

A First-phase Approach to Post-verbal Locative *Zai* Phrases in Mandarin

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This research argues for a syntactic account of how the interpretations of post-verbal locative *zai* phrases are derived. In the literature, many works have conducted discussions on the syntactic constraints and interpretations of post-verbal locative *zai* phrases (Zhu (1981), Shao (1982), Li & Thompson (1982), Sybesma (1999), Chirkova & Lamarre (2005), Liu (2009)). However, no explanations have yet been made as to how a post-verbal *zai* phrase receives a directional reading despite its intrinsic existential/locative meaning. We adopt Ramchand's (2008) first-phase syntax, proposing that the derivation of the interpretations is syntactically evident, and that the application of an independent element in the structure that identifies the result component of the structure may better explain the ambiguity of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase in the complement position of the result subevent.

Key Words: first-phase syntax, post-verbal locative *zai* phrase, Mandarin, directional meaning, locative meaning

I. Introduction

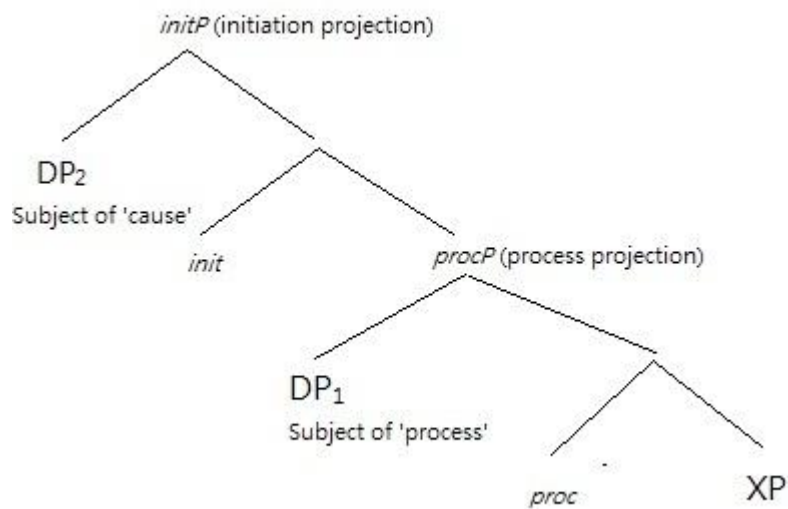
In the literature, many works have conducted discussions on the syntactic constraints and interpretations of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases: Zhu (1981) offers an overview of the patterns where the locative *zai* phrases are placed either preverbally or post-verbally, and *ba*-construction is claimed to be the key that holds the connections between the two cases. Shao (1982) continues on the discussion and provides some more detailed analysis of the relations between the verbs and the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases. Li & Thompson (1982) classifies the verbs and claims only four types of verbs can take a post-verbal locative *zai* phrase in the sentences. Liu (2009)'s focuses are not only placed upon the classifications of the verbs compatible with a post-verbal locative *zai* phrase, but also on the contributions the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases make to the verb meaning and how the events may

be affected as a whole. Chirkova & Lamarre (2005) deals with not just the locative *zai* phrases in the post-verbal position, but the constructions where they are involved. The post-verbal locative *zai* phrases in such constructions fall under the category of locative resultatives in Sybesma (1999). However, there are yet some issues that still remain unaccounted for. The first of all would be how the locative *zai* phrases in post-verbal position receive directional meaning, aside from its intrinsic existential/locative meaning. The directional meaning of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases is acknowledged in the discussion of all works in the field, but no specific answers are given other than the implication in Zhu (1981) that it may involve the effect of *ba*-construction, which can also be seen in Li & Thompson (1982), and the claim by Liu (2009) that the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases have different functions according to the verbs they attach to offers an overall account, but no specific accounts about the origin of the directional meaning. This research is aimed at providing such account in terms of the structural status of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases, and shows that the encoding of the directional meaning can be syntactically manifested under the first-phase theory in Ramchand (2008).

