A NEW STUDY ON MANDARIN IRREALIS “V DE/BU X” CONSTRUCTION
(漢語短語結構非實然結果達成判斷式 "V 得/不 X" 研究)

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By

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DEDICATION

To the memory of Dr. John DeFrancis and of my parents Shen Rui and Hu Maode.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Beverley Maeder (my thesis adviser from Lausanne University), as well as Julian (my son), just name a few, are of no less importance to the achievement of this work!

Needless to say, I am completely responsible for the contents of this dissertation, and all errors remain my own.
ABSTRACT

The V DE/BU X construction in Mandarin is traditionally called the ‘potential complement’ and is a difficult grammatical point for Chinese Second Language students as it is a highly complex construction. Literature on the subject indicates ambiguity about whether it is a modality or aspect qualification, or both. This dissertation bears primarily on its theoretical aspects and attempts to fill the lacuna in its description. Its syntactic and semantic properties can be presented from different angles. The V DE/BU X construction belongs to the semantic category of irrealis. DE/BU insertion into Verb-Resultative (VR) construction is an epistemic modality qualification, expressing “judgment on the attainability of X, the result of an irrealis or imagined event”. My description purports that since in usage it appears mostly in the negative form, it more accurately expresses “the non-attainability of X, the result of an irrealis or imagined event V”, or simply that there is no possibility of V achieving X, the result. This description involves two main levels of analysis. Syntactically, DE/BU insertion operates on the invisible functional head [BECOME] of VR and reverses the perfective qualification of VR back into an imperfective aspect of the state of affairs, and thus is “attainable/non-attainable.” Based on my empirical analysis of 400 authentic V DE/BU X sentences, I suggest that V DE/BU X mostly appears in irrealis types of sentences because, pragmatically, its sentential context and illocutionary features are those used in hypothetical sentences or in association with the emphatic conjunction “LIAN…DOU/YE…” etc. In addition, it
appears with modal adverbs and particles, or as rhetorical interrogatives. This indicates that the V DE/BU X construction belongs to the semantic category of *irrealis*. It is pragmatically motivated for rhetorical effect of emphasis because with the indefinite or generic qualification of an *irrealis* sentence, it is disengaged from being an assertion of a person’s opinion, prediction, or judgment and gains an impersonal or universal voice.
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<tr>
<td>A or Adj.</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asp.</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Complement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cl.</td>
<td>Classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Directional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP or DetP</td>
<td>Determiner Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td>Unspecified, can be either LE&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt; or LE&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Attached to the verb: perfective aspect marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>LE at sentence final position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Noun Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O or Obj.</td>
<td>Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perf.</td>
<td>Perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ptl.</td>
<td>Particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Resultative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVO</td>
<td>Subject + Verb + Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>V + Complement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VD</td>
<td>V + Directional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO</td>
<td>V + Object or VO compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Verb Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VR</td>
<td>V + Resultative</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>VX</td>
<td>Replacing VC to avoid implication of ‘Complement’ for Chinese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X (in VX)</td>
<td>Can be realized by either R, D, or Adj. It is preferred over C to avoid controversy for calling post verbal element ‘complement’ in Chinese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE/BU X</td>
<td>Stand for accompanying features, such as time or location adverbials, etc. in a sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X (in SVOX)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or in SXVO)</td>
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* Chinese names are spelled in the order of “Family Name – Personal Name,” without “,” in between. For example, in “Liu Yuehua,” “Liu” is her family name, “Yuehua” is her personal name.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Mandarin construction “V DE/BU X” is traditionally called the “potential (extension) of VC construction,” where C (complement) stands for either a resultative,\(^1\) directional,\(^2\) or degree\(^3\) segment. In order to avoid confusion in the following discussion, I will follow this traditional terminology with only one alteration, that is, to replace C (complement) with X.\(^4\) This X has a definite reference, and it is instantiated as either a resultative segment R or a directional segment D.

This construction is one of four neo-constructions that developed from colloquial Middle Chinese (late Tang and early Song), and it is shared by all modern Chinese dialects\(^5\) except the Min dialect (Mei Tsulin 梅祖麟, 1999). Many scholars have observed that this construction is undergoing grammaticalization (e.g., Wu Fuxiang 吳福祥, 2002).

A native speaker of Mandarin usually acquires this construction by the age of two,\(^6\) which shows that it belongs to the core syntactic structure of Modern Chinese.

---

\(^{1}\) The grammatical status of the resultative in Chinese is very different from its marginal status in English. However, in order to better define and describe its use in Chinese, the following simple definition from Wikipedia will be useful as a point of reference: A resultative is a phrase that indicates the state of a noun resulting from the completion of the verb. In the English examples below, the affected noun is shown in **bold** and the resulting predicate is in *italics*:

- John licked **his plate** *clean*.
- Mary painted **the fence** *blue*.
- The cold weather froze **the lake** *solid*.

\(^{2}\) Directionals form a lexically-defined, closed list of verbs, including 9 simple and 18 compounds, in Chinese. They follow other verbs to form the syntactical unit “V + Directional.” This VD construction is a highly frequent syntactical pattern in Mandarin (See sections 2.2.3–2.2.4.1 for more details).

\(^{3}\) Y. R. Chao, 1968: 354–357. Also see section 3.3.2 of this dissertation.

\(^{4}\) Some other Chinese linguists have also opted for this kind of notation in studies on the same subject, such as Fan Jiyan (1963) and Yu Min (1988).

\(^{5}\) In this study, I have adopted the term “dialects” to denote the major speech varieties used by Chinese speakers. Other scholars may prefer to use the term “languages” to make this differentiation. The question of whether varieties of Chinese should rightly be called dialects or languages is not a focus of this dissertation.

\(^{6}\) This is mostly based on my own observation.
However, for many foreign students of Mandarin,\(^7\) it is a difficult syntactic pattern that triggers stumbles even among advanced learners, in their third or fourth year of college Chinese classes (Tian Huabin 田化冰, 2001). This difficulty may be attributed to two facts. One is that their native languages do not have any equivalent or similar constructions. The other is that there is no specially designed drill module for this construction in most Chinese second language textbooks and curricula. This absence in pedagogical materials could be attributed to the incompleteness of basic descriptive work for this construction in the wider literature. Although numerous studies have been done in recent years, they are mostly related to topics of VR constructions (Shi, 2002, 2004), DE constructions (Li Linding 李臨定, 1963; Li Xiaoqi 李曉琪, 1985; Liu Ziyu 劉子瑜, 2003; Lu Liehong 盧烈紅, 2002; Xu Dan 徐丹, 2005), or empirical research on usage (Liu Yuehua 劉月華, 1980, 1998; Zhang Wangxi 張旺熹, 1999). In the present study, I focus on the V DE/BU X construction’s description from both theoretical and empirical perspectives, and then I look into the consequences of newly proposed theoretical representations. Finally, I argue for a change of grammatical terminology with regard to this construction’s syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic interpretation, and I discuss the consequences of such a change for Mandarin second-language pedagogy.

\(^7\) The data reported in this study generally concerns students of Mandarin who are native speakers of English, French and German. In further studies, I intend to examine in more detail the specific effects that native language may have on the learning of Mandarin. For example, we might expect that native speakers of languages having similar resultative constructions (such as, perhaps, Thai) might have an easier time learning Mandarin resultatives. The language-specific effects of L1 are not a focus of this study.
1.1 Remarks on theory⁸ and methodology

Before we enter into the subject, a few words about the methodology are indispensable for the understanding of the terminology and the theoretical framework that the present study is based on. “Comparison” is the keyword. It is used in the sense that the well-known Chinese linguist Lü Shuxiang (呂叔湘) has proposed in his article “Study Grammar through Comparison” (通過對比研究語法, 1977/1992: 4).⁹

In order to recognize special properties of Chinese, we should compare it with other non-Chinese languages; for that of modern Chinese, we can compare it with Pre-Modern and Classical Chinese, and for that of Putonghua (the common speech), we can compare it with dialects. Research on all aspects of the language, either that of phonology, of lexicology or of syntax, can be conducted with this methodology.

In addition,

For anybody who studies the grammar, his observation can neither be totally correct nor without omission—there is no such a thing as perfection in the world—therefore, one needs to keep an alert mind on what others have said and check what she/he heard with the actual facts of the language (Lü, 1992: 17)

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⁸ I graduated from the linguistics department of Lausanne University (Switzerland) with an M.A. in general linguistics (1996). My initial linguistic training was definitely marked by the Prague School and the structural linguistics developed by Saussure and Jakobson. Although two years post-Master’s studies spent at the University of Geneva from 1996 to 1998 gave me a full exposure to the current generative development, my understanding of it is rather from outside. More recently, studies on Chinese linguistics with Professor Y.C. Li and other scholars here at the University of Hawai‘i have broadened my view further; thus in research, I consider that my approach is eclectic rather then the result of an affiliation to a particular school of thought. Here, I use the term “theoretical linguistics” in the sense that it is opposed to “applied linguistics,” such as developing direct applications in SL pedagogy.

⁹ Quotations from Chinese sources in this dissertation are my translations unless specified.
This latter point is a guiding reminder for this dissertation. My goal is to continually check the theoretical elaboration against the empirical and to be aware of the danger of being carried away by the acrobatics of new terms and frame sets.

My initial focus was on the structural description of the V DE/BU X construction through a thorough review and comparison of all current synchronic, diachronic, and empirical studies of topics related to the subject (mainly Chinese sources). However, due to the complexity of the subject, and as my research advanced, I adopted a multiple perspectives approach. For instance, for discussion of internal syntactic properties, I use the most current generative proposition on the subject (Xiong Zhongru 熊仲儒 & Liu Liping 劉麗萍, 2005; see sections 5.5–5.7). Concerning semantic and aspectual properties, Tai’s (2003, 2007) cognitive description of VR and Shi Yuzhi’s (石毓智 2004) thesis that VR is the keystone in the development of modern Chinese grammar are used. The modality property of the construction led me to review the perspectives of Palmer (2001), Mithun (1999), Nuytz (2001), and scholars of historical pragmatics (Shen Jiaxuan 沈家煊, 2004), discussed in Chapter 7. In sum, looking for an adequate explanation and description of the V DE/BU X construction is my goal, and I have used sources from an eclectic group of schools of thought and methodologies, so as to engage with as wide a range of scholars as possible who are interested in this construction. For instance, in language pedagogy research, contrastive analysis is perceived as an applied approach, because it may elucidate similarities and differences between language systems, so that the learner’s errors may be “predicted” and explained. However, in a broader sense, comparison between two languages or dialects of the same language may also facilitate our understanding of one particular language. In other words, contrastive analysis may be
used as a method or discovery procedure in linguistic description. For instance, James Tai (戴浩一, 2003) uses contrastive analysis between English and Chinese to illustrate his hypothesis that, conceptually, the English predicate focuses on the process represented by the verb, while the Chinese predicate focuses on the result, represented by the VR construction (see section 3.4.4). Therefore, I will use comparison between English and Chinese, as well as comparison among Chinese dialects, as my main method to describe and explain the semantic contents, syntactic properties, and sentential context features of the Mandarin V DE/BU X construction.

1.2 Organization of the dissertation by chapters

A detailed review of the literature on the subject of V DE/BU X is undertaken in Chapter 2, including general descriptions of it in grammar manuals, the controversy that has risen around it for some researchers, the empirical studies done on it, and some dialect evidence for the multiple functions compressed into this one form. Next, to avoid seeing the leaves without recognizing the tree, a brief outline of the Chinese grammatical system is introduced in Chapter 3, though the emphasis is on the issues related to this construction, such as the notion of VC, the grammaticalization of DE, and the reasons why the VR is one of the major predicate patterns in modern Mandarin. Chapter 4 follows a diachronic approach, comparing diachronic and cross-dialectal data, and asks questions such as why the Min dialect does not have the V DE/BU X construction and how the grammaticalization of DE as a phase complement marking accomplishment is related with the development of V DE X’s use for expressing unachieved or non-achievable action. Recent studies in historical pragmatics (see section 4.5) resolve the
question of how the construction’s original meaning of expressing a non-achieved event developed into its modern meaning of expressing a non-attainable event. Chapter 5 sets forth the first part of my interpretation of the V DE/BU X construction. While a tour of the controversy among Chinese linguists over what is the syntactic head of VR does not seem to settle the issue, the notion that an “invisible” functional category such as [BECOME] or [CAUSE] should be its syntactic head paves the way for my proposal that the insertion of DE/BU into VR for the formation of the V DE/BU X operates on this invisible functional category, yielding “attainability/non-attainability of R” as the internal syntactic significance of the construction. Chapter 6 addresses the second issue discussed in Chapter 5, which is the semantic and assertive quality of the negative form V BU X. The solution to this latter issue also answers the question of the asymmetry between the negative form V BU X and its positive counterpart V DE X, as well as why this latter is more often used in the interrogative. Chapter 6 is an empirical description of the construction. In the first section, I try to show that, while V in the V BU X construction is an open-list component, the X is a closed-list component. In addition, the membership of X can be established by means of comparing and sorting existing lists of its usage. In 6.2, the lexical aspect of V DE/BU X is presented, with an ad hoc collection of idiomatic V DE/BU X phrases in an appendix as illustration. In 6.3, based on my own data analysis of 400 authentic V DE/BU X sentences, an attempt to describe this construction’s sentential features and illocutionary types is made. Chapter 7 is the final part of my interpretation of V DE/BU X; it is its sentential features that qualify the construction as an *irrealis* event, hence the modality interpretation of its “potential” significance.
1.3 Terminology and relevant issues

The term “potential (complement)” for the designation of V DE/BU X has been known for over 40 years, ever since Y. R. Chao (趙元任) employed it in his seminal work (Chao, 1968). It has been generally accepted since then. Linguists of Chinese generally know what “potential” refers to in Chinese. Is there a possibility, however, that linguists might mistake its semantic and syntactic properties because of the word “potential” can have the sense, “virtual power or capacity to perform a difficult task”? The term is not merely a conventionalized code for the designation of an object or a concept; it also has value in guiding people’s comprehension of it. The layman would understand “potential complement” at face value, because we do not find a systematic correspondence for it in Western languages. It is of no consequence if he/she does not learn Chinese, but when he/she does, the vagueness of the term will often be problematic, frustrating Chinese SL teachers and some Chinese linguists as well. According to Liu Yuehua, a specialist in Chinese SL pedagogy,

Textbook grammar should avoid chasing the fashion, especially with regard to following a grammar theory and terminology....even if your theory is well founded, it won’t be popular, because it is not easily accessible to the language teachers in classroom practice (Liu Yuehua, 1989: 359).

My concern is that the issues surrounding the semantic and syntactic properties of the V DE/BU X construction are not adequately represented by its current name, “potential complement.” In addition, since the fuzziness of the term often leads to misunderstanding and errors by Chinese SL teachers and students, I believe that a systematic approach to this construction is overdue and necessary, both for both Chinese
SL students and teachers as well as for the linguistics community at large. This is my proposition for a revision of the terminology:

The Chinese V DE/BU X construction expresses the “judgment of non-attainability of an irrealis event” in its main usage.

1.4 A stratified presentation of V DE/BU X’s syntactic and semantic properties

The addition of the concept of irrealis to the discussion entails an extended systematic view of this construction, which includes a scrutiny both of its sentential context and of its illocutionary elements, as well as its pragmatic motivation. These had not been taken into account in an earlier stage of my research on the subject. The following is a summary of the stratified description of its properties in four levels, namely, the temporal, the modal, the aspectual, and the pragmatic:

1.4.1 V DE/BU X is atemporal by itself; therefore, its temporal interpretation depends on the temporal deictic in its sentential context. When it is used in association with LE, the realis temporal deictic, it expresses a counterfactual event, the actuality (or non-actuality) of which has been verified syntactically. In this case, it cannot express the “potential” meaning per se, since “potential” refers to the event, the actuality of which has not been verified.

