THE ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURE VB$_1$+ZHE+ [OBJECT] +VB$_2$ IN CHINESE LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT. *The Analysis of the Structure vb$_1$+zhe+ [object] +vb$_2$ in Chinese Language.* One of the most common structures in written Chinese language is verb$_1$+zhe+[object]+vb$_2$. Its use involves knowing not only some grammatical aspects, but also some cultural factors, which this article aims to present in a succinct way. Starting with the origin and meaning of *zhe*, analyzing the direction of writing and the way grammar is adapted to the laws of nature, we can underline the importance of establishing the main and secondary action in order to correctly translate the structure vb$_1$+zhe+[object] + vb$_2$.

Keywords: abstraction, grammaticalization, writing direction, time-space framework.

REZUMAT. *Analiza structurii vb$_1$+zhe+[object]+vb$_2$ în limba chineză.* Una dintre structurile limbii chineze moderne întâlnită din ce în ce mai des în limba chineză scrisă este vb$_1$+zhe+[compl.]+vb$_2$. Utilizarea acesteia implică, pe lîngă înţelegerea aspectelor gramaticale şi cunoaşterea cîtorva factori culturali pe care articolul de faţă încearcă să îi prezinte într-o formă succintă. Pornindu-se de la originea şi înţelesul lui zhe, sensurile direcţiei de scriere şi adaptarea gramaticii la legile naturii se scoate în evidenţă importanţa stabilirii acţiunii principale şi secundare pentru traducerea corectă a structurii vb$_1$+zhe+[compl.]+vb$_2$.

Cuvinte cheie: abstractizare, gramaticalizare, direcţie de scriere, cadru spaţio-temporal.

1. The appearance and evolution of the functional word 着 (zhe)

Zhe belongs to the category of functional words of Chinese, those words whose grammatical function is prevalent in relation to the semantic

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function. Thus, the meaning and usage of the word 着 (pronounced *zhuo*), will be found in the grammatical form of *着 (zhe).* The first written forms of 着 (originally written 著) are to be found during the Zhou dynasty, after the appearance of writings in China, when it was used only as an ordinary word.

It is difficult to say whether it already had an intellectual history before it was introduced in the official language in the grammatical form of *zhe*, with precise intentions, or it appeared out of the inspiration of an anonymous speaker. Most of the sinologists who studied *zhe*'s appearance, link its origins to the verb 附着 (*fuzhuo*) which is also present in the first ancient Chinese writings. *Fuzhuo*'s meaning is considered equivalent to the *zhuo* meaning from current Chinese.

For example, in the Zhou dynasty' work *Zuo zhuan*, we find the following statement:

(1) 附着于丁宁 (He attached it to the bell)[1]

Most of the times, instead of 附着 it is used only 着 with the actual meaning of *zhuo.*

(2) 风行而着于土 (The wind travels and settles over the earth.)

In the example above *zhao* refers to the action of *wrapping* or *covering*, this meaning being used also in modern Chinese language.

From (1) and (2) we see that *fuzhuo* and *zhuo* were used with the meaning of *attaching*, *adding*, *covering* with something and introduced secondary actions. *Zhe* took over this feature that he conveys to the verb which it follows. Another feature of *fuzhuo* and *zhao* was their use to strengthen or specify a connection to the space in which the main action takes place.

The abstraction and grammaticalization of *zhuo* into *zhe* started with the Han dynasty, but especially during the Wei and Jin dynasties, when the process of translating the Buddhist scriptures became of general importance. This measure was taken with the sole purpose of easing the translators' work. Thus, *zhe* after verb was more and more used as a functional word in structures like: vb+object+着+ place (动+宾+着+方位结果) At this stage of *zhe*'s evolution, the verb used with *zhe* could not receive an object. For example:

(3) 排著井中 （搜神，35）([were] lined in the middle of the well.)

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[1] *dingning-* is a musical instrument, shaped like a bell. In the past it was used mainly during the military marches.

Zhe in the example above is used to strengthen and specify the location. Its inner meaning was: *in this place, here* or *in that place*, *there*. The whole meaning of example (3) is: They were lined there, at the well. This initial use of *zhe* we can still find it in today's spoken Chinese, in statements like: 你听着! (Listen!), with the full meaning of Listen here/ there! or Look here/ there! From what we can see *zhe* had already become a functional word, its purpose being that of underlining and inducing the image of a space. The meaning of *here/ in this place* or *there/ in that place* can be inferred from the abstract form of *zhe*, this meaning being different from the meaning of an ordinary word.