II. A First-phase Analysis

The theory adopted here decomposes verbs into three components that make up the structure: initiation, process, and result. The initiation component hosts the trigger or the initiator of the process, which is the core component of the structure. It can in turn take a *PATH*, an element that holds homomorphism relation to the verb. The structure containing a *PATH* is as below:

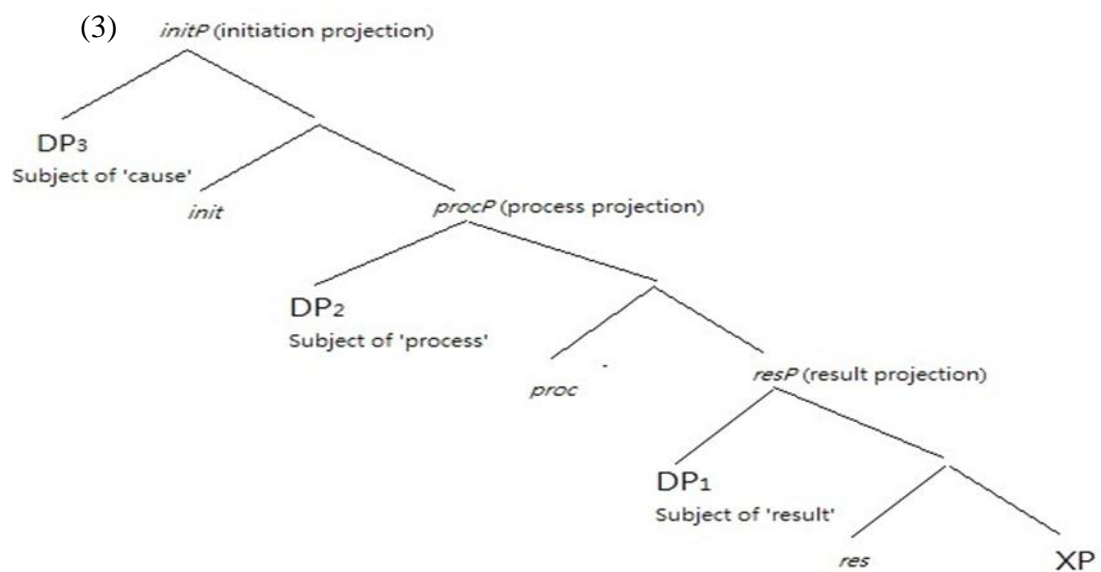
(1)



If the PATH specifies the final location of the transition, then it renders the event telic and will thus be bounded; otherwise the PATH should be unbounded.

- (2) a. Mary danced to the store (bounded path)
- b. Mary danced toward the bridge (unbounded path)

The process can also take a result component that hosts the entity holding the result state:



The culminated point that yields telicity can also be represented by a result subevent which depicts the endpoint of the process of the event, with the element that takes up the complement position of the result subevent representing the state as a result of the action.

(4) Ariel entered the room.

What should be noted here is that, although both bounded PATH and RESULT in the complement position of the process component lead to a telic event, they are distinctive in that PATH contains a scale property that is homomorphic with the event i.e. we should be able to track the progress of the action with PATH, whereas RESULT only marks the endpoint of the action.

With the theory briefly alluded to above, we should now see how the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases are classified.

- (5)a. 張三走在路上
b. 稻子爛在田裡

First we see the two cases where the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase possesses the locative meaning: in (5a) the locative phrase describes the path where the action traverses along, and since no endpoint is provided by the locative phrase, the sentence should be a case of the post-verbal locative representing the unbounded path. (5b) shows that the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase depicts a state introduced by the result component. This case should be distinguished from (6a) below, where the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase receives a directional reading:

- (6)a. 字寫在黑板上
- b. 把字寫在黑板上
- c. (把)字寫在黑板上三天了

According to Zhu (1981), (6a) is claimed to be equivalent to the *ba*-construction in (6b) where the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase has a directional meaning. Interestingly, it can also have a locative meaning and is thus capable of being modified by durative time adverbials as in (6c). For (5b), where a change of state verbs is used, the interpretation of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase seems to have only one option i.e. directional, but for verbs such as verbs of creation, the ambiguity arises where there is an option of focusing on different portions of the information structure, which is a matter of pragmatics. That is, the reason why Zhu (1981) claims sentences such as (6a) are ambiguous may be that the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases in either case have the same base position in the structure.