The counterfactual interpretation is derived from its historical origin (negation of actualization). Defining this construction as atemporal solves the paradox of calling it “potential” when it expresses “counterfactual” in its negative form in a sentence marked

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10 For instance, in my dissertation proposal, I did not envisage a survey of this construction’s sentential context features, but planned to investigate its manifestation in different dialects, such as Yue and Min.
by the past or present deictic. The counterfactual meaning of V BU X is determined by its context. This is no longer its main usage in modern Mandarin.

1.4.2 When the realis temporal deictic is absent in its sentential context, and when there are other indications of modality, whether lexical, syntactic, or illocutionary, such as an IF hypothetical; the interrogative; the emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE… (連…都/也…), etc., which would point to indefinite qualification, such a V DE/BU X sentence belongs to the semantic category of irrealis, and then its default modality interpretation will be triggered.

The default interpretation of V DE/BU X consists of the following:

- It is in assertive mood and belongs to epistemic modality category.
- It expresses a “judgment on the attainability of result X, of an irrealis event” or a “judgment on the non-attainability of result X of an irrealis event,” because the negative V BU X is the root form of this construction.

1.4.3 The “attainability” part of its definition comes from the analysis of its internal structure, the invisible functional category BECOME of VR, the base for its formation. While the insertion of DE, the partially grammaticalized aspect marker, marks BECOME as possible, and thus “attainable,” the insertion of BU operates on BECOME resulting in NON-BECOME; thence, the “non-attainability” of X. Aspectually, both V DE X and V BU X are imperfective.

1.4.4 The pragmatic motivation of V DE/BU X resides in the irrealis nature of the sentences in which this construction appears. This irrealis nature is determined by various context features and illocutionary elements, of which a preliminary count has been made in the corpus study presented here.
How are these stratified descriptions of V DE/BU X related to one another? How are they supported by empirical evidence? Chapter 7 addresses these questions.
CHAPTER 2

General Presentation and Literature Review

In this chapter, various current descriptions of the V DE/BU X construction in Chinese grammar research are compared, and then summaries of the research and the related issues, such as those regarding VR and VD, as well as the bases for the insertion of DE/BU to form the construction V DE/BU X, are examined. Comparisons with other Chinese dialects, such as Taiwan Min dialect, are also examined. The comparison with other Chinese dialects aims at discovering the semantic and syntactic properties hidden because of the structure-compressing tendency of Mandarin in its pre-modern development. Further comparison with English, French, and Italian aims to shed light on the teaching of this construction in Chinese SL pedagogy, complementing the general description.

This chapter takes a synchronic approach. It focuses on the presentation of the problem along four lines:


2. Questions from research and related problems (Fan Jiyan 範繼淹, 1963; Li Linding, 1984; Liu Yuehua, 1980; Yu Min 俞敏, 1988; etc.).


2.1 Contemporary Chinese grammarians’ descriptions

2.1.1 Lü Shuxiang: DE may express capability as well as feasibility

Lü Shuxiang’s article “Word Order in Connection with the Post-Verbal DE and BU” (與動詞後得與不有關之詞序問題, 1944) is the earliest study on this construction. Although Lü’s article is mainly concerned with the development of post DE/BU word order in the V DE/BU X construction, his introduction of the various aspects of this construction clearly and concisely lays out general guidelines for its study. In his abstract, Lü says:

The verb DE, expressing possibility, which precedes other verbs in classical Chinese, comes after them in the modern colloquial; thus a full-fledged verb becomes in the course of time something between an adverb and a mere particle. The relation between the two is somewhat analogous to that which exists between the group “be able to” and the suffix “-able” in English. With this difference: while “-able” does not correspond to “can,” DE may express capability as well as feasibility (emphasis added). In the article, Lü further explains that in the notion of “possibility (KE-NENG)” there exist two meanings, KE “feasible” and NENG “capable.” “Capable or not” points to the capacity of the agent, while “feasible or not” depends on the exterior conditions. For instance, KE designates the tolerability according to common sense or according to other people’s preferences. These things are not within the agent’s power. “Possibility or potentiality” expressed by DE covers both meanings. For instance, sentence (1) talks about the child’s capacity:
Sentence (2) either means that the dish is tasty or harmless. It is concerned with the feasibility of the action.\(^\text{11}\)

Whether the subject is the agent or the patient of the verb also depends on whether V DE/BU X expresses the capability or the feasibility. For instance, in example (1), the subject is the agent, while in example (2), the subject is the patient of the action.

However, a subject may also indicate feasibility, as in (3):

(3) 大人吃得，孩子吃不得。
    daren chi DE, haizi chi BU DE,
    adult(s) eat DE, children eat NOT DE
    ‘(Something is) edible for adults, not edible for children.’

In (3), the real object “something” is not overtly mentioned. In addition, the real object of the verb may either be placed before the verb, as in (4):

(4) 辣椒之類，有胃病的吃不得。
    lajiao zhi lei, you weibing de chi BU DE.
    chili’s kind, have stomach illness’s (people) eat not DE.
    ‘Spicy food is not “edible” for those who have stomach problems.’

Or after the verb, as in (5):

(5) 有胃病的吃不得辣椒
    you weibing de chi BU DE lajiao
    have stomach illness’s (people) eat not DE chili
    ‘(Those who) have stomach problems cannot eat hot chili.’

\(^{11}\)Lü’s original text: “得字之表可能，又可判別‘可’与‘能’之二義。能与不能，行事者自身之能力而言；可与不可，则取决于外在之势力，如情理之當然，如他人之好惡，而非行事者本人所可左右也。此二用，得字蓋兼而有之：如‘這個孩子吃得，’謂其健飯，‘能’也；‘這個菜吃得，’或言其味美，或言其無害，總之皆‘可’也。”
2.1.2 Lü Shuxiang presents V DE/BU X, the “potential,” with other verbal aspects

Lü Shuxiang (1999: 16) presents V DE/BU X, in a manual of Chinese grammar for Chinese second language teachers and students, together with five verbal aspects. This presentation configuration can be misleading because it suggests that the V DE/BU X construction is one of the Chinese verbal aspects. In the manual, he discusses the V DE/BU X construction under both “Part of Speech” and “Syntax” sections. In “Part of Speech” (Lü, 1999: 16–17), he says: “Potential (可能態) is formed by inserting DE/BU into VR or VD.” Lü gives the following example:

說得清, 說不清
shuo DE qing, shuo BU qing
speak DE clear, speak BU clear,
‘able/not able to explain clearly’

---

12 Lü’s original text (Lü, 1999, 16):
汉语的动词没有‘时’的分别，但是有‘态’的分别.
Chinese verbs have no distinction of ‘tense,’ but they have distinction of ‘aspect.’
[The/some of the aspects are]
進行態 (连续态): 说著话
Progressive (continuous): [using verbal suffix particle ZHE (~著), Ex.] shuo ZHE hua ‘talkING.’
完成態: 说了三个字
Compleative: [using verbal suffix particle LE (~了), Ex.] shuo LE sange zi ‘talkED three words.’[with definite past time ref.]
經驗態: 说过这句话
Experienced: [using verbal suffix particle GUO (~過), Ex.] shuo GUO zhe ju hua ‘sAIID this sentence [in the past but without definite past time ref.]’
短時態 (尝试态): 你说说, 我听听
Short Duration (Tentative): [using verb reduplication, Ex.] ni shuo shuo, wo ting ting ‘(how about that) you talk a little bit (about it) […]
可能態: 说得清; 听不懂
Potential: [using the insertion of DE/BU between the verb and its complement. Ex.] shuo DE qing; ting BU dong
speak DE clear; listen NOT understand
‘able to explain it clearly’; ‘unable to understand.’
Two kinds of VP (短語式動詞) need special discussion. One is V + directional element (VD, 動趨式), the other is V + result element (VR, 動結式). The shared feature of these two kinds of VP is that they both allow the insertion of DE/BU between the two components to form the V DE/BU X construction. In addition, the VX directional also allows the insertion of LE (V LE X directional), the completive particle, while the VX resultative only accepts this at the end (VX resultative LE).

The choice between VX and V DE X depends on the length of the complement. A shorter complement may combine with the verb directly to form a VX. If the complement is longer, DE (DE₁, see the section below) is used. Then the complement becomes an independent part by itself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V Resultative</th>
<th>V DE Complement Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>長大了</td>
<td>長得又高又大</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhang da LE</td>
<td>zhang DE you gao you da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow big LE</td>
<td>grow DE and tall and big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘grew up’</td>
<td>‘grew up big and tall’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>翻亂了</td>
<td>翻得亂七八糟的</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fan luan LE</td>
<td>fan DE luan qi ba zao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turn messy LE</td>
<td>turn DE upside down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘turned messy’</td>
<td>‘turned upside down’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2.1 Structural particle DE and V DE/BU X

Lü (1999: 163–165), giving the examples below, separates the two kinds of DE with the same character 得: “DE₁ is a structural particle. It connects complements expressing result or degree of state:

洗得乾淨
xi DE ganjing
wash DE₁ clean
‘washed clean’
字寫得清楚
zi xie DE₁ qingchu
Character write/wrote clear
‘write/wrote clearly’

The negative form of DE₁ is to put BU, the negative adverb after it. For example:

字寫得不清楚
zi xie DE₁ BU qingchu
character write/wrote DE NOT clear
‘write/wrote not clearly’

DE₂ is a particle expressing possibility, feasibility and permission (emphasis added).

There are two forms of DE₂:

a) V + DE₂: In the positive form, the V must be monosyllabic; in the negative form, the
V can be disyllabic. In this construction, the subject is usually the patient of the verb
and therefore the V does not allow any object.

這東西曬得曬不得?
zhe dongxi shai DE₂ shai bu DE₂
this thing expose to sun DE expose to sun not DE?
‘Can this thing be left in the sun?’

b) Insertion of the DE/BU in a VX resultative (VR) or VX directional (VD) to express
possibility or impossibility. In this form, whenever V is transitive, an object may
follow.

吃得了吃不了?
chi DE₂ liao chi BU liao?
eat DE finish eat NOT finish
‘Able or unable finish it/eat it all up?’

[The negative form of DE₂ is BU alone, with DE omitted and replaced by BU.]

看不清楚
kan BU qingchu
look NOT clear
‘unable to see it clearly’

---

13 This note is mine.
Some of the V DE/BU X constructions are idiomatic expressions. These idiomatic V DE/BU X usually do not have corresponding VX versions without DE/BU insertion.

對得起, 對不起,
dui DE qi, dui BU qi
match DE up to, match NOT up to
‘Equal to the other’s esteem or consideration, not equal to the other’s esteem or consideration’

but there is no *對起 dui qi

來得及 來不及?
lai DE ji lai BU ji
come DE arrive come NOT arrive
‘(Do we) have enough time?’

and there is no *來及 lai ji (Lü, 1999: DE1, p. 163; DE2, p. 165).

2.1.3 Potentials as transformations or extensions of result complement

Xing Fuyi (2002: 46-52, 55-58) includes the “potential” in one of the two complement categories: “The circumstantial (狀況類) complements include the resultative (結果), the directional (趨向), the potential (可能), the degree or extent (程度), and the judgment or commentary (評判).” Xing gives an example:

長得大, 長不大,
zhang DE da, zhang BU da,
grow DE big, grow NOT big
‘able to grow up, unable to grow up’

Xing explains the syntactic and semantic contents of various complements separately: “The potential complement construction is the transformation or extension of the resultative construction VR or the directional construction VD under certain conditions.” Xing provides the following examples:
According to Xing, whether a given V DE X expresses the resultative or the potential meaning can only be determined by its context. Besides reminding the reader about the partial overlapping of forms between the potential and VR construction, Xing’s envisaging of potential as expansion of VR seems to be in line with the original analysis that we can trace back to Fan Jiyan (1963) and Chao Yuen Ren (1968).

Xing also draws attention to the asymmetry between the positive and negative form of this construction, i.e., the negative form does not have DE, but only BU, the negative adverb. What does DE contribute to the V DE/BU X construction syntactically and semantically? Empirical studies have confirmed the predominance of the negative form in general usage of this construction. Chao Yuen Ren also points out that the positive V DE X is a back formation from the negative form V BU X, and therefore DE in V DE/BU X seems to be the tip of the iceberg with many hidden semantic and syntactic properties to explore, which will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

2.1.4 V DE/BU X in Chao Yuen Ren (1968)

Chao’s description of the potential is the earliest and probably the most detailed. V DE/BU X has been called “potential” ever since (Chao, 1968). Even the current
Chinese terms for this construction “動詞可能態” (dongci keneng tai), “能性補語” (neng xing buyu), or “述補結構能性補語” (shubu jiegou neng xing buyu) are basically derived from Chao’s English nomenclature. Being the first systematic elaboration of Chinese grammar based on the oral language, Chao’s “A Grammar of Spoken Chinese” laid out the frame of reference. As a result, many basic notions and much of the terminology of current Chinese grammar can be traced back to this work.

Chao treats V DE/BU X in section “6.6 Verb-Complement (V-R) Compounds,” subsection “6.6.5. Potential Complement” of his manual. He describes the V DE/BU X construction as an “infixable V-R compound. An intermediate type of V-X compound that consists of those which admit insertion of DE ‘can’ or BU ‘cannot’ as infix resulting in potential V-X compounds, but not other insertions” (Chao, 1968: 437, 6.6.1.2 Expandability (2)).

Chao gives the following example:

看破
kan po
look broke
‘see through’

→ 看得破
kan DE po
look DE broke
‘able to see through (it)’

看得破
kan BU po
look BU broke
‘unable to see through (it)’

看不破
kan BU po
look BU broke
‘unable to see through (it)’

Chao also notices that the expansion of V-X compounds into V DE/BU X “is very productive,” that “the force of analogy is sometimes so strong as to make V-R compounds out of otherwise non-V-R compounds.” Chao illustrates this with the following coordinate compound of synonyms:
完成 \rightarrow 完不成
wan cheng \rightarrow wan BU cheng
complete achieve \rightarrow finish not achieve
‘complete’ \rightarrow ‘unable to complete’

(Chao, 1968, section 6.6.1.1, p. 438)

Chao is the first to observe the stress pattern of this construction (Chao, 1968: 436, section 6.6.1.1 Prosodic features of V-R compound). A usually neutral tone complement recovers its full tone when occurring in potential form (italic for neutral tone, bold for full tone).\(^{14}\)

\[
\begin{array}{lll}
\text{看見} & \rightarrow & \text{看得見} & \rightarrow & \text{看不見} \\
kan jian & \rightarrow & kan DE jian & \rightarrow & kan BU jian \\
look see & \rightarrow & look DE see & \rightarrow & look NOT see \\
‘see/seen’ & \rightarrow & ‘able to see’ & \rightarrow & ‘unable to see’ \\
\end{array}
\]

In addition, “as a rule, the complement [Resultative] receives the main stress.” If the R is a directional, then it usually has a neutral tone. However, when the VX (Directional) expands to the V DE/BU X, the directional X is restored to its original full tone and takes up the main stress of the segment.

\[
\begin{array}{lll}
\text{關上門} & \rightarrow & \text{門關不上} \\
guan shang men & \rightarrow & men guang BU shang \\
close up door & \rightarrow & door close not up \\
‘close the door’ & \rightarrow & ‘unable to close the door’ \\
\end{array}
\]

On the whole, many of Chao’s observations have been confirmed by other Chinese grammarians, though their interpretations may take a different turn.