According to 刘宁生 (Liu Ningsheng) this process of turning *zhao* into the functional word *zhe* ended before the Tang dynasty, when a new structure：verb+着+ place (vb+着+方位结果) appeared. In this structure *zhe* was the equivalent of the 在 (*zai*, exist). It was also during this period that the word 里 (li) was added, whose meaning was that of *in* or *inside*. This word also refers to space. Thus, the above structure turned into vb+着里 and when an object was used it changed into verb+着+object+里 (vb+着+宾+里) For example:

(4) 佛向经中说着里，依文例清唱将来 （变文集 34）

In Foxiang sutra it is said that, by taking as an example what is written, we have a good example of how to clearly trace our future.

(5) 我自做着天里 （二程集 67）

I'm doing it myself today.

In the two examples, 着里 it is used to underline space. If in (4) it is only slightly emphasized the idea that it is said in Foxiang sutra, not in another sutra, it is not the case for example (5). Here, the fact that *zhe* emphasizes the idea that *he is doing it today*, not in another day, can make us to think that, at this stage, 着里 also emphasizes time. However, this is not true, because time was seen as a sum of moments, every moment being correspondent to a space as it is shown below, in Fig.1. So, at this stage, *zhe* had only a spatial meaning, not temporal a temporal one.

In this period we can also find some situations in which 里 (li) is missing like: 敦煌变文集 (Dunhuang's writings) (in 古汉语语法及其发展，下，杨伯峻 and 何乐士，语文出版社，Beijing，2003)

(6) 皇帝忽然赐四马，交臣骑著满京夸

The Emperor suddenly gave four horses and the buglers rode all around the capital announcing [what happened] loudly)

In this example *zhe* is different from the temporal *zhe* in modern Chinese. Its meaning is also that of *in this space* and not that of *in this time*. A translation by using gerund adds temporal nuances, which does not correspond to the meaning of the structures in that period which contained *zheli*. Thus the meaning of example (6) is not *as they were riding, they were announcing what happened loudly*, but *they were riding here, all over the capital and were announcing what happened*.

For the adjectives used as verbs, instead of *zheli*, they were followed by 在里 (zaili), which had the same meaning, but emphasized space even more.

After the Song dynasty, the structures which used *zai* and *li*, two characters which refer to space, disappeared, and a new structure appeared: verb+着+ object+ 呢 (vb+着+[宾]+呢). This structure emphasizes time and it is also used in modern Chinese.

So the functional word *zhe* derives from *zhuo*, a word that through grammaticalization and abstraction was originally placed after the verb, in order to specify a location in space. After the Song dynasty appears the transition from space to time. At the same time, the pronunciation of 着 *zhuo* changed into *zhe,* to make the distinction between two instances: when it is used as an usual word and when it is used as a functional word, with abstract meaning.

The words 著/着，在 and 里 were initially used in agreement to the level of knowledge and way of perceiving the world. In that time, the Chinese notion of time was different from that of physical time which we use today. The tendency of passing from space to time is not an isolated one, it is also found in other languages of the world. Moreover, this step was easily made, because the chain of events was seen as a series of temporal moments, as it is shown in the figure below, where each space S_i belongs to a moment of time T_i
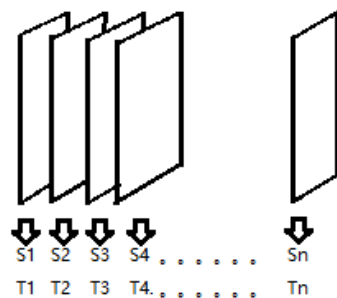

Fig.1

Thus the accent which was first set on space, was gradually directed towards time. The Chinese did not perceive space and time as a smooth line going to the infinite, but as a sum of frames, scenes or time moments. The order of these time moments is to be found in word order and morphology of sentences.

2. The influence of direction and spatiality

The Chinese language, being closely related to the practical way of adapting human laws to the principles of nature, which the Chinese have established since the dawn of civilization, could not be influenced by them. The movement in the words' universe was designed to coordinate with the great cosmic movement.