Before putting forth another possible account of the ambiguity here, I would like to consider the probability of the directional meaning derived from the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase taking up the complement position of the process subevent. As mentioned above, telicity can be induced by either the presence of a bounded path or the existence of the result component in the structure, and since the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase can well serve as the path as in (5a), perhaps there is a chance for it to be bounded and thus renders the event telic. A closer look at the theory will then show that this is unlikely. According to Ramchand (2008), the process subevent can only take a pathP, not a placeP that denotes only location. Therefore, for instance, for a motion verb to take a locative phrase that refers to simple location, it must itself contain a result subevent so as to host the element that serves only as the detail of the result state.

(7) Mary walked in the room

In (7) the locative phrase either serves as the path the action moves along, or provides the endpoint of the action by taking up the complement position of the result subevent. The same goes for Mandarin: a post-verbal locative *zai* phrase may only obtain directional reading with the help of the structure.

If we are to exploit the current theory a bit further in analyzing the derivation of the interpretations of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase, specifically the ambiguity addressed above, we may consider the possibility of applying the notion of another element in the structure that identifies the *res* component itself. This notion is proposed in Ramchand (2008) to account for at least two different constructions: double object constructions, where the *res* component is identified by the directional preposition *to* when it is present in the structure, and AP resultatives with an unselected object, where the *res* head is identified by a null property possessional head, the cases of which are exemplified in (8) and (9) respectively.

(8) Alex gave the ball to Ariel

(9) John ran his shoes ragged.

In (8), since *to* is assumed to be able to identify a *res* head, the *res* feature possessed by the verb does not identify the *res* head due to underassociation, and because the *res* component of the structure is identified by an independent lexical item, it becomes possible for the result state to be nonadjacent to the giving event in terms of time. In (9), on the other hand, a null head identifies *res* head and takes the AP in its complement position to denote a static property, and since in this case the verb refers

to an activity and does not contain a *res* feature, the postulated null head that identifies the *res* component of the structure receives stronger support. Therefore, if it is possible to assume that the notion exists in Mandarin, which means the result component of the structure may be identified by an element other than the verb itself, the ambiguity of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases in the complement position of the result subevent can be accounted for within the range of syntax, not pragmatics. Put differently, when the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase is in the complement position of a *res* subevent that is identified by the verb, it receives directional reading. On the other hand, if the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase is taken as the complement of a *res* subevent that is identified by an independent element, whether by *zai* itself or by a postulated null head, it remains as the detail of the result state, hence locative. This analogy may be manifested by the example in (6) where an activity verb is used, and it is probable that the disposing nature of *ba*-construction enhances the notion of the *res* head being identified by the verb itself, and thus the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase receives directional meaning via process-result coherence. When *ba* is absent, it is more likely for the *res* head to be independently identified by another element and thus the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase conveys locative meaning.

III. Conclusion

The analysis presented in this research deals with the derivations of the interpretations of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases under first-phase theory, and proposes that the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase can receive directional meaning only when it serves as the complement of the result component identified by the verb. The locative meaning of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase may come from the locative phrase either serving as the unbounded path in the complement position of the process component, or taking the complement position of the result component that is

identified by another independent element in the structure. Although it remains unsure whether the notion of an independent element identifying the *res* subevent can be applied to other constructions, it helps in explaining the ambiguity of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrase in the complement position of the result component, and the first-phase analysis should help better understand the origin of the interpretations of the post-verbal locative *zai* phrases, more importantly how the directional meaning is derived in the structure.

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以首層語法探究現代漢語動後處所短語[在+處所詞]

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本文主張從語法層面解釋現代漢語動後處所短語[在+處所詞]的意義與成因。歷代文獻雖對其語法限制及意義多所著墨 (Zhu (1981), Shao (1982), Li & Thompson (1982), Sybesma (1999), Chirkova & Lamarre (2005), Liu (2009))，卻未有理論探討動後處所短語[在+處所詞]如何在處所意義之外，能另獲得趨向意義。運用 Ramchand (2008) 的首層語法，本研究試圖證明動後處所短語[在+處所詞]的趨向意義乃由語法架構所賦與，且相信藉由除動詞之外的獨立要素參與語法架構組成，可解釋動後處所短語[在+處所詞]在結果次事件中為何具有歧義。

關鍵詞：動後處所短語，[在+處所詞]，趨向意義，處所意義，首層語法，現代漢語