\(^{14}\) This study will not consider prosodic phenomena in greater detail. Nonetheless, Chao’s point on stress placement is certainly valid, and may relate to the semantic distinctions I will make in Chapters 6 and 7.
2.1.5 Yu Min’s proposition of V BU X as tri-syllabic words based on its stress pattern (Yu Min 俞敏, 1988)

Yu Min’s observation on the stress pattern is in agreement with Chao’s description in the above. He proposes that the 10 “BU-X” groups of “V BU X” items he collected from the Beijing Dialect be considered as lexical items. One of his main arguments is based on the stress pattern of the construction Chao observed in the above section, i.e., the X, the last syllable in VX compounds is restored to its full tone after DE/BU insertion. With more precision, Yu Min further describes the stress pattern of V BU X with a scale of four degrees, therefore the three syllables in V BU X receive the stress degree of 3, 1 and 4 respectively. This stress pattern of [314], according to him, is exactly the same as the usual stress pattern for tri-syllabic words in Chinese.

The other argument Yu puts forward is the lack of transparency in its semantic composition:

There are four pieces of information in kan bu jian (看不見): 1. to use the eye to capture the information kan ‘look’; 2. to receive the information jian ‘see’; 3. the negation bu; 4. possibility/potential. There are only three carriers of information in this unit: ‘look,’ ‘see’ and ‘not,’ where is the carrier for ‘potential’? It is the word form incarnated by its stress pattern 314” (Yu Min, 1988: 247).

Therefore Yu argues that the V BU X should be treated as a lexical item, not as a grammatical construction. In addition, Yu also points out that since the X receives the primary stress, it is this last syllable which is the semantic focus of the segment. Consequently to call it a “complement” of the verb is absurd.
2.2 Empirically based studies on V DE/BU X

2.2.1 Commentary on Liu Yuehua’s *Study on the Usage of the Potential Construction* (1980)

To understand the distribution of V DE/BU X in Mandarin, Liu Yuehua’s work (1980)\(^{15}\) is the major reference. The initial motivation of Liu’s study was to look for solutions to some specific questions in Mandarin SL teaching. The recurring errors in using the V DE/BU X constructions among Mandarin SL students\(^{16}\) are mostly in the form of using BU NENG VX where V BU X should have been employed instead.\(^{17}\) Liu points out that since Chinese native speakers ordinarily never make such mistakes, Chinese grammar manuals have never collected these error examples, and have glossed over the problem in general. The source of the errors, besides the fact that their mother tongue does not have a comparable syntactic pattern to express the same idea, in Liu’s opinion, is in improper teaching:

Current grammar manuals all have been very brief on its syntactic significance, believing that it expresses “possibility”; and uses the modality “NENG” (能) ‘can, be capable of’ to explain it. […] Such explanations make students believe that since we can explain the V

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\(^{16}\) Liu did not indicate whether their mother tongue is English or other foreign languages.

\(^{17}\) Liu’s examples of Mandarin SL students’ errors:

*我們不能想到* 旧社会劳动人民的生活是那样的悲惨.

women bu neng  xiang dao jiu shehui laodong renmin de shenghuo shi na yang de beican

*We not NENG ‘can’ think arrive at old time working class people’s life is that kind miserable.’

*我们不能想象* 旧社会劳动人民的生活是那样的悲惨.

women bu neng  xiang dao jiu shehui laodong renmin de shenghuo shi na yang de beican

*We not NENG ‘can’ think arrive at old time working class people’s life is that kind miserable.’

Nanjing de fengjing hen mei, dao guo nar de ren dou bu neng  wang le/liao

Nanking’s scenery very beautiful, be at GUO there ‘s people all not can forget LE/LIAO (finish)

“We cannot /are unable/have hard time to imagine that the life of common people in the old society was so miserable.”

Correct version: *想不到* xiang bu dao (V BU X) ‘think not arrive at’

*[[南京的风景很美.]] 到過那兒的人都不能忘了*

Nanjing de fengjing very beautiful, people who had been there cannot forget (about it)“

Correct version: *忘不了* wang bu liao (V BU X) ‘forget not arrive at’
DE/BU X construction with NENG, naturally we can replace it with NENG in usage (Liu Yuehua, 1980: 246).

Liu’s investigation is empirically based. She surveyed a corpus of 1,145,000 characters in modern Chinese literary works\(^\text{18}\) from the period of the 1930s to the 1970s to find the distribution of V DE/BU X in comparison with those using the modal auxiliaries NENG ‘can, capable of’ and KE-YI ‘may, allowed.’ She then used statistics and concrete samplings to elicit the semantic contents of the construction.

To investigate why V DE X and V BU X have such a substantial asymmetry in their usage distribution with the ratio of 1 positive against 30 negative (Liu’s actual counts are 42 : 1211). Liu puts them to a substitution test. Her findings are:

For the negative, most V BU X cannot be replaced by BU NENG VX.

On the other hand, for the positive, V DE X generally can be replaced by either NENG VX or KE-YI VX. In addition, stylistically, NENG VX or KE-YI VX sounds much more affirmative than V DE X.

However, for expressing the negative NENG A meaning, i.e., the negation of capacity, of volition, and of possibility, V BU X is the only choice. Liu sums up the semantic contents of V BU X as “not because of unwillingness but actually incapable and/or impossible” (Liu Yuehua, 1980: 257; 非不願也，實不能也 [fei bu yuan ye, shi bu neng ye]).

The usage for the V DE X form is mainly in the interrogative. In other words, V BU X is predominantly used for the negation of capacity, of volition, and of possibility.

\(^\text{18}\) The material that Liu uses for her investigation are works by four very popular Modern Chinese authors: Cao Yu (曹禺), Lao She (老舍), Zhao Shuli (趙樹理), and Yao Xueyin (姚雪垠).
Therefore if we want to match these forms by their usage distribution, we find that the positive vs. negative pair would be NENG VX vs. V BU X.

2.2.2 *Zhang Wangxi’s Semantic Conditions for the Realization of V BU X (1999)*

Zhang’s study of V BU X (1999: 125–162) is frequently quoted for its subject matter and referred to for its comprehensive quality and empirically based statistics. There are a few advantages to going into Zhang’s study. One is that his subject matter is very similar to that of the present dissertation, i.e., the syntactical function and semantic interpretation of V BU X. The other is that it is empirically based. Zhang’s corpus source is current and comprehensive. However, caution needs to be used in drawing conclusions from it.

Zhang believes that the semantic conditions for V BU X realization are: 1. The V must be volitional; 2. X must be the ‘goal.’ The semantic content of it is ‘willing but not able to.’ In the same article, Zhang quotes Ma Qingzhu (馬慶株, 2002) for the definition of volitional verb. We find that Ma says: “All ‘potential’ constructions are non-volitional. Neither the category of V, nor that of X [complement] in it has anything to do with volition” (Ma Qingzhu. 2002: 179, section 3.3).

2.2.3 *V + Directional X (Fan Jiyan, 1963)*

Verb + Directional X is one of the three constructions where DE/BU insertion can apply to form the V DE/BU X construction. It is also the largest group of the three, the others being the V + Resultative construction and the detachable verb compounds. Fan

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19 Chao did assert that “most cases of predominantly potential compounds are of the directional type” (Chao, 1968: 457–58).
Jiyan is the first to have done a thorough systematic study on the subject (Fan, 1986: 88). The notion of DE/BU as an inserted element and V DE/BU X as a special extension of VX originated in Fan’s study. We’ll see in Chapter 5 that half of Yu’s 10 categories of V BU X consist of a directional element in X position. Generally, having a directional element attached to a verb to form a Verb + Directional construction is a very important property of the Chinese verbal system.

### 2.2.3.1 V DE/BU X as a special extension of V + Directional X

Fan remarks that generally all the VX directionals having an imperative form allow DE/BU insertion. The reverse is also verified: those VX which do not accept DE/BU insertion do not have an imperative form (Fan, 1986: 87). The imperative form signifies that the verbal event VX is indefinite in real time—the temporal reference defined by the speaker’s speech act. It qualifies an event as unaccomplished, and thus indicates its “potential” nature. The compatibility between the imperative mood and the V DE/BU X signifies that both belong to an irrealis mood or modality. This observation is of the utmost significance, pointing to one of the most important grammatical properties of the V BU X construction: Its significance should be interpreted in the semantic frame of the irrealis mood.

### 2.2.4 Summary of Liu Yuehua’s work on directional complements (Liu Yuehua, 1998)

Liu’s work intends to provide an empirically-based description of the directional complement with exhaustive data in modern Chinese. Liu elaborates the semantic
categories including the cognate/directional meaning, the resultative meaning, the state
description, and the idiomatic usages. In comparison with Fan’s study, which focuses on
the formal and syntactical aspects, Liu concentrates on the semantic aspects. With
exhaustive authentic illustrations, Liu’s work constitutes a corpus-based semantic
description. In addition to drawing on the network of meanings that Liu illustrates, this
dissertation research uses her extensive V DE/BU X examples as a mini corpus.

2.2.4.1 Summary of Liu’s semantic network

Liu has established three categories of directional meaning:

1. Direction of action. All directional elements have this cognate meaning. However, only a limited number of verbs are compatible with the cognate meaning of directional X. They include verbs of movement by the agent, such as run, walk, fly, etc.; and verbs that express changing the position of an object, such as push, pull, take, carry, transport, etc.

2. Result of action. This category is an extension of the lexical/cognate meaning. The result meaning is specific with regard to a specific VD association. The majority can have this meaning, consequently majority resultative VD can form potential.

3. Change of state (狀態意義). This category of meaning is abstract and figurative. It is involved with either the change or the continuation of the action.

Liu noticed that the extended ‘resultative’ meanings of VD are difficult points for students of Chinese SL and it is based on this, the resultative meaning, that V DE/BU X is formed.
2.3 Comparison with other dialects

2.3.1 Taiwan Min dialect: Differences from Mandarin

The formation of Min may be traced back to as far as Qin and Early Han (around 250 B.C.). The most referred-to historical event, with great immigration consequences, is the “Five Barbarians Invasion” (五胡亂華) around East Jin (304–449 A.D.). Although there is no historical record of formation of the Min dialects, phonological reconstruction shows that the Min dialects descended directly from Archaic Chinese (上古), and didn’t participate in the Middle Chinese phonological change that the other Chinese dialects underwent (for instance, no voiced/non-voiced differentiation of some labials and dentals) (Yuan Jiahua 袁家驊, 1960: 240).

According to Zhang Zhenxing (張振興 2002: 27), Chinese dialects may be divided into two big groups, in accordance with whether they have the obvious commonly shared regional phonological features that distinguish one group from another. Thus among northern dialects, Beijing Mandarin, Manchurian Mandarin (東北官話), South-West Mandarin (西南官話), Lanzhou-Yinchuan Mandarin (蘭州-銀川), Jin (晉), Wu (吳), Hakka (客家), and Xiang (湘) dialects all belong to the first group that has salient regional phonological features. The other group has no salient regional phonological features. Min and Yue belong to this latter group. Therefore, how to distinguish one dialect from another in this latter group is a difficult question; simply naming them by geographic area can lead to unnecessarily narrow distinctions, though in practice this is often what is done. After reviewing various propositions, Zhang finds that Jerry Norman’s (1988) 12 characters with distinctive pronunciations is a sound test, but
some of these characters are not in everyday oral vocabulary, so he proposed to add
another three, more commonly used, oral characters仔 [kiaⁿ] for ‘son,’厝 [ts’u] for
‘house,’ and鼎 [tiaⁿ] for ‘pot’ or ‘pan.’ These three oral register cognates, which are
found in various subgroups of the Min dialect, can be used as representative distinctive
features of the dialect.

Following are some of the major structural differences between Taiwan Min and
Mandarin that touch on the subject of the V DE/BU X construction in Mandarin and its
possible equivalent(s) or translation in Taiwan Min:

- Syntactically, Taiwan Min has a serial verb structure just like those of Archaic
  Chinese. These serial verbs tend to be lined up in a long sequence, while in Mandarin the
  verbs in sequence are either separated by conjunctions or compressed into a short form.
  For example, to say ‘He doesn’t want to do this (thing),’ Mandarin and Taiwan Min use
different sentence patterns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Taiwan Min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他不想(去)做這件事</td>
<td>伊無想欲愛去做這項代志.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tai bu xiang (qu) zuo zhe jian shi</td>
<td>I bo siuN be ai khi cho chit hang dai chih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He not want (go) do this Cl. Thing</td>
<td>He not want desire like go do this Cl. thing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- For the interrogatives, the Mandarin V Neg.-V form is not allowed in
  Taiwanese Min (Y.C. Li, 2001: 140–141). For example, to ask ‘Do you drink wine?’ we
  have:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Taiwan Min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>喝不喝?</td>
<td>飲酒抑毋飲?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He bu he jiu</td>
<td>Lim chiu ia m lim?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Neg V O</td>
<td>V O or Neg V (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drink not drink wine?</td>
<td>drink wine or not drink?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the formation of the interrogative with the positive vs. the negative conjunction, Mandarin simply uses the adjacent position/juxtaposition, while Taiwanese must use an overt *ia* (‘or’).

- Negative adverb which corresponds to BU in Mandarin V DE/BU X:

  勿會 [beö], is sound fusion of 勿 [m] ‘not’ and 解/會 [e] ‘capable of’; it means ‘not capable/not possible.’

  For example:

  彼杯酒飲勿會了 (Taiwan Min)
  hit pue chiu lim boe/be liao
  that glass wine drink not know finish
  ‘cannot, unable to finish that glass of wine’

  vs. the corresponding Mandarin V DE/BU X sentence:

  喝不了那杯酒 (Mandarin)
  he BU liao na bei jiu
  drink NOT finish that glass wine
  ‘cannot/unable to finish that glass of wine’

### 2.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have first reviewed representative presentations of the V DE/BU X construction by well-known scholars in the field, including Lü Shuxiang (1999), Chao Yuen Ren (1968), and Xing Fuyi (2002). Second, I have presented and commented on the major empirical studies on the subject, including Liu Yuehua’s study (1980) on its distribution and related study on the V + directional constructions (1998), as well as Fan Jiyan’s study on Chinese V + Directional X (1963), which asserts that the insertion of DE/BU into V + Direction is one of the grammatical properties of this construction. This observation establishes the current understanding on its formation. Zhang Wangxi’s study
on the semantic conditions for the actualization of V BU X (1999) provides us with revealing statistics, such as the composition of the V and that of the X. The distribution of X shows that it is a closed list. Li’s dialect comparison shows that V DE/BU X in Mandarin is a compressed form containing several overlapping functions.

In the following chapter, I will review the Chinese verbal system, especially tense, aspect, and modality in relation to the V DE/BU X construction, in order to gain an overview of its position in the system.
CHAPTER 3

Issues Related to V DE/BU X in Chinese Grammar

3.1 Chinese VC is a language-specific construction

Li Jingyi (李錦頤, 2003) has a concise summary of the studies on Chinese Complements in her doctoral dissertation “A Study on Complements in Modern Chinese” (Li Jingyi, 2003: 7-26). The following are some of her main points.

The study on “complements” in Chinese has a history of over eighty years, since Li Jingxi (黎錦熙, 1924) first named it in his “New Chinese Grammar” (新著國語語法). Li defined it as the verbal or the adjectival element following the verb and accorded it “compound” status. Wang Li (王力, 1943) in his “Modern Chinese Grammar” (中國現代語法) called this “complement” the “coda constituent” (末品), because it follows the “secondary constituent,” the verb. He also defined the syntactic relation between the V and the Resultative construction (VR) as a “cause + become” relation (使成式).