The word order, characters construction and the way of writing, as well as the morphological and syntactical rules, all followed the general principles theorized in the 易经 (Book of Changes) and the theory of 阴阳 (Yin Yang). They were in agreement to the human nature, as a sixth sense by which the world perceives itself rationally through words. The old writing system, from right to left and top to bottom, reveals the fact that, after some careful observations, it has been adapted to basic instincts, especially of men. It is known that almost all predators attack from the right side. Because of this, both animals and humans have developed a right-wing reflex. Every time something new appears, the first instinct is to look to the right. This instinct is suitable for the reader, the right-left direction being in agreement to his inner instincts.

At the beginning those who wrote were men. It is known that men have an offensive personality, with attacking reflexes and tend to act from right to left so, the old way of writing fit their natural way of acting.

A third aspect, also very important, is that the direction of writing has neurolinguistic effects. The right to left writing system gives rise to offensive behaviors and that from left to right, to defensive behaviors.

It is already well known the fact that the animals are more peaceful when someone sits on their left side. So, when we want to ride a horse, we climb on the left side, so that the animal does not perceive this sudden movement as an attack (which would happen if we try to climb on its right side).

The old armies, including the European ones, started a fight almost exclusively from the right flank, using, thus, soldiers' basic instinct of attackers. The left flank did not exist or consisted in some insignificant troops. The claim that the Greek armies, for example, did not have a left flank out of superstition, is not true because, during the period of antiquity, there was a general habit of paying attention only to the right flank.

In 371 B.C, at the Battle of Leuctra, Epaminondas first introduced the left flank. Besides some decisive victories, his decision caused a great change not only in what concerned tactics but also in what concerned the natural behavior of fighters. These right-wing instinctive tendencies were not just a characteristic of ancient civilizations, but they have been used throughout history up to present. An example is the right-hand movement, introduced by Napoleon, who needed an offensive population, in order to expand his empire. Another example is that of the Romanian armies which, on the assumption that the Romanian soldier is eminently offensive, during the two World Wars, carried most of the attacks on the right side. This habit of looking instinctively to the right is currently taken into consideration and implemented in many domains of activity. For example: the referees are positioned on the right side of the offensive team, so that the central referee and the players can see the raised flag as soon as possible avoiding, thus, possible incidents; safety exits are mostly faced towards the right; right-wing political parties are usually offensive while the left-wing ones are more defensive and conservative.

So, the right-to-left writing system did not appear accidentally, it had an important influence on the establishment of Chinese language. It is true that, currently, Chinese has adopted the horizontal, left to right writing system, but it still maintains the spatiality rules of the old, right to left writings. Without a proper understanding of them, the word order in sentences or phrases, and their meaning cannot be understood completely.

The change from right-to-left writing to the left-to-right writing does not radically alter the meaning of *zhe*. The understanding of time and space remains unchanged, what is different is the angle from which the course of events is seen.

In the *xiandai hanyuzhong zhe he zhene de xingshi he yuyi fenxi* space is rendered in this way:

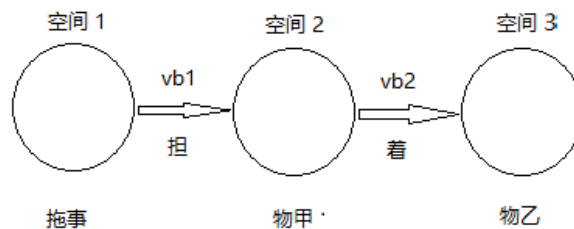(7) 担鬼着肩上 (He carried the demon on his shoulder.)

Fig.2

From the above scheme we can see that one of the verb's functions in Chinese is that of expressing a movement from one space to another or from a time moment to another. It, thus, gives us information about how to distinguish different time moments. That is another reason why we cannot speak of tenses in Chinese. So, although vb$_1$+zhe from the structure vb$_1$+zhe+[object.]+vb$_2$ it is translated in Romanian by using the gerund, it does not imply a relationship between vb1 and time. It is just a means of expressing equivalence at the level of meaning and representation, but not at the level of grammar.

