1 The function of topic marker ......................................................................................... 165
  4.4.2 The function of the discourse cohesion of “V1+NP” ................................................................ 170
  4.4.3 The focus of the verb-copying sentence ......................................................................... 171
4.5 The Discourse Environment of the Verb-copying Sentence ..................................................... 174
4.6 Summary ................................................................................................................................. 177

Chapter 5 The Questionnaire on the Verb-copying Sentence by Language Awareness .................................................. 179
5.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 179
  5.1.1 The significance of language awareness in this research ..................................................... 179
  5.1.2 The research objectives of the four surveys ..................................................................... 180
  5.1.3 Two phases of a pilot study ................................................................................................. 181
5.2 Survey I ..................................................................................................................................... 183
  5.2.1 The research objects in Survey I ........................................................................................ 183
  5.2.2 The hypothesized rules of the usage of the verb-copying sentence from the perspective of syntax and semantics ........................................................................................................ 183
  5.2.3 Phase II pilot study for Survey I ....................................................................................... 191
  5.2.4 Procedure .......................................................................................................................... 192
  5.2.5 Result analysis ................................................................................................................... 192
  5.2.6 Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 197
5.3 Survey II ..................................................................................................................................... 198
  5.3.1 The hypothesized rules of usage of the temporal complement verb-copying sentence and the counterpart non-verb-copying sentence in the perspective of pragmatics .................................................. 198
  5.3.2 Phase I pilot study for Survey II ........................................................................................ 200
  5.3.3 Phase II pilot study for Survey II ....................................................................................... 202
  5.3.4 Instrument and procedure ................................................................................................. 203
  5.3.5 Result analysis ................................................................................................................... 204
  5.3.6 Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 207
5.4 Survey III ................................................................. 208
  5.4.1 The hypothesized rules of usage of the verb-copying sentence in the perspective of discourse function ................................................................. 208
  5.4.2 Phase II pilot study for Survey III ........................................... 214
  5.4.3 Instrument and procedure .................................................. 215
  5.4.4 Result analysis .............................................................. 215
  5.4.5 Conclusions ....................................................................... 223
5.5 Survey IV ............................................................................ 224
  5.5.1 Experienced data and hypothesis ........................................... 224
  5.5.2 Phase II pilot study for Survey IV ........................................... 224
  5.5.3 Instrument and procedure .................................................. 225
  5.5.4 Result analysis and Discussion .............................................. 225
  5.5.5 Conclusions ....................................................................... 230
5.6 Summary ............................................................................... 230

Chapter 6 A Corpus-based Study on the Acquisition of the Verb-copying Sentence ................................................................. 232
  6.1 Previous Research on the Acquisition of the Verb-copying Sentence .................................................................................. 232
  6.2 The Research Object, Methods and the Sources of Corpus .............. 235
    6.2.1 The research objects ......................................................... 235
    6.2.2 The research methods ........................................................ 235
  6.3 A Corpus-based Study on the Acquisition of the Verb-copying Sentence .......................................................... 236
    6.3.1 Study purpose, data, and the selection of grammar items .......... 236
    6.3.2 The distribution of different kinds of verb-copying sentence in the modern Chinese corpus and the interlanguage corpus .......... 240
    6.3.3 The acquisition of four kinds of grammar items in the elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels ............................................. 241
    6.3.4 The acquisition of F1, F2, F3, and F4 in each level .................. 254
    6.3.5 Conclusion ....................................................................... 257
  6.4 From the Error Analysis Point of View, a Discussion of the Acquisition of the Verb-copying Sentence ................................................................. 258
    6.4.1 The error analysis of the verb-copying sentence in the works of error analysis of teaching Chinese as a second language .......... 258
6.4.2 The analysis of the error types and the reasons for the occurrence of the verb-copying sentence in the interlanguage corpus ................................................................. 261

6.5 The Settings and Analysis of the Verb-copying Sentence in Chinese Textbooks for Foreigners 278
6.5.1 The settings of the verb-copying sentence ................................................................. 278
6.5.2 The analysis .................................................................................................................. 288

6.6 The Teaching Strategies and Countermeasures of the Verb-copying Sentence .................. 294
6.6.1 Teaching methods and strategies are put forward that take into account external language difficulties ........................................................................................................... 294
6.6.2 Teaching methods and strategies are put forward from language internal difficulty ........ 297
6.6.3 The teaching should take the learners as the leading factor ....................................... 301

6.7 Summary ......................................................................................................................... 302

Chapter 7 Reflections on Construction Grammar .......................................................... 305
7.1 The Characteristics of Construction Grammar ............................................................... 305

7.2 The Difference between Construction Grammar and Transformational Generative Grammar ... 308
7.2.1 Chomsky opens the era of cognitive language research ............................................... 308
7.2.2 "Innateness hypothesis "and "an embodied approach" ................................................. 309
7.2.3 "Universality" and "specialty and universality" ............................................................. 310
7.2.4 "Autonomy" and "non-autonomy" .............................................................................. 310
7.2.5 "Modularity" and "non-modularity" .......................................................................... 311
7.2.6 "Formalization" and "non-formalization" .................................................................. 313

7.3 The Progress of Construction Grammar ....................................................................... 314
7.3.1 Evaluation of the progress of construction grammar by Goldberg......................... 314
7.3.2 Evaluation of the progress of construction grammar of this study ............................. 315

7.4 The Limitation of Construction Grammar ..................................................................... 322

Chapter 8 Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 334
8.1 Contributions ................................................................................................................ 334
8.2 The Limitations and Issues to be Solved in this Study ................................................ 336

References ......................................................................................................................... 339

Appendices ........................................................................................................................ 362
Appendix I ......................................................................................................................... 362
Appendix II ........................................................................................................................ 369