Lü Shuxiang and Zhu Dexi (朱德熙, 1952) in their well-know Lectures on Grammar and Rhetoric (語法修辭講話) consider the Chinese complement a kind of “add-on” element (附加語) to the verb or the adjective. The notion of the Chinese complement is essentially a copy of the English complement, as advocated in the “Draft of Chinese Grammar Teaching Guidelines” (暫擬漢語語法教學系統, Zhang Zhigong 張志公, 1956). This document further clarified that the function of the Chinese complement was to answer the question of “how,” “how many” and “how long,” i.e., the manner, the duration and the description of the result state of the action.
Using the English concept of VC to describe and explain Chinese VC is very misleading. Although English VC and Chinese VC designate the same surface configuration, i.e., a verb plus its following non-nominal elements, their respective syntactic functions are very different. In order to better understand the V DE/BU X, the extension of the VC subsets, the V + Resultative (VR) and the V + Direction (VD), an in-depth analysis of the internal syntactic relation of Chinese VR and VD is of the utmost importance.

In this chapter, we concentrate on the description of Chinese VR and its position in Chinese grammar, which will shed light on the nature of the V DE/BU X construction.

3.2 Basic notions related to V DE/BU X

3.2.1 Is the basic unit “word” monosyllabic in Chinese? Is the VR still a compound after DE/BU insertion?

Chinese has a one-to-one match between the syllable and the character. However, the word boundary is an unsolved problem in Chinese, especially in language processing. Xu Tongqiang (徐通锵, 2001, 1997, 1994) and Pan Guowen (潘国文 2002) strongly advocate “Sinogram-Based Grammar” (漢語字本位語法), the idea that the character should be regarded as the basic unit in Chinese; however, most statistics show that the majority of word units identified in any Chinese corpus, especially those of written texts, are disyllabic.

While monosyllabic and disyllabic words co-exist side by side, there exists a definite distribution between the two categories. It is generally known that monosyllabic verbs have a higher frequency and mostly appear in speech, while disyllabic words are
the norm of written texts and formal language. Some recent studies in cognitive linguistics on the conceptual structure of Chinese verbs have revealed that the opposition between monosyllabic and disyllabic basic word units can be traced to the conceptual level of Chinese words, although for a long time, this phenomenon has been interpreted as the “disyllabic tendency” (雙音化) in Chinese phonological development. This “disyllabic tendency” has also been used to explain trends in Chinese word formation.

Tai (2003) has proposed a “Chinese verb unbounded/atelic hypothesis,” which asserts that conceptually monosyllabic verbs in Chinese do not have a telic aspect or an end point in their lexical makeup. Tai’s well-known illustration for his hypothesis is the contrastive analysis of English “kill” and Chinese “sha” (殺). To convey the meaning in the English word “kill,” which is a telic verb, Chinese “sha” is inadequate, because “sha” in modern Chinese is atelic. A resultative or perfective aspect morpheme, such as si “dead” (死), diao “drop, drop, disappear” (掉), or the LE (了) the completion or perfective aspect marker, has to be added to “sha” to form a V + Resultative construction. If this hypothesis is confirmed, then the “dissyllabic tendency” observed in Chinese word formation and lexical change becomes a necessity instead of a mere “tendency.”

Shi Yuzhi (2004, 2002, 1997) demonstrates that in Old Chinese the ongoing aspect and the result state of an action were systematically conveyed by two sets of monosyllabic words: One set, the first verb, is atelic; the other, often adjective type which expresses the result or the end point of the action, is telic. In modern Chinese this state of affairs is usually conveyed by the disyllabic of V + Resultative compound.

Here, the essential issue is that syntactic relations exist between the two characters of the disyllabic VR. Most disyllabic words in Chinese are called syntactically
generated compounds (語法造詞複合詞) because originally the two adjacent characters were separate words themselves; however, because they so frequently occurred in association, the syntactic relationship between them became obscured and they appear as a single word unit. Of the total of compounds in the modern Chinese lexicon, 95 % are syntactically generated (Bian Chenglin 卞成林, 2000, as cited in Shuai Zhisong 帥志嵩, 2005). However, the syntactic relations between the syllables of a compound have not all fossilized into bounded forms. Various grammatical operations may still occur. For instance, aspect particles, such as LE, numbers and classifiers can be inserted in a VO compound (動賓式). For example:

| 理髮 | → | 理了髮 | → | 理了一個髮; |
| li fa | li LE fa | li LE yige fa |
| trim hair | trimmed hair | trimmed one Cl. hair |
| ‘haircut’ | ‘cut [sb.’s] hair’ (past) | ‘got a haircut’ |

After such an addition, if the integrity of the semantic content of the original compound remains, then the word status remains. To distinguish this particular type of compound from the bounded form compound, the notion of a “detachable word (離合詞)” was proposed (Lu Zhiwei 陸志偉, 1957). “Detachable words” include three categories: The V + Object type, the V + Resultative type and the V + Directional type. The latter two are considered “phrasal verb construction” in Lü’s manual 800 Functional Words in Modern Chinese (Lü, 1999: 16). The two latter categories allow DE/BU insertion directly, while the VO type detachable verb compound allows the DE/BU insertion in the perfective form of DE-LIAO/BU-LIAO.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{20}\) Certain other more general resultatives may also be inserted in combination with DE/BU, such as \textit{wan} (完) ‘finish,’ \textit{cheng} (成) ‘achieve,’ \textit{shang} (上) ‘up (get the chance)’ etc.
3.2.2 C as the main predication in Chinese VC

To believe that the V is the main constituent of the VR construction reflects the influence of an English notion of a grammatical complement. In English, only finite verbs have the function of predication and, by the same token, only they can be the target of negation. Following the same line of interpretation, Lü Shuxiang mentions that the main verb of the VD and that of the VR is the V (Lü, 1999: 16).²¹

Li Linding (1984) explains this issue with convincing examples and explanations and proposes a counter analysis. He demonstrates that in Chinese the complement is irreplaceable in its function:

1. Both the V and the C retain their full lexical content.
2. This VC can be extended by insertion of other elements.
3. The complement in this VC entertains a syntactic relation either with the object of the sentence, as in the example:

她哭紅了眼睛.
she cry red Perf. Asp. eye
‗she cried her eyes red’

This can also happen with the subject of the sentence, as in the example:

她哭累了.
she cry tired Ptl.
‗she cried (herself to the state of ) tired’

²¹ Lü’s original text: “有两种短语式动词需要特别提一下：一类是主要动词加表示趋向的动词，可以叫动趋式；一种是主要动词加表示结果的形容词或动词，可以叫动结式” (emphasis added).
Li concludes that with the VC, the predication function occurs with the C, not the V. This point is very important to our study of the V DE/ BU X. If the C (X) is the main predication, then the position of BU is correctly situated in the V BU X.

3.2.3 C as the root and V as a later insertion

How is the action-result relation between the V and the C formed in the first place? Generally, a simple sentence has only a single stative verb as predicate, as with *pang* (‘fat’) in (1) and *hong* (‘red’) in (2):

(1) 他胖了
ta pang LE
he fat Ptl.
‗He is fatter now (in contrast to the past)’

(2) 她的眼睛紅了.
ta de yanjing hong LE
her eye red Ptl.
‗Her eyes (became, changed) red’

These types of sentences usually express the result of a change or the appearance of a new situation. The latter is also the result of a change. Therefore, when an adjective or a verb is followed by LE, it often acquires the meaning of the result. When we add some other verbs or adjectives, we form the following sentences:

(3) 他吃/養/長/胖了 
ta chi/yang/zhang pang LE
he eat/rest/grow fat Ptl.
‗He is fatter now as the result of eating/resting/growing.’

(4) 她的眼睛 哭/揉/睡 紅了.
ta de yanjing ku/rou/shui hong LE
her eye cry/rub/sleep red Ptl.
‗Her eyes became red as result of crying/rubbing/sleeping’
Comparing (1) and (2) with (3) and (4), we can see the V “eat,” “rest,” “grow” or “cry” and “rub” are later add-ons which provide the cause of the resulting stative verb pang (‘fat’) or hong (‘red’); even with the V added, the following stative verb remains the central element of predication.22

3.3 Grammaticalization of DE

3.3.1 DE as structural particle marking the result state

DE is the positive infix23 for the formation of V DE/BU X and knowing its semantic and syntactic properties is indispensable to this latter’s description. Of its grammaticalization, Cao Xiuling’s (曹秀玲, 2005a) study is most to the point. Following is a summary of her main points:

The etymological and the cognate meaning of DE (得) is “to obtain,” as the opposite of SHI (失) “to lose.” This sense of DE is still present in many modern Chinese disyllabic words having DE as the second element, such as 取得 qu DE ‘fetch obtain’ → ‘to get,’ 獲得 huo DE ‘receive obtain’ → ‘to receive,’ 奪得 duo DE ‘grab obtain’ → ‘to obtain through competition,’ 记得 ji DE ‘remember obtain’ → ‘to retain it in memory,’ etc. The first step toward the grammaticalization of DE is the transformation of its original meaning from “obtain” to “reach out and arrive at,” and then to “become.”

DE can be taken to have originally entailed two contextually determined interpretations:

22 Here, the V “eat,” “rest” and “rub” are verbs by their lexical contents, while “fat” and “red” can be considered as complements due to their post-verbal position, though this does not occur in (1) and (2).
23 Mei Tsulin also calls DE/BU “modality infix” (Mei, 2000: 257): “(iii) 表示可能或不可能的 情态中缀, 如 ‘穿得破’、’穿不破’的 ‘得’, ‘不’ […]”
I. Already achieved action; it is also called the circumstantial or the adverbial complement.

(1) 蒙世尊慈悲. 救得阿娘火難之苦. (*Collection of Dunhuang Bianwen Scripts*)

Meng Shizun cibei, jiu DE a nian huonan zhi ku.
Receive respectful highness mercy, save DE mom(‗s) fire torture/disaster
‘Thanks to Your Highness’s empathy, I *saved* her (mother) from this fire.’

II. Not yet achieved action (but expected to be achieved); it is also called a “potential” complement.

(2) 只今吃飯成火, 吃水成火. 如何救得阿娘火難之苦? (Idem)
Zhi jin chi fan cheng huo, chi shui cheng huo, ru he jiu DE a nian huonan zhi ku
That now eat food become fire, drink water become fire, how save DE mom fire disaster
‘Now whatever she ate became fire, whatever she drank became fire, **how can** I *save* her (mom) from this fire?’

III. Modality: DE is used in place of NENG “can”

(3) 蒼天變化誰料得? 萬事反復何所無? (杜甫: *杜鵑行* )
Cang tian bianhua shei liao DE? Wan shi fan fu he suo wu
Blue sky change who predict DE? Ten thousand things come and go what not have
‘The Blue Heaven’s (World’s) changes, who *can predict*? The uncountable affairs return and repeat; what have we not seen?’

One thing to take note of in the above examples from Cao’s study is that in the “potential” usage in (2) and (3), both sentences are of the interrogative type; that is, the events being questioned are unrealized.

For DE to develop gradually from a weakened verb into a structural particle, the key factor is the commutation of the post-DE elements. At first, DE followed other verbs of a sequential nature and became a kind of verbal coda, marking the completion or the

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25 杜甫 Du Fu, Tang poet (712-770 AD): “杜鵑行”(*Balad of Cucoo*).
achievement of the action designated by its preceding verb. Around the Tang period (600~900 A.D), the result state elements or the directional elements began to be added after DE, giving rise to the V DE + Result construction.

(4) 氣象四時新, 無人畫得成. (方幹: 處洲洞溪) 26
qixiang sishi xin, wu ren hua DE cheng
Seasonal scenes four season anew, no person paint DE achieve
‗Sceneries (keep) changing anew with the changing seasons; nobody (is) able
to achieve a painting (of it)‘

Although the meaning of DE is variable with the context, its cognate meaning of “to obtain” has never been completely drained, but gradually developed into “to achieve the completed state of” (達成 da cheng):

“To obtain”  “(to be able to) reach/arrive at”  “to achieve the state of”

When another descriptive element appears after DE, such as cheng (成 to achieve, to accomplish) in (4), DE functions as a connector, eliciting the CAUSE/BECOME relationship between the preceding verb and the verb or adjective following it indicating that the action is already achieved. Serving as a connector finally transformed DE into a structural particle, marking the result state, though still carrying partially its original lexical residue of “to reach/arrive at/to achieve the resulting state of.”

Because the lexical content of DE “to arrive at/to achieve the state of” by itself is not sufficient for completing V’s semantic actualization, another element of predicate nature is needed. In this sense, DE + Result is actually the real predication, comparable to the function of the finite verb in English.

3.3.2 DE indicates that the result state reaches the extent or the degree of the following resultative

According to Chao Yuen Ren (1968: 354-57), the use of *dao* (到) or *de* (得) for “to an extent or degree” comes from the use of those words for indicating “reach, arrive at, to” in space or time. With the following adjective or resultative, it means the result state reaches the extent or the degree of that resultative. For example:

冷得要命
leng DE yao ming
cold DE demand life
‘s so cold it will take your life/terribly cold’

好得不得了
hao DE bu de liao
good DE not DE finish
‘so good as not to get to an end /awfully good’

3.3.3 VR vs. VC: DE/BU insertion as criterion of distinction

Are VR and VC the same? Are they different names for the same linguistic entity? When describing “verb-predicate patterns (動詞謂語句),”27 Lü has the following definition of a “complement”:

*Complement*: Segments following the verb, expressing a result or state, and introduced by the particle DE (得), are called complements. Sometimes V + Complement and VR mean similar things. The criterion one uses to choose either the former or the latter [as terminology] is the length of the post-DE segment […]. For example:

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27 “Verb-predicate patterns (动词谓语句)” in Lü’s manual are contrasted to “noun-predicate patterns,” and “Shì”(to be) copula patterns (名词谓语句和‘是’字句)” and “clause-predicate patterns (小句谓语句)” etc. as one of the major syntactic patterns, “verb-predicate patterns are the most frequent sentence patterns. It contains a great variety of subcategories.” The complement pattern (补语句) is one of the thirteen subcategories of this group in Lü’s manual (Lü, 1999: 21-37).
VR (動結式)  |  V + C (動詞 + 補語)
---|---
長大了  |  長得又高又大
zhang da LE  |  zhang DE you gao you da
grow big LE [Asp],  |  grow DE both tall and big
‘grew big [up]’  |  ‘grew to (the form of) tall and big.’
翻亂了  |  翻得亂七八糟
fan luan LE  |  fan DE luan qi ba zao
turn mess LE  |  Turn DE disorder seven eight mess
‘turned (things) upside down / in disorder’  |  ‘turn (things) into a messy disorder’

Nonetheless, we also find shorter complements, such as:

跑得快  |  快得很
pao DE kuai  |  kuai DE hen
run DE fast  |  fast DE very
‘run fast’  |  ‘very fast’

跑得快得很  |  跑得快得很
pao DE kuai DE hen  |  pao DE kuai DE hen
run DE fast DE very  |  run DE fast DE very
‘run very fast.’ (Lü, 1999: 22-23)

From the above, one would think that VR and VC are variable names of the same syntactic construction. However, as a theoretical question of what “complement” (補語) designates in Chinese grammar, Lü considers it unsolved (Lü, 1984b: 539-542).28

The DE construction has a very high frequency in modern Chinese. However, opinions are divided as to what it should be called. It is generally accepted that DE can be divided into two major classes. One is the V DE/BU X, the “potential”; the other is the V DE C. The latter class has been called various names depending on the interpretation of

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28 This issue will be revisited in section 7.3.1.3 of Chapter 7.
its function. These include: “adverbial complement” (狀態補語, Zhu Dexi, 1982), the “degree complement” (程度補語, Chao Yuen Ren, 1968) and the “resultative complement” (結果補語, Wang Huan 王還, 1991). The resultative complement, Wang Huan defines by exclusion from the first class as “a DE construction which does not express the potential” (Wang Huan, 1979). In addition, Wang (1991) believes that the semantic dominance is in the X. The preceding V is often a structural “dummy.”