Another example that helps to understand the use of *zhe* as a functional word can be observed in the diagram below, used for:

(8) 风行着于土 (The wind travels by laying over the earth.)
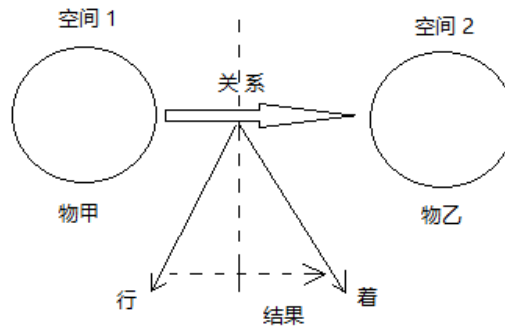

Fig.3

The scheme above, besides giving us information about how to move from one space or time moment to another, shows that there is a link between the two verbs due to the simultaneity of the actions. The result is expressed from the action the verb 行 (to travel), which is the main one, that of 着 being auxiliary and only helping to achieve the result.

From the two figures we can see that:

- there is an agent who performs vb$_1$'s action

- vb$_2$'s action is not the result of vb$_1$'s action, but uses its spatial position

- by abstraction and transforming, *zhe* into functional word, it uses the same space as vb$_1$

- The second frame (乙物) introduces a location which is part of the general context

In the above examples both verbs are action verbs which connect the two spaces, but there are also situations when one of the verbs can only describe a situation so, the action it expresses is limited to a single space.

Until the beginning of the last century, when *baihua* was introduced, the spatial meaning of *zhe* prevailed over the temporal meaning. Now the spatial meaning has not completely disappeared, it is still used, especially in story books or books which aim to disseminate traditional culture to natives. Here we will not find expressions in which grammar notions are used to render time, but, instead, we find expressions which suggest space images. That is why, in most of Chinese stories books, functional words like 了，过 or 着, when they are used as temporal markers, are almost absent, although they are always present in a regular text.

3. The meaning and usage restriction of zhe in vb₁+zhe

The purpose of the introduction of the functional word *zhe*, derived from the verb *zhuo*, which was used in both of the cases: when it connects two spaces and suggests the development of an action and when it describes a space and suggests a continuous action.

However, there are situations in which we cannot use *zhe* with a verb. This happens when the verb can itself describe a space or an action. In this case some of the verbs may themselves suggest the property of a space, like: 合适 (to be suitable), 多 (to have a lot), 差 (to lack). Other verbs describe a relationship, and thus, establish a connection between spaces like: 象 (to be like), 等于 (to be equal to), 指 (to point at). In this category we can also include verbs which suggest an ability or desire, because they describe or make a connection between spaces like: 可能 (to be possible), 会 (to know how), 想 (to want), 敢 (to dare), but also verbs which suggest feelings like: 嫉妒 (to be jealous of), 放心 (to be relaxed), 失望 (to lose hope) or a psychological state like: 满足 (to be satisfied), 怀疑 (to doubt), 佩服 (to admire), because they help to describe spaces.

There are also situations when there are used verbs which suggest the starting point or ending point of an action or state, or verbs whose action or state cannot be settled between two time moments t_1 and t_2, like: 入 (to enter), 死 (to die), 到 (to arrive), 毕业 (to graduate), 认识 (to know), 超过 (to overpass). The meaning of these verbs is different from that of *zhe,* which refers to time.

These general limitations of *zhe*'s usage are even more clear in the structure verb+着+ object+verb2, case in which there are three situations:
Case 1: the use of *zhe* shows that vb₁ helps vb₂ to carry out an action or a goal.

(9) 他骑着自行车回家。(Riding his bike he returns home.)

In the example above *cycling* helps to achieve the purpose of returning home. So, by using the direction of the time-space framework, we see that the

action of *riding the bike* is the first action and that of *returning home* is the final action, which points to the last framework, the purpose of the action.

Case 2: the verb before *zhe* no longer helps to achieve the goal. It suggests not only a secondary action that is carried out at the same time with the main action but also accompanies it.

(10) 她喝着咖啡看报。(Drinking coffee she reads the newspaper.)

In this example, the action of *drinking coffee* does not influence the main action of *reading*, but, as in the previous example, the main action is that of the last framework.