Table 3.1 Mandarin Complements (based on Ma & Wang, 1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V + Resultative</th>
<th>V + Complement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allow DE/BU insertion to form V DE/BU X</td>
<td>Do not Allow DE/BU insertion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R= Resultative [結果補語]</td>
<td>C=Adverbial [狀態補語]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C can be reduplicated + de (地 =-ly); C can be qualified by hen “very,” bu [neg.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R=Directional [趨向結果]</td>
<td>R= Non Directional [非趨向結果]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**DE lexically more or less full [意義實在]</td>
<td>DE lexically empty [意義虛空]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shaded areas have DE in common

“*” is the note of the original authors, and “**” is my addition to the table.

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29 For Ex. 小姑娘长得很漂亮.
   xiao guniang **zhang** DE hen piaoliang
   little girl **grow** DE very pretty.
   ‘the little girl is very pretty’
Here the verb “grow” does not carry its lexical meaning of growing, except pointing to the physical aspect of her appearance (Wang Huan, 1991).
Actually, Chao Yuen Ren also used the insertion of DE/BU to distinguish one type of VR from the others. In the section 6.6.1.2 Expandability [of VR] of his manual, he says:

(1) Solid V-R Compound. A solid V-R compound takes no infix, nor other inserted element. […]

(2) Infixable V-R Compound. An intermediate type of V-R compound consists of those which admit insertion of –de- ‘can’ or –bu- ‘cannot’ as infix, resulting in potential V-R compound, but no other insertion (Chao, 1968: 437).

3.3.4 The DE construction vs. the VC and the V DE/BU X

Xu Dan (2005) discusses the relation between the DE construction, the VC and the V DE/BU X construction in general. He finds it misleading that some Chinese grammarians place the two in the same category and take the latter as the extension of the former by means of DE/BU insertion. According to Xu, the DE construction in modern Mandarin is a fixed pattern, and it was originally formed by the merging of two phrasal patterns. To better understand the internal structure of it, in his view, the first step is to treat the DE construction separately from the VC construction, instead of taking it as a subcategory of the VR or the VD. Xu then provides the following evidence for his hypothesis that the DE construction expressing the potential has two sources of origin:

(1) DE construction expressing the achieved aspect (result state)

(2) DE construction expressing the non-achieved aspect (potential)
3.3.5 The VC vs. the DE construction: selection constraint over following R

Xu Dan reveals that for the VC, the complement may be an adjective or a clause. The VC construction accommodates a wide range of semantic contents. In comparison, the DE construction only accepts a narrower range of elements. The abstract resultative and the negative resultative are questionable utterances, pragmatically. Compare the following examples for their respective interpretations of [“+” vs. “-” result] and [“+” vs. “-” potential]:

(1) 孩子營養不良, 個子長得矮.
    haizhi yingyang bu liang, gezi zhang DE ai
    child nutrition not well, grow DE short
    ‘The child has insufficient nutrition so he is short.’
    [(+) result; (-) potential]

(2) 颜料塗得薄, 好看.
    Yanliao tu DE bo haokan
    Color paint DE thin good look
    ‘It looks nicer when/if the color is painted thin.’
    [(+) result; (+) potential]

(3) 房子蓋得很小.
    Fangzi gai DE hen xiao
    House build DE very small
    ‘The house is (built) very small.’
    [(+ result, (-) potential]

(4) *? 房子蓋得小嗎?
    Fangzi gai DE xiao ma
    House build DE small MA (question marker)
    ‘Can the house be built small?’
    [(-) result; *?(+) potential]

(5) 墻刷得白嗎?
    Qiang shua DE bai ma
    Wall paint DE white MA (question marker)
    ‘Can (we) paint the wall white?’
    [(-) result; (+) potential]
When the sentence has a negative sense, such as in (1), (3), (4), (6) and (7), the resulting interpretation is perfectly acceptable, but the “potential” interpretation is either unacceptable (marked with “*”) or doubtful (marked with “*?”). Xu’s observation here is accurate. Similar observations have also been made by Liu Yuehua (1980) and Zhang Wangxi (1999).

I think the constraint on the abstract or the negative result is caused by the inherent semantic residue of the DE, originally the transitive verb “to obtain,” “to get.” We usually want to obtain or to get something desirable and tangible or concrete. It is illogical to want to obtain something negative or undesirable. The incompatibility sensed by most native speakers of Chinese here between the semantic residue of the DE and the negative nature of the result can be traced back to the incomplete grammaticalization of the DE during its transformation from a lexically “full” word to a lexically “empty” word. As it is still in this process, it retains some of its original semantic content. However,
since it is rather abstract, most native speakers would find sentences like (4) and (6) “awkward,” but they cannot explain why.

With the same form, whether this DE construction expresses the achieved event with a result state in the real world, or the achievable event in the speaker’s mind, is the matter of its sentential context and illocutionary type, as in (4), (5) and (6) These are questions because an interrogative sentence, by nature, can only express a projected, but non-actualized event.

Xu concludes that the Mandarin DE construction is related to VR, but their relation is not that of derivation, i.e., the former is not derived from the latter. The positive vs. negative pair between V DE X and V BU X for expressing the “potential” is coincidental in language change. Its formal asymmetry has drawn the attention of many Chinese linguists. It has been generally accepted that the grammaticalization of V DE X and that of V BU X are of different origins and the latter occurred about 500 years earlier than the former. Even today, in many Chinese dialects, the positive and negative forms of V DE/BU X construction are not symmetrically matched. Xu further demonstrates that the DE construction should be divided into two categories by its aspectual nature: One expresses the achieved result, and the other the possibility, i.e., the event or the action has not yet actualized.

Diachronically, the first is derived from the [V DE] C structure and the second from V [DE C] structure. There will be further discussion and examples of these historical changes in Chapter 4.

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30 To form a negation in Chinese, we usually add the negative adverb, either ‘MEI’ for actions with perfective aspect, or “BU” for unbounded, atelic or activity verbs in front of the segment it negates. Therefore, to match the positive form ‘V DE X,’ the negative form should be “V BU DE X” instead of the actual ‘V BU X.’ This phenomenon of the mismatch between the positive and the negative form is called ‘asymmetry’ by Chinese linguists.
3.4 The VR is the main predicate pattern in modern Chinese

3.4.1 Chinese VR in James Tai’s perspective: The cognitive and conceptual approach

Recent research on Chinese Grammar, such as the work of James H-Y Tai, has altered the perspectives of schools in distinct ways. His theoretical foci, in his own words, are in two main areas: One is Functional Grammar, where he proposes the “limited relativism in syntax,” and the other is in Cognitive Grammar, where he revises the conceptual system of Jackendoff and applies it to Chinese.

Tai’s major contribution, summed up in his paper “Conceptual Structure of Chinese Morphology and Syntax” (Tai, 2007) includes the following basic notions:

The five conceptual principles in Chinese grammar

1. Chinese nouns are mass noun, uncountable unless quantified by Cl. 31
2. No default subject in a sentence
3. Word order follows temporal order
4. Action-Result
5. Whole-part

The parts that directly concern us in the present study (namely 2, 3, and 4) are those that have to do with the verbal system.

31 Nouns by default are mass nouns, uncountable unless quantified by MW/Cl. According to Tai, Chinese nouns in general refer to the substance/stuff of the objects in material world, instead of the “body,” from which most English nouns get their reference. Therefore they are “mass” nouns, uncountable unless being quantified by a Classifier/Measure Word, which not only categorizes the names of objects in accordance with their shape, seize, etc, but also conceptualizes Chinese nouns into countable objects that can be qualified by numbers, just like those English mass nouns, water, rice, etc. This explains why Chinese nouns do not have singular vs. plural formal distinctions.
3.4.2 Chinese predication is realized by VR; the subject is not obligatory

First, Tai’s conceptual principle that Chinese sentences do not require a subject. The notion of having an obligatory subject in all the sentences comes from the grammar of the Indo-European languages, where the predicate can only be realized by a finite verb, and a finite verb requires a subject for its number and person agreement. In Chinese, the predication is realized differently. According to Tai, the central theme of Chinese predication is “what has happened?” In other words, the action or the event incarnated by the verb must arrive at a telic point or bounded state for the verb to get the necessary predication qualification (my emphasis added). The subject of the verb is not necessarily involved in this process, therefore no subject is required for Chinese sentences. When the subject is not obligatory, its appearance and position will be dictated by rules other than the syntax.

3.4.3 Conceptual schema “Action-Result”

Tai demonstrates his point with the following examples:

(1) 張三買了車子.
Zhang San mai LE chezi
John sell Perf. Asp. car
‘John sold the car.’ (SVO)

(2) 張三把車子買了.
Zhang San BA chezi mai LE
John BA car sell Perf. Asp. (BA: The disposal particle)
‘John sold the car.’ (S BA-O V)

(3) 車子被張三買了.
chezi BEI Zhang San mai LE
car BEI John sell LE (BEI: The passive marker “BE V+ed by”)
‘(the) car is/was sold by John ‘ (O BEI-S V)
Tai considers sentence (1) a neutral type. It marks neither the agent nor the patient, but only shows the participants of the action. The obvious contrast between agent and patient comes out in (2) and (3). Tai regards (2) as an assertive sentence in the format of “S BA-O V,” which marks the definite patient with BA construction. Sentence (3) he considers to be passive as it uses the “O BEI-S V” (which can mark the agent using BEI, or leave it out). In other words, a Chinese sentence does not require an obligatory subject at the pre-verbal position; consequently, the patient can appear at that position without being marked as in (4).

(4) 車子買了.
chezi mai LE
car sell Perf. Asp.
‘(The) car is/was sold’ (OV)

Zhu Dexi (1982) regards (4) as the complement of a BA construction. However, Tai further proposes that since sentence (4) is perfectly normal and a complete sentence in Chinese, this confirms his postulation that, at the conceptual level, the predication theme in Chinese is “What has happened?” i.e., the predication is realized by the result of the action. Sentence (4) satisfies this essential and minimum qualification of the Chinese predication by providing the result. In this conceptual schema, the result is the only necessary and adequate condition for the realization of predication, while the subject is not the prerequisite of it.

3.4.4 English VC, VR and Chinese VR compared

We have demonstrated that C, the complement, is the main predication component in a typical Chinese VC sentence according to Li Linding’s analysis (Li, 1984) in 3.2. However, for Chinese SL students, an in-depth and contrastive analysis of this
point would be more appropriate. In both Chinese and English, identifying the predicate is the key to understanding a sentence.

For intermediate to advanced Chinese SL students, it is very important to understand the difference between English, in which the predicate is usually realized by a finite verb or a verb phrase, and Chinese, in which the resultative complement qualifies the sentence. James Tai’s contrastive presentation and analysis of this issue reveals several fundamental differences between English and Chinese at the cognitive level, although both languages are thought to be the SVO type. Tai’s examples are obviously chosen with an English native speaker audience in mind (the translations are Tai’s):

(5) 他走進了公園.
    ta zou jin LE gongyuan
    he walk enter Perf. Asp. the park
    ‘He walked into the park (he entered the parking by walking).’

(6) 他走到了公園
    ta zou dao LE gongyuan
    he walk arrive at Perf. Asp. the park
    ‘He walked to the park (he reached the park by walking).’

In both sentences the first verb zou “walk” can be omitted, and the sentences still carry essentially the same information, while if the second verb jin “enter” in (5) or dao “arrive at” in (6) was omitted, the resultant (7) won’t make sense.\(^{32}\)

(7)* 他走了公園
    ta zou LE gongyuan
    he walk Perf. Asp. park
    ‘He walked the park.’

English also has Verb + Resultative constructions, such as the following:

\(^{32}\) For (7) in English, Dr. Michael Forman pointed out that the sentence is perfectly acceptable in certain contexts, such as a security guard or a police officer doing his duty of checking the park after dark, etc.
(8) He hammered the metal flat.
他用錘子把那塊金屬打扁了.
a he yong chuizi BA na kuai jinshu da bian LE
he use hammer BA that Cl. metal beat flat Perf. Asp.

(9) He kicked the door open.
他踢開了門.
a ti kai LE men
he kick open Perf. Asp. door

The other interesting finding of Tai’s, using a contrastive approach, is that on the surface level, English quantifies the noun and the object, while Chinese quantifies the verb.

(10) English: She married the wrong person.
Chinese: 她嫁錯了人.
a jia cuo LE ren
she marry wrong Perf. Asp. person

Literal translation from English back into Chinese yields an unacceptable sentence:

* 她嫁了錯人.
a jia LE cuo ren
she marry Perf. Asp. wrong person

(11) English: He entered the wrong door.
Chinese: 他走錯了門.
a zou cuo LE men
he walk/enter wrong Perf. Asp. door”

Literal translation from English back into Chinese:

* 他進了錯門.
a jin LE cuo men
he enter Perf. Asp. wrong door.”

This displacement of the attribute from the noun in English to the resultative complement in Chinese is another source of error for Chinese SL students when they use literal translation methods at a certain stage in their study. The mismatch is at the
conceptual level: Chinese predicates with the VR construction, where the R, the resultative complement, is the information focus; in comparison, English predicates with the VP, which dictates an obligatory subject for number agreement with the verb and a qualified or specified object as its argument.

Tai provides more contrastive examples to illustrate his point:

(12) 他多吃了一碗饭.
      ta duochi LE yi wan fan
      he more eat Perf. Asp. one bowl rice

vs. English: He ate one more bowl of rice.”

(12) 他少算了一毛钱.
      ta shao suan LE yi mao qian
      he less count Perf. Asp. one dime money

vs. English: He counted one dime less.”

(13) 他又丢了一本书.
      ta you diu LE yi ben shu
      he again lose Perf. Asp. one Cl. book

vs. English: “He lost another book.”

(14) 三本书他都看了.
      san ben shu ta dou kan LE
      three Cl. book he all read Perf. Asp.

vs. English: “He read all three books.”

According to Tai (2007) and Shi Yuzhi (2004, 2002), VR is the main predicate pattern in modern Chinese because conceptually most Chinese monosyllabic verbs do not have a telic point in their semantic makeup. We have seen in 3.2 and 3.3 that the VR construction is not at all a marginal phenomenon in the Chinese verbal system, but a highly productive compound pattern. Until recently, its irreplaceable position in the Chinese verbal system seems to have escaped the view of Chinese grammarians. Shi
Yuzhi’s recent studies on the VR construction reveal that its establishment in modern Chinese transformed the word order and information organization scheme of Chinese from the SVOX to the SXVRO.\textsuperscript{33} In addition, Tai’s studies on the internal structure of the VR, in accordance with Li Linding’s previous research, reveal that R, the resultative, is the real information focus point. The VR is the main pattern of predication in Chinese, which elicits “what has happened,” i.e., Chinese predication focuses on the telic state or the perfective aspect. This is in contrast to the English predication schema “who does what to whom,” or the process-focused predication pattern.