Case 3: by repeating vb₁+着 it is underlined a result expressed by vb₂ (not an intended purpose)

(11) 我们走着走着 [天色] 暗下来。(We were and walking [and the sky] darkened.)

The order of the events, in this situation, also corresponds to the space-time reality, the main action establishing a connection with the last framework.

Although the writing direction has changed, the space-time chain of events still influences the topic of modern Chinese and deviation from the norm by using inversions or poetic licenses is seldom allowed.

4. Main and secondary action in vb₁+zhe+[object]+ vb2 structure. Translation difficulties in Romanian

According to the grammar rules of modern Chinese, in the structure *vb₁+zhe+[object]+vb₂* the main action is expressed by vb₂, the secondary one vb₁, and *zhe* is seen as an auxiliary verb. According to the space model previously discussed, establishing which is the main action and which is the secondary action does not seem to raise particular difficulties, reaching the same conclusions. Following the direction of writing which is a space-time grammar axis, vb2 is the one who, appearing at the end, states the main action.

However, there appear two situations which require special attention:

a) the influence of the context

In the article 旱灾纪念日募捐记事 (Notes on donations from the anniversary of the commemorative day of drought calamities) the author speaks about her participation to the demonstration and says:

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(12) 四下了望着，又追着车儿奔走 (We were walking quickly, looking all sides and following the cars.)

The main action, the hurried walking behind the cars, suggested by the context, is in agreement with vb2 (to run), which renders the main action.

But in the article 鸟兽不可与同群 (Birds and wilds cannot...with the same group) she recounts how she was pursued by a dog, saying:

(13) 它追着我狂吠不止 (Following me, it was rabidly barking all the time.)

The main action suggested by the context is that of the dog chasing the author but the main action in example (13), taken separately, is the rabidly barking of the dog.

This situation shows that the main and secondary action of the analyzed structure, in separate sentence or phrase, is rendered by the grammatical and logical relationship between vb1 and vb2. When there is a context, the main action must be related to its general meaning.

b) translation problem

The translation of the verb accompanied by zhe is rendered in Romanian by using gerund which, in a sentence, introduces also a secondary action. But when there is a context, in Romanian as in Chinese, it is the one to determine the main action.

If we translate the structure vb_1+zhe+ [object] +vb_2 from Chinese to Romanian the only difficulty occurs when the sentence or phrase to which it belongs is part of a context and the main action of the context is different from that in the analyzed structure. The translation of the example (13) without a proper knowledge of the context may leave the impression that *barking* is the main action. In this case the translation of vb_2 by using gerund is one of the easiest ways to render the correct meaning.

Another difficulty occurs when the translation is from Romanian into Chinese. This is because the gerund in Romanian can be placed either before or after vb_2. Thus, if the context is missing it is very difficult to determine which is the main action and sometimes it is the translator who has to make the decision. For example:

(14) Bătea cu degetele în masă fluierând. (He knocked on the table with his fingers, whistling.)

(15) Fluierând, bătea cu degetele în masă. (Whistling, he knocked on the table with his fingers.)

In example (14) the gerund *fluierând* (whistling) expresses the secondary action, but in example (15) it is difficult to establish it also because the readers or listener's imagination can add several other verbs like vb$_2$. For example:

(16) He knocked on the table with his fingers, whistling, looked far away and sometimes frawned.

In this case it is obvious that the gerund expresses the main action and all the other verbs show secondary actions accompanying the whistling action. Moreover, when translating the word *fluierând* (whistling) into Chinese, *zhe* can no longer be used and suitable solutions must be sought in order to render the correct meaning.

In conclusion, *zhe* appeared through the abstraction and grammaticalization of the word *zhuo* in order to express a continuous action or state. Its use in the structure vb$_1$+zhe+[object] +vb$_2$ is according to the usual chain of events seen as a succession of individual frameworks. Today it is seldom used to express space, but more often used to suggest time. Although the direction of writing has changed, the topic still expresses a progressive action. This is why the structure vb+着 is always placed before the verb which expresses the main action. Establishing the main action in the structure vb$_1$+zhe and vb$_2$ is possible at two levels. At the grammar level we have a fixed subordination of vb$_1$ to vb$_2$ and at the logical level, where the main action is rendered by the context. In the absence of a context the main action is rendered by the relationship of grammar subordination.

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