3.5 Lexical aspects of Chinese verbs

Tai (1984) asserts that one special character of Chinese verbs is that there is almost no monosyllabic verb with a perfective or telic aspect in their semantic makeup. He uses a contrastive method to demonstrate this point, translating the English verb pair “study” and “learn” with the duration of time into Chinese. “Study” xue as an activity verb in Chinese is compatible with the duration of time “five years” with “for,” while “learn” xuehui as an accomplishment verb or a VR in Chinese is not compatible with the duration of time, unless used with “within” (zai...nei) to make the duration bounded. (In the following examples, the translations are Tai’s, while the glosses in parentheses are mine.)

He has been studying Chinese for five years.
他學了五年的中文.
ta xue LE wu nian DE zhongwen
(he study Perf. Asp. five year Ptl. Chinese)

\textsuperscript{33} By ‘establishment’ Shi means that predication qualification function of VR is generally recognized in the native speaker’s mind, and its use is comparable to those morphological features for marking syntactic function. The word order change occurs because the R took the post V position, therefore other accompanying features (represented by X here) have to be relocated to the pre-verb position (see section 3.6).
He has learned Chinese for five years.
*他學會了五年的中文.
ta xuehui LE wu nian DE zhongwen
(he learn Perf. Asp. five year Ptl. Chinese)

*He has been studying Chinese in five years.
*他在五年內學了中文.
ta zai wu nian nei xue LE zhongwen
(he within five years study Perf. Asp. Chinese)

He has learned Chinese in five years.
他在五年內學會了中文.
ta zai wu nian nei xue hui LE zhongwen
(he within five years learn Perf. Asp. Chinese)

He studied Chinese, but he still doesn’t know it.
他學了中文，可是不會中文.
ta xue LE zhongwen, keshi bu hui zhongwen.
(he study Perf. Asp. Chinese, but not know Chinese.)

These contrastive examples show that the accomplishment verb “learn” needs to be translated into a VR construction “xue hui” (學會) to have its accomplishment aspect conveyed, because “xue” (學 “study”) in Chinese does not have the “telicity” aspect in its lexical content.

Tai (2003) further explains that in contrast to the four semantic categories which Vendler (1967) proposed for English verbs, Chinese has only the state, the activities and the result categories, but lacks the accomplishment and achievement ones. The latter two categories are expressed most in action-result verb compounds (V₁-V₂). Moreover, the resultative complement V₂ seems to indicate foreground information and the action verb V₁ seems to indicate background information.
3.5.1 Monosyllabic verbs in Chinese

Tai maintains that among the achievement verbs identified by Vendler (1967), and Dowty (1979), many are expressed in Chinese by action-result verb compounds. For example, “to find” in Chinese is *zhao dao* (找到) “seek-arrive,” “to receive” is *shou dao* (收到) “collect-arrive,” “to hear” is *ting dao* (聽到) “listen-arrive.”

Regarding the head or the main verb of the VR compound as discussed before, the dominant view holds the first element of the compound as the “head” (Chao 1968, Li and Thompson 1982, Huang J. C–T. 1988, Chang 2001). A different view has been proposed by Tai (1973) and Hsueh (1989), which regards the second element or the so-called “complement” as the “head.” If we accept “result” as a semantic prime underlying action-result compounds, it makes sense to take the second element as the center of predication, even though it cannot be analyzed as an independent transitive verb in surface syntax.

In fact, in Talmy’s (2000b: 151-153) recent treatment of the semantic category “result,” all incorporations of “result,” whether in verb root or satellite, presents the main event. In Chinese action-result verb compounds (*V*₁-*V*₂), *V*₁ expresses the cause, but presents the subordinate event, whereas *V*₂ expresses the result, but presents the main event. Thus Talmy’s analysis of the resultative construction supports Tai’s early analysis of the resultative complement as the center of predication in Chinese.

Chinese and English exhibit a systematic difference in structuring events consisting of both action and result. This systematic difference indicates that, while English is structured according to the action aspect, Chinese is structured according to the result aspect. This ontological difference means that English speakers tend to pay more
attention to the process of an event, but Chinese speakers pay more attention to the result. In other words, while English is an agent-oriented language, Chinese is a patient-oriented\textsuperscript{34} language.

### 3.6 VR as one of the primary predicate qualification means in Chinese

The predicate qualification for Chinese has been discussed under different titles. Some use the terminology of “the necessary and adequate conditions for a complete sentence” (成句條件). The most recently described means for actualizing a cognate verb into a predicate is the VR construction. In comparison with its marginal status in English and other Western languages, the VR syntactic structure has a unique and key position in Modern Mandarin. Of note, Zhao Xiuying (趙秀英 1998: 369) asserts that there is no VR syntactic equivalent between that of Modern Mandarin and Western languages.

Shi Yuzhi further proposes that the information organization principle (in the form of word order) in Modern Mandarin has undergone a radical change from that of Old Chinese, which can still be found in some modern Chinese dialects, such as Yue:

\[
\text{[Subject]} + \text{Predicate} \ [V + \text{Obj.}] + \text{Complement (adverbial of time, place, manner, etc.)}
\]

To become the following:

\[
(\text{Subject}) + \text{Accompany features} + \text{Predicate verb} + \text{Result features (+Obj.)}
\]

（伴隨特徵 + 謂語動詞 + 結果狀態）

“[…] the bare verb can no longer serve as a predicate by itself. It is obliged to have a result element added to it to form a VR construction. Often, the added result

\textsuperscript{34} “Patient” here refers to the object or the recipient of the action.
element does not carry a semantic content with it, but is attached there to meet the syntactic obligation” (Shi Yuzhi, 2004: 31).

This “syntactic obligation” actualizes the corresponding verb into a predicate in Modern Mandarin.

3.6.1 Typological perspective

Given VR as the base for DE/BU insertion, understanding the significance of the VR in Chinese grammar is key to the comprehension of the consequence of V DE/BU R. Shi Yuzhi proposes that the establishment of VR in Modern Chinese is the keystone. An English reader can easily understand what a VR is, given that similar constructions may be found in English (Adele E. Goldberg and Ray Jackendoff, 2005). For instance, “She ate herself sick.” The English VR construction expresses the idea of cause vs. effect or the consequence; therefore, it is a more specific and localized device in the system of English grammar. The Chinese VR has a different position in Chinese grammar. It is comparable to the aspect marker LE and the aspect marking has the function of predicating the verb in Chinese. In other words, this predicate qualification function in Chinese is comparable to the inflexion of the finite verbal system to a large degree, therefore Chinese VR is a core grammatical feature of the Chinese verbal system.

Modern Chinese, with the new information organization schemas SXVRO, SXVO and SVRO are special cases of the SVO type. One explanation for this shift from the SVOX to the SXVO and the SVRO is that, cognitively, the latter imitates the time sequence of the real world, i.e., the result follows the action temporarily.
3.6.2 The English VR vs. the Chinese VR

The currently accepted definition of VR is that it is a syntactically derived verb compound. This definition is based on Li and Thompson (1981: 54). However, the term “verb compound” may be misleading because it suggests that it is a lexical matter and thus not productive. The more recent definition of the VR is that it is a syntactic pattern wherein the two elements have an action-result relation. The second element is also called the resultative, which is defined as:

- The Resultative signals that a state exists as a result of a past action. They are used only with telic verbs which have inherent endpoints.
- The Perfective signals that the situation is viewed as bounded temporally. Bybee et al., 1994: 54).

These properties can be said of the Chinese VR after it has been made into a predicate in an utterance.

Goldberg describes the English resultatives as follows (Goldberg, 1995: 193-4):

1. The two-argument resultative construction must have an (animated) instigator argument.
2. The action denoted by the verb must be interpreted as directly causing the change of the state: No intermediary time intervals are possible.
3. The resultative adjective must denote the endpoint of a scale.
4. The change of state must occur simultaneously with the endpoint of the action denoted by the verb.
These features are not necessarily applicable to the Chinese VR construction, which is not a special pattern for stylistic effect, but a basic predicate pattern in modern Chinese.

3.6.3 VR and verb conceptualization

Conceptually, an English verb with a bounded aspect in its conceptual structure can only be conveyed by VR when translated into Mandarin:

a. kick = 踢著 ti zhao ‘kick hit’

b. kill = 殺死 sha si ‘to kill resulting in death’

c. open = 開開 kai kai ‘to open (to the state of) open’

d. cure = 治好 zhi hao ‘to treat with the result of being healed’

e. break = 打破 da po ‘to hit to the point of breaking’

f. select = 選出 xuan chu ‘to select with a positive result’

In turn, these Chinese VRs can have a modality expansion by inserting the negative marker BU, resulting a V BU R (X) expressing the non-attainability of R. Therefore, we have:

A1 踢不著 ti BU zhao ‘try to kick does not hit’

B1 殺不死 sha BU si ‘try to kill but does/did not succeed’

C1 開不開 kai BU kai ‘try to open but does/did not succeed’

D1 治不好 zhi BU hao ‘try to treat but does/did not cure’

E1 打不破 da BU po ‘try to hit but does/did not break’

F1 選不出 xuan BU chu ‘try to select without any positive result’
Notice in the English translation of these V BU X, the original telic quality in the English verbs is negated to the effect of an open-ended or imperfective aspectuality and we find this aspectuality undetermined/ambiguous in the negative English gloss “but does/did not,” which can only be clarified by context.

In Modern English, causative is expressed by “auxiliary/verb + O + resultative:

- I painted the chair green.
- He made me crazy.

However, the English VR is a marginal construction. It is only used for special stylistic effect. In addition, the result is usually the negative consequence of the action. The association of V with R is usually idiomatic (Goldberg, 1995: 195). For instance, in English we can say

He ate himself sick.

but not

*He ate himself ill/full/nauseous.

In Modern Mandarin, causative can also be expressed by the VR construction: V + resultative + O.

我吃壞了肚子.
wo chi huai LE duzi
‘I ate (something wrong, as result) and made myself sick.’

Or by the V DE O VR:

他氣得我發瘋.
ta qi DE wo fa feng
‘He drove me crazy.’
However, the causative is only one of the functions that the Mandarin VR expresses. It is a very common and productive construction and the interpretation of its actual function depends on the context. For example, many monosyllabic adjectives can figure in the R position to form a VR construction with a verb. In the case of the Chinese verb *chi* (吃 eat) for instance, there may be as many as ten VR constructions with valid semantic associations:

- 吃飽 *chi bao* (eat full) ‘eat to the state of being full’
- 吃膩 *chi ni* (eat saturated) ‘eat too much of something/eat to the point of becoming sick of (something)’
- 吃病 *chi bin* (eat sick) ‘eat to the point of being sick’
- 吃胖 *chi pang* (eat fat) ‘eat to the point of becoming fat’
- 吃窮 *chi qiong* (eat poor) ‘eat to the point of becoming poor’
- 吃暈 *chi yun* (eat dizzy) ‘eat to the point of dizziness’
- 吃累 *chi lei* (eat tired) ‘eat to the point of tiredness’
- 吃瘦 *chi shou* (eat thin) ‘eat to the point of becoming thin’
- 吃吐 *chi tu* (eat vomit) ‘eat to the point of throwing up’
- 吃煩 *chi fan* (eat bored) ‘eat to the point of getting bored (of the food)’

Notice that in the English translation of these Chinese VRs, a generic gloss “to the point of becoming” is used to render syntactic significance between the V and the R.

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35 As Dr. Michael Forman points out, the English idiom “eat us out of house and home” fits this meaning well.
According to Cognitive Grammar, semantics and syntax are not separable. Grammar puts concepts into a system of construction and symbols and the resulting syntactic system is open-ended (Langacker, 1999).

Diachronically, the separation of one action/event into two aspects (the act and the result) had a direct effect on the grammar: The previously monosyllabic V now must be rendered by two syllables (V + R). Shi Yuzhi asserts that one can find this opposition, i.e., monosyllabic V vs. VR with all the verbs that express an act and its result in association. He thinks that this differentiation in verb conceptualization is partially motivated by the disyllabic tendency in Modern Chinese and that its direct consequence is the establishment of VR construction in Modern Chinese. In any case, since its establishment around the 12th Century, VR is a highly productive grammatical pattern that has altered the Chinese grammatical scene to the extent that “most Modern Chinese grammatical features, which are different from Old Chinese, are the direct or indirect consequence of this event” (Shi Yuzhi, 2002, 2003, 2004: 259).

### 3.7 The VR and the directional

Meng Cong (孟琮 1995/1998) also proposes that the “result” is one of the perfective aspects of Chinese. In addition, he further points out that the “result” aspect is one of the major semantic compositions of the directional construction. He asserts that the so-called “directional” in many occasions is actually the resultative; the former being a generic name for the lexical content of the category, while the latter is its real syntactic function.
In his preface to Liu Yuehua’s manual of *Directional Complement Explained,* Meng says:

The traditionally called ‘directional’” is also a result complement. It is a result complement made of directional words, which follow the verb to express the result state. Sometimes, these directional words express the directional result, but in a majority of cases, they simply express a non-directional result. For the convenience of Chinese SL teaching, we opt to use the traditional terminology “directional,” but the directional construction is a syntactic construction expressing the result. Liu’s book has provided a substantial demonstration of this point.

Meng further explains:

[…] The result is actualized by the accomplishment of an action, therefore the result is a perfective state. For instance, in the VR *he zui* (喝醉) “drink drunk – drunk by drinking – got drunk,” “drunk” is a result of drinking. It is also an accomplished action. Likewise, the directional *chu qu* (出去) “exit go” in *zou chu qu* (走出去) “walk/go exit go – go out,” *qi lai* (起来) “up come” in *cang qi lai* (藏起来) “hidden” are the results of the accomplished action *zou* “walk, go - went” and *cang* “hide – hidden” (Liu Yuehua et al., eds., 1998: 3).

Therefore, we can be sure that although the formula says that one inserts DE/BU into the VR or the VD to form a “potential,” the operation is actually one and the same operation on the same syntactic construction – the construction of VR, with R sometimes being realized by a directional word.
3.8 ~LE, ~GUO, ~ZHE and the VR

“Generally speaking, the system of aspect markers and the VR constructions are the phenomena of the same category” (Li Na 李娜; Shi Yuzhi, 1997).

The VR and the aspect marker ~LE and ~GUO definitely overlap in the semantic feature of the “achievement of the action” or the “accomplishment of the event,” since they all mark the action for its accomplishment or the achievement. On the other hand, if we add ~LE or ~GUO to a VR, the result “VR LE” or the “VR GUO,” this is not a redundant double marking of the accomplishment, but an addition of some new information, that of the real world time reference. In other words, this addition of the perfective or the experiential marker to the VR actualizes or qualifies the VR into a predicate. Thus, the VR seems to be the lexical marked form of the achievement, while ~LE and ~GUO are syntactic markers actualizing a cognate construction into an utterance.

3.9 What percentage of Chinese verbs accepts DE/BU insertion?

Quantitatively speaking, what proportion of the Chinese verbal system does the VR construction occupy? Some indicative information can be found in the current “Grammatical Information Knowledge Base of Contemporary Chinese” (Yu Shiwen 俞士汶, et al., eds., 2003). This Knowledge-Base has a General Verb Base (動詞總庫), which counts a total of 2147 entries. This General Verb Base is further divided into six sub-bases: The V-Obj. (Obj.= NP), the V-Obj. (Obj.=VP), the V + Two Objects (雙賓), the Verb-Result (動結式), the Verb-Directional (動趨式), the Detachable Compounds (離和動詞). The verb bases which concern the present study, i.e., those which allow the DE/BU insertion, are the Verb-Result (946 entries), the Verb-Directional (1602 entries)
and the Detachable Verb Compounds (158 entries). Here are the percentages of these sub-categories against the total verbs:

Table 3.2 Entries and percentages of VR, VD and Detachable Verbs in GKBCC

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Verb Base</th>
<th>Verb-Resultative</th>
<th>Verb-Directional</th>
<th>Detachable Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2147</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>1062</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4
V DE/BU X Construction in Diachronic and Dialectal Perspectives

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we approach the study of the V DE/BU X construction from a diachronic perspective and that of dialect comparison. Tracing this form’s development sheds light on its semantic components. Comparing its surface realization in different dialects reveals its hidden structural composition, obscured by the syntactic compressing tendency in modern Mandarin. Finally, the discussion from the perspectives of historical pragmatics and cognitive linguistics shows how the cognitive process of communication motivates its change.

The following issues are discussed:

1. Why did the V DE/BU X construction appear in all Chinese dialects except the Min?

2. What are the proofs that changes in the V DE X construction are related to the grammaticalization of DE.

3. What evidence can be found in dialects for the assertion that BU in the V BU X is the contraction of BU-DE expressing modality in modern Mandarin?

4. How did the V BU X, originally expressing “X is not achieved,” become a part of the V DE/BU X construction expressing “attainability of X”?
Wang Li (1990: 1-3), in his well-recognized *History of Chinese Grammar*, outlines five major changes that challenge the apparent stability of Chinese grammar as having a fixed word order of “subject preceding predicate, modifier preceding head and verb preceding object”:

a) The development of **disyllabic words** as compensation for the simplification of the phonological system, with the purpose of reducing homonyms.

b) The emergence of the **aspect marker**, which provides a device to express the internal temporal structure of the verb (example: ~LE, ~ZHE, ~GUO).

c) The innovation of **disposal** construction: With BA, a patient is overtly differentiated from an agent in a pre-verbal position.

d) The development of **resultative** constructions, which symbolize an ‘action-result’ relationship with a compound-like verb. In the old grammar, such a relationship had to be expressed with two clauses.

e) The establishment of the **classifier** system and the emergence of **affixes** of nouns and pronouns.

Shi Yuzhi (2002: 2-3) further refines the above description by stating that “most of these features [...] reached the completion point of their development during the Song and the Yuan dynasties” (approximately A.D. 1000 – 1400). He also regroups the changes into structural and morphological categories:

**Structural changes**

a. Resultative construction (VR)

b. BA construction

c. BI comparison construction
d. Verb-copying construction

e. New topicalization construction “SUBJ + TOPIC + VP”

Morphological changes

a. Aspect marker : ~LE, ~ZHE, ~GUO

b. Verbal and nominal negative MEI

c. Verb reduplication

d. Verb clitics

e. Classifier system

f. Genitive, associate and clause marker DE (的)

However, Shi asserts that among these changes, “the fundamental change is the formation of the resultative construction (VR), and others are either direct or indirect consequences of this fundamental change” (Shi, 2002: 3).

The VR in Shi’s sense has achieved the completion of grammaticalization. According to Shi, “Grammaticalization” is “a diachronic process through which content words or constructions develop into new grammatical devices, typically involving innovations of morpho-syntactic particles and syntactic construction, […]” (Shi, 2002: 6).

The development of the V DE/BU X construction and the development of the VR are closely related, because it is generally recognized that the formation of the former is through the insertion of the DE/BU into the latter.
4.2 Distribution of V DE/BU X construction across Chinese dialects

Mei Tsulin (2000: 247-285) describes the distribution of the V DE/BU X construction across Chinese dialects. He observes that almost all modern Chinese dialects share the following four constructions:

A) The disposal, or BA, construction (處置式/把字句).

B) The verb + resultative complement construction (VR) in the form of ‘agent + VR + patient.’

C) The positive and the negative form of potential complement, or the V DE/BU X construction.

D) The aspect markers which can occur between the verb and the object [~LE, ~GUO, ~ZHE].

Since none of these constructions nor the aspect markers occurred in Old Chinese and Early Middle Chinese, why do almost all the modern Chinese dialects, except Min, have them in common?

Mei’s thesis is that these constructions first emerged in the northern dialect of the Tang capital, Chang-an. When this northern dialect became the koine during the late Tang and the early Song Dynasties, these constructions spread to other dialects. This explains why all modern dialects use these same constructions, although they often employ different grammatical particles for their actual realization.

4.2.1 Why does Min not have V DE/BU X construction?

Mei accounts for the non-occurrence of V + completive aspect + O in the Min dialects. He claims that the V + phase complement + O is the necessary antecedent for
the development of the V + completive + O construction. Since Min dialects lack the former, they also do not have the latter. Along the same lines, if Min dialects missed the developmental step of DE becoming a phrase complement, then they would also miss the development of V DE X. This latter is the basis for the development of the V DE/BU X construction.

4.2.2 Grammaticalization of DE and V DE X

Wu Fuxiang claims that the V DE X’s coming into being has much to do with the grammaticalization of DE:

DE (得) originally was a transitive verb with the meaning of “obtain or acquire.” During the Han, the Wei and the Six Dynasties periods (~200 B.C. – 600 A.D.), the post verbal DE gradually lost its lexical content and was grammaticalized into a resultative complement indicating that the action is accomplished and a result is achieved. After this, the co-occurrence of the object with DE is no long obligatory. During the Tang Dynasty, the resultative complement DE gradually developed into a …phase complement indicating the realization or the accomplishment of the action (Wu 2002a, section 2.2).

Wu explains that around the Tang and Five Kingdom period (600~900 A.D), V DE Resultative and the V DE Directional were also used to express either the achieved action or the unachieved action (‘potential’) depending on context. During this period, they gradually lost their capacity to express the achieved action in the course of time because they shared this same function with the VR and the VD. When one function is carried by two forms, one or the other of these forms will become redundant, and consequently will be eliminated in the course of time. In other words, now the function of expressing the achieved action is carried by VR and VD, so V DE X (either in form of V
DE R or V DE D) is left with the function of marking the action as unachieved (but achievable).

4.3 Different dialects have different realization of V DE/BU X

Mei quotes Ota Tatsuo 太田辰夫 (1987: 219-220) by stating that V DE/BU X came into being in the late Tang period. According to Mei, the late Tang negative form for the real situation is the V WEI (未) R. Different dialects actualize the same negation of the real situation differently. For instance, Mandarin and Wu dialects have MEI VR (没 VR) instead of V WEI R (V 未 R) for the negation of an achieved action, Yue dialects have both a \( m^{36} \) R (= V BU R) and a \( m \) DE R (= V BU-DE R) for the negative (Wu Fuxiang, 2005a), which reveals that the BU in Mandarin’s V BU X construction could be the contraction of BU-DE. Min dialects are special in their layout of the achieved vs. the potential (Cf. 2.4.1). These different dialect forms can reveal the underlying structure of V DE/BU X, which was obscured in modern Mandarin, due to its tendency towards syntax compression (Y.C. Li, 2001: 129-162).

4.4 Modern dialects as evidence regarding DE and BU-DE (Li Xiaoqi, 1985)

The Comparative Method is one of the major methods in linguistic studies. Li Xiaoqi’s study “On the ‘DE’ of the Potential Complement Construction” showed that evidence from modern dialects can provide support for the discovery of hidden or vanished structures. By comparing different dialects’ realization of V DE/BU X, Li is able to show that the DE in the positive V DE and the negative V BU-DE form is not the

\[ ^{36} \text{‘m’ stands for negative in Yue.} \]
same DE in its origin. According to Li, there should be eight forms of V DE (positive) and V BU-DE (negative) with different monosyllabic and disyllabic verbs and adjectives in the V position. However, there exist only five:

**Table 4.1 Distribution of V DE vs. V BU-DE (Li Xiaoqi, 1985: 13)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V-monosyllabic DE</th>
<th>V-monosyllabic BU-DE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>V-disyllabic BU-DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>A-monosyllabic BU-DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>A-disyllabic BU-DE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the frequency of the negative forms greatly exceeds the positive. This asymmetry in the V DE positive vs. the V BU-DE negative distribution gives rise to the question of whether it is the same DE in the positive form and in the negative.

Li Xiaoqi believes that historically the DE in V DE and V BU-DE were not of the same origin. The positive DE was a verb meaning ‘to achieve,’ while the DE in the negative was a structure particle marking modality. Evidence from dialect comparison supports this viewpoint. For instance, the present day Shanxi Wenshui (山西文水) dialect has a positive form V DE DE where the first DE is the modality and the second DE is the verb marking the achievement of the action.

**4.4.1 BU in V BU X is the contracted form for BU-DE**

In the negative V BU-DE, the BU-DE is one block, expressing “cannot” either in the sense of the non-attainability of the action (‘potential’), or in the sense of the persuasion or the interdiction against the action. Li Xiaoqi asserts that this V BU-DE form in the Wenshui dialect is structurally the same as the V BU-DE in Mandarin, which proliferated in the Pre-Modern period, but became obsolete in modern Mandarin except in its sense of the interdiction.
Li Xiaoqi’s article is very important because it clarifies an essential point in the study of the semantic composition of the V DE/BU X construction: the BU in V BU X is the contracted form of BU-DE. Some non-contracted BU-DE examples can be found in Pre-Modern Chinese literature, such as the following example that Li took from the

*Capital Edition of Popular Novels:*\(^37\)

井亭橋有遺漏! 吃不得這酒成. (V BU-DE O X)
Jing ting qiao you yi lou! chi BU-DE zhe jiu cheng
Jing Ting Bridge have lost leak, eat not-can this wine achieve
‘There is a failure in the Jing Ting Bridge, (we/you) cannot/are unable to drink this wine.’

Although the V BU-DE X form did not continue in modern Mandarin, it was kept alive and is still widely used in certain dialects, such as in Hakka:\(^38\)

爬不得前
pa m dek chian
crawl NOT-DE ahead
‘Unable to crawl ahead’

跑不得及
cheu m dek kip
run NOT-DE up (to it)
‘Unable to run up to it, unable to catch it up’

站不得起
khii m dek hii
stand NOT-DE up
‘Unable to stand up’

Modern Mandarin did not keep this BU-DE as the negative form of the V DE/BU X construction, but contracted it into a single BU, Li Xiaoqi speculates that the reason is

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\(^{37}\) *Jin Ben Tong Su Xiao Shuo* (京本通俗小說) ‘Capital Edition of Popular Novels’

\(^{38}\) Hakka transcriptions here are by Monique Hwang.
likely an attempt at phonetic or rhythmic alignment, so the negative form will match the tri-syllabic rhythm of the positive form V DE X.

To summarize, Li Xiaoqi’s thesis is that, in parallel with V DE and V BU-DE, the DE in V DE X is the verbal particle marking accomplishment, while the BU in V BU X is the contracted form of the negative modality BU-DE ‘not can’ (with the omitted DE carrying the meaning of the modality).

In fact, the insertion of the DE/BU into the VX is a theoretical representation of its structure from the synchronic perspective. It does not reflect the construction’s process of change. When people communicate, the V DE X or the V BU X is used as a mounted whole, a gestate unit. The syntactic relation between its components is opaque, i.e., it does not pass through the speaker’s consciousness as the analyzed form V DE X or V BU X.

4.5 V DE/BU X viewed from the angle of cognitive linguistics and historic pragmatics

Shen Jiaxuan (2004: 243) uses the V BU X construction as an example to illustrate language change. There are two main paths of language change, one is re-analysis and the other is analogy (Meillet, 1958). The re-analysis is a transition from one concept to another related concept. It is a metonymy of concepts. In Middle Chinese, the V BU X “xue bu cheng (學不成, study not achieve) is a serial verb construction expressing “have not achieved success in studies” or meiyou xue cheng (沒有學成, did not succeed in studies). In modern Mandarin, the same form of “xue bu cheng” expresses “not possible to achieve success in studies” (bu keneng xue cheng 不可能學成).
The V BU X construction is a VR (Verb + Resultative) construction in modern Mandarin. A re-analysis of the original serial verb construction took place in its development. “Have not achieved success in studies” and “impossible to achieve success in studies” are two related concepts. That is, one can be interpreted as entailing the other, since an event that is impossible to accomplish (xue bu cheng 学不成) is certainly an event that has not been accomplished (meiyou xue cheng 没有学成). With this example, we can see that the mechanism of change is closely related to the cognitive mechanism, such as metonymy and metaphor.

4.5.1 What is the extended meaning of the V BU X construction in modern Mandarin?

Historical linguists have been using pragmatic principles in diachronic linguistic research in order to better account for the motivation and the mechanism of language change. This new approach belongs to historical pragmatism. In this new approach, there are two main concerns. The one focusing on meaning tries to explain the constraints on the extended meaning of the original form, in our case V BU X. First, we need to clarify which is the extended meaning of this construction. In its origin, the V BU X construction expressed the actualized event. To be more precise, it describes the non-actualized event in the past, or the counterfactual event. A non-actualized event in the past.

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39 This does not mean that such an interpretation is the only possible one; I will revisit this point in chapters 5 and 7.
40 Shen continues: “The inference process goes like this: We hear ‘xue bu cheng (学不成) in the sense of xue er wei cheng (学而未成) ‘study but have not yet achieved success’ and we know that the cause or the reason for not having achieved it is usually ‘it is not possible to achieve it.’ We therefore infer that xue bu cheng most likely expresses the meaning bu keneng xue change (不可能学成) ‘impossible to achieve success in studies.’” (Shen Jianxuan, 2004: 245)
41 Shen quotes Jacobs, Andreas, and Andreas H. Jucker (1995) as representatives of this approach (Shen, 2004: 244).
imagined or hypothetical situation is its extended meaning. In modern Mandarin, this role was reversed and the counterfactual interpretation of the V DE/BU X in the realis context\textsuperscript{42} became the extended meaning.

This is primarily because the main usage of V DE/BU X in modern Mandarin occurs in imagined or hypothetic situations or contexts, which puts it in the irrealis mood (Cf. 6.3 for more details). Following are some examples of counterfactual usage of V DE/BU X in modern Mandarin:\textsuperscript{43}

事情變化得太快了, 他的腦子已追趕不上. (老舍, 駱駝祥子 Lao She in Liu, 1998: 102)
shiqing bianhua de tai kuai le, ta de naozi yi zhuigan bu shang le.
things change DE too fast LE, his brain already follow not up LE
‘The situation changed too fast; his mind could no longer catch up with it.’

緊急集合, 背包打不上了. (鄭友悔 Deng Youmei in Liu, 1998: 96)
Jinji jihe, beibao da bu shang le.
sudden assembly, backpack pack not up Ptl.
‘(Due to a) Sudden (military) assembly, there is no time to pack the backpack.’

材料不全, 房子蓋不上了. (Liu, 1998: 89)
cailiao bu quan, fangzi gai bu shang le.
material not complete, house build not up LE
‘Some materials are missing; the house can no longer be built/finished.’

Obviously these counterfactual V BU Xs cannot be interpreted as having a ‘potential’ meaning because they are non-actualized events in the past or the present. The surface form of these V BU Xs themselves have not changed. It is their realis temporal

\textsuperscript{42} The ‘realis’ context refers to a context wherein the temporal deictic such as the aspect marker ~LE, ~ZHE or ~GUO anchors this sentence directly with the speaker’s speech time – the real world time.

\textsuperscript{43} These examples are quoted from Liu Yuehua, 1998. The page numbers are from her book.
frame marked by the perfective aspect marker ~LE in its context which leads to their counterfactual interpretation.

4.5.2 Constraints on V DE/BU X for expressing ‘potential’ are in its context

The other concern for historic pragmatics is the form, i.e., the investigation of constraints on current forms for expressing a given semantic category. We have just seen that when the V BU X is in the realis context, such as with ~LE in the same, previous or following clause, i.e., in its sentential context, it expresses a non-actualized event in the past or the present. It is a counterfactual event rather than a future event that may yet be actualized, i.e., the potential event in the imagined or hypothetic situation. In other words, the constraints on the V DE/BU X construction for expressing the ‘potential’ event are in its context at the sentential level. We’ll have more detailed discussion of this in Chapter 7.

4.5.3 Semantic development of V DE/BU X from the perspectives of historical pragmatics and cognitive linguistics

Shen Jiaxuan (Shen, 2004: 245) demonstrates the semantic development of V BU X from its original meaning of “did not actualize or achieve X” to the present meaning of “impossible to actualize or achieve X,” or the “non-attainability of result X.”

Both language acquisition and re-analysis involve reasoning, mostly that of pragmatic principles of relevance. The development of V BU X from expressing “X has not been actualized” to expressing “X is unattainable,” has gone through a cognitive or logic path involving a backtracking inference based on logical reasoning and common sense.
Levinson (1995) distinguishes two kinds of “conversational implications.” One is called “general conversational implication (GCI),” the other is “particular conversational implication (PCI).” PCI changes in different contexts, while GCI does not.

Although GCI is “general,” it is not yet the intrinsic or ‘semantized’ meaning of the construction and so can be annulled in a special context like PCI. On the other hand, GCI is not dependent on a given context, and is therefore predictable and more reliable. It plays a very important role in linguistic communication. The bottleneck of communication is thinking is faster than speech can be produced, i.e., there is always more to say than what is actually said in a given period of time. The solution is “speaking less, inferring more.” Therefore, the inference needs to be reliable and fast. The inferences made through of PCI are too slow and unreliable; in contrast, the inferences made through GCI are faster and more reliable.

4.5.4 The Process of semantic development: PCI→GCI→SM

In the beginning, the extended meaning is generated from PCI. For a given PCI, there are not many such particular conversational situations or contexts at first. Each time, this extended meaning must be inferred from its context. (This is the stage when the interpretation of the non-actualized meaning of the V DE/BU X must be inferred from its irrealis context.) This process is long and tedious. Later these context-dependent inferences are repeated to the degree that the implication or the extended meaning spreads, i.e., this particular extended meaning is no longer dependent upon its original context. (This is the current stage when people know that, in general, V DE/BU X expresses non-actualized, imagined or hypothetic events and so this construction is called
the ‘potential.’) The extended meaning of the construction or the PCI has finally developed into GCI. This GCI then will gradually become fixed or semanticized into the intrinsic meaning of the construction. When the extended meaning is still context-dependent in the form of PCI, it is not yet regular. When it later develops into GCI, it becomes regular. The transformation from the GCI to the SM (semantic meaning) often induces a reaction to the original form, which may entail an eventual change. For instance, with the V DE/BU X, we can speculate that at the point when the GCI became fixed into the SM, then the V DE X and the V BU X were perceived as the pair of the positive vs. the negative form of the same construction V DE/BU X (emphasis added).

**Figure 4.1 Diagram: semantic development process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form A</th>
<th>Form B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V BU X</td>
<td>V DE/BU X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SM (A)</td>
<td>PCI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GCI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SM (B)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[X is not achieved] [X is none attainable]

However, in language change, the general trend is for the formal change to lag behind the meaning change.

Traditional Historical Linguistics also talks about ‘association’ and ‘analogy,’ but gives them equal weight. ‘Association’ actually is ‘re-analysis,’ i.e., the move from one concept to a related concept. Some well-known studies conducted by historical linguists, such as Bybee et al. (1994) and Traugott and Dasher (2002), argue that the mechanism of the so-called ‘grammaticalization’ is the ‘association’ or ‘re-analysis’ rather than

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44 Shen quotes Hopper (1990), Shen Jianxuan, 2004: 247.
‘analogy.’ In our case, it is first the association of the non-actualized event with its sentential temporal framework of the past or the present temporal deictic. Later, it is the association with the *irrealis* illocutionary type. The change is gradual, instead of sudden and operates cognitively as ‘metonymy,’ rather than ‘metaphor. ‘Association’ is the process, while ‘analogy’ is the result of it. Although people do not generally agree upon this point of view yet, any linguistic study that does not take into the account the pragmatic aspect of the item is incomplete. In other words, the meaning of any linguistic entity is also composed of both pragmatic contents as well as cognitive contents (Traugott, 2002).

In sum, language change is not generated from the language per se, but is originated and motivated by its use; and in major part arises from adult use rather than the children’s. The most important motivation is the direct, or the “online” communication between the speaker and the listener, which is regulated by pragmatic principles. The meaning develops according to the mechanism of the context-dependent inference, from the PCI to the GCI, and then finally to the SM. This is the conclusion of recent historic linguistic studies.

### 4.6 Summary

- Studying the non-occurrence of V DE/BU X construction in Min dialects reveals that the cause of it is that they missed the intermediate step of developing the phase complement DE (4.2).
- After the first step of grammaticalization of DE into *a phase complement* indicating the realization or the accomplishment of the action, V DE R or V DE D (V DE
X) are further specialized into marking unachieved (but achievable) action, leaving the function of marking achieved action to VR and VD in modern Mandarin (4.2.2).

- Comparing different dialects’ realization of V DE/BU X reveals the underlying structure of V DE/BU X, which has been obscured in modern Mandarin due to its tendency towards syntactic compression (4.3).

- Effectively, with the evidence of modern dialects, Li Xiaoqi proved the BU is the contracted form of BU-DE, which is a modality expression (4.4.1).

- The *realis* reading or the counterfactual interpretation of V BU X was the original meaning of this contraction. However, in modern Mandarin, the role is inverted: the *irrealis* usage of V DE/BU X became the main use (Cf. 6.3), while the *realis* usage in co-occurrence with LE should be regarded as its extended meaning (4.5.1-2).

- Historical pragmatics and cognitive linguistics approaches explain how the V BU X originally expressing “X is not achieved” became part of the V DE/BU X construction expressing “non-attainability of X, the result of an *irrealis* event” (4.5.3-4).
CHAPTER 5

My Interpretation of V DE/BU X (Part I): From ‘Potential’ to ‘Attainability of X as a Result of an Irrealis Event’

5.1 Introduction

My interpretation of V DE/BU X consists of two parts. One concerns its internal syntactic structure and the insertion of DE/BU into the VR construction. The other concerns its context and pragmatic interpretation, which will be presented in Chapter 7.

In Chapter 3, we discussed various issues related to the V DE/BU X construction from the perspective of the VR construction, its properties and its position in the Chinese verbal system. The three main points are:

First, the main information focus is R, not V. Li Linding (1984) demonstrates this point thoroughly. James Tai’s cognitive approach also supports this viewpoint (Tai, 1979, 2003, 2007). Tai asserts that Chinese R is the ‘center of predication.’ Compared with English predication, where the verb must be finite in order to be in agreement with the subject, Chinese is a ‘patient’ oriented language, qualifying the predication with the telic aspect or the boundedness of the event. While English predication answers the question of “who does what to whom?” Chinese predication answers the question “what has happened?”

Second, contrary to the common belief that the proliferation of the VR in modern Chinese is caused by the disyllabic tendency in the development of Chinese phonology, Shi Yuzhi (2004) asserts that the proliferation of VR is the natural consequence of the development of the conceptual structure of the Chinese verb system. In other words, because most Chinese monosyllabic verbs are activity verbs, which do not have a telic
aspect in their semantic makeup, to convey the achievement or accomplishment of an action, the VR is resorted to for the solution (cf. James Tai’s ‘Chinese verb unbounded hypothesis’ (Tai, 2003)).

Third, the information organization schema of modern Chinese has changed from “SVOX”\(^\text{45}\) to “SXVO” (Shi Yuzhi’s proposition is that VR is the keystone in this development of Chinese grammar, Cf. 3.4.4, 3.6 and 3.6.1).

Other related questions include the Chinese verb aspects, the property of the post-verbal DE and its multiple functions, as well as the gradual draining of its lexical content. This last issue has a direct bearing on the V DE/BU X construction.

In this chapter, I concentrate on two issues. The first is the syntactical properties of VR, mainly the invisible functional category [BECOME], because this is the base for the interpretation of the V DE/BU X construction. The second is the meaning of the negative form V BU X. The solution to this latter issue also answers the question of the usage asymmetry between the negative form V BU X and its positive counterpart V DE X, as well as why this latter is more often used in the interrogative.

I further use this information to propose a revision to the meaning of the DE/BU insertion from “potential” to “attainability of R” in the VR, which is a qualification or a predication of the R. I further propose that this qualification of the R is comparable to the ‘finite’ form of the verb in many Indo-European languages.

From the syntactic perspective, the syntactic head of VR is the invisible functional category of BECOME and CAUSE, which will be further discussed below. The importance of recognizing this for the study of the V DE/BU X construction is that the syntactic and semantic properties of this construction directly stem from this analysis.

\(^{45}\) Here X stands for the other accompanying features such as time adverbial, the location, etc.)
A simple formula for the interpretation of the V BU X is that the negation, BU, bears on the invisible functional category BECOME (達成), therefore the V BU X construction means:

(the action V) does NOT [BECOME] (the result X)

This understanding is supported by both diachronic and dialect comparison evidence. Although the functional head [BECOME] is not visible on the surface, the significance that it carries in the articulation between the V and X in the VX (VR) construction, that of expressing the achieved state X (resultative) through the action or by means of V, is there. This function was visible in the past, at a certain stage of its development, in the form of DE (Wu Fuxiang, 2002b; section 4.2.2). Also, Li Xiaoqi’s study on dialect comparison shows that the BU in the Mandarin V BU X is the contracted form of BU-DE, which is still visible in Hakka (Li Xiaoqi, 1985; section 4.1). In addition, conceptually, the insertion of BU negates the original bounded aspect of VX (VR), therefore in V BU X, the action V is blocked from its actualization in X.

From the semantic perspective, Shi Yuzhi demonstrates why the negative V BU X is predominant, as well as that V BU X and V DE X are in complementary distribution in declarative vs. interrogative sentences.

5.2 The syntactic head matters for the interpretation of V DE/BU X

Li Linding’s structural analysis (1984, 1992) and James Tai’s cognitive approach (2003) question the R in VR’s description as a “resultative complement” and propose that R should be the center of predication and even the main verb. However, this viewpoint does not provide a satisfactory solution to the interpretation of V DE/BU X’s syntactic
property and meaning. Xiong and Liu’s proposition that the invisible functional categories BECOME and CAUSE are the syntactic head of VR resolves the question of the syntactic property and meaning more adequately (Xiong & Liu, 2005). However, in order to justify my choice of Xiong and Liu’s analysis with regard to VR’s syntactic head, Shen Jiaxuan’s discussion and the current viewpoints on the issue are presented in detail first (5.2).

5.3 Current viewpoints and Shen Jiaxuan’s analysis (Shen, 2003)

The Chinese VR construction appears in two basic forms: The V + Directional (VD), and the V + Resultative (VR).

V + Directional:

瓶子漂出岩洞。
Pingzi biao chu yandong
Bottle float exit stone-cave
‘the bottle floated out of the cave.’

V + Resultative:

媽媽晾乾了衣裳。
Mama liang gan le yishang
mom hang dry Perf. Asp. clothes
‘Mother dried the clothes (by) hanging them (outside)’

For uniformity, I continue to use “VX” to represent both.

5.3.1 Three prevailing views on the head of VX

The predominant view shared by the majority of Chinese grammarians is that the V is the head. Its current name, VC or verb + complement, already implies this viewpoint.
The second view counters the first by considering X to be the head. This view is based on Bloomfield’s theory of ‘endocentric construction,’ which states that if a part of a construction can function for the whole, then this part is the head or the essential part of the construction (Bloomfield, 1933). Li Linding (1984) used this procedure to prove that the so-called “complement” actually bears the essential information of the predication of VX.

Following are some examples of Li Linding’s deduction using the method of parts subtraction (Li Linding, 1984). The second column shows that without V, the X alone still carries the essential information of the predicate, while the third column shows that without X, the sentence is either doubtful, has a changed meaning or is meaningless in Chinese.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我已经吃饱了</td>
<td>我已经饱了</td>
<td>? 我已经吃了</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wo yijing chi bao le</td>
<td>wo yijing bao le</td>
<td>wo yijing chi le</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I am already full’</td>
<td>‘I am already full’</td>
<td>‘I’ve already eaten.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(after eating)</td>
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</table>

The third viewpoint is represented in Fan Xiao’s analysis (範曉, 1985). She believes that using Li Linding’s method, one can only prove that some VX have the V as the head, some have the X as the head, some have dual heads and some others have no head. Following are her examples:
The V ‘beat’ is the head in VX da si (打死) ‘beat dead’

武松打死一隻老虎
Wu Song da si yi zhi laohu
Wu Song beat dead a Cl. tiger.
‘Wu Song killed a tiger.’

武松打一隻老虎
Wu Song da yi zhi laohu
Wu Song beat one Cl. tiger
‘Wu Song beat one tiger.’

武松死一隻老虎
Wu Song si yi zhi laohu
Wu song die one Cl. tiger
? ‘Wu Song die[46] a tiger.’

The X ‘lose’ is the head in the VX pao diu (跑丢) ‘run lose’

他跑丢了一隻鞋.
Ta pao diu le yi zhi xie
he ran lose Perf. Asp. one Cl. shoe
‘he lost one shoe (in/because of) running.’

? 他跑了一隻鞋.
Ta pao le yi zhi xie
He ran Perf. Asp. one Cl. shoe
? ‘he ran (away) one shoe.’

他丢了一隻鞋.
Ta diu le yi zhi xie
He lose Perf. Asp. one Cl. shoe
‘he lost one shoe.’

Having dual heads: both V xue (學) ‘study’ and X hui (會) ‘learnt (capable of)’

我學會了兩門外語
wo xue hui le liang men waiyu
I study learn Perf. Asp. two Cl. foreign language
‘I learned two foreign languages.’

[46] 死 si ‘die’ is not a transitive verb in Chinese. It is usually used as description of subject or the object of the sentence.
我學了兩門外語。
wo xue le liang men waiyu
I study Perf. Asp. two Cl. foreign language
‘I studied two foreign languages.’

我會了兩門外語。
wo hui le liang men waiyu
I learn Perf. Asp. two Cl.
‘I learned two foreign languages.’

Having no head: Neither *ku* (哭) ‘cry,’ nor *hun* (昏) ‘dizzy, messed up in one’s clear-mindedness’ has adequate scope over the patient to be identified as the head.

她哭昏了我的腦袋。
Ta ku hun le wode naodai
She cry mess up Perf. Asp.my head
‘she cried my head all messed up/she messed up my head (by) kept crying.’

?她哭了我的腦袋
Ta ku le wode naodai
She cry Perf. Asp. my head
?‘she cried my head.’

?她昏了我的腦袋。
Ta hun le wode naodai
She dizzy Perf. Asp. my head
?‘She dizzied my head’ (‘dizzy, messy in the mind’ is not transitive in Chinese.)

Fan Xiao concludes that using the endocentric construction theory won’t help reveal the head of the VR construction in Mandarin.

5.3.2 Distinguishing the syntactic head from the lexical head

In order to have a clearer picture of the debate, Shen Jiaxuan points out that the first task is to distinguish the semantic head from the syntactic head. The debate between the Chinese grammarians about the identity of the head of the VR is not clearly stated to start with. The question is difficult to settle because different syntactic functions are used
as criteria to identify the semantic head. In Shen’s opinion, the conclusion that the R is the head of the VR construction, or in Tai’s term “center of predication,” drawn along the line of arguments of Li Linding (1984) and Ma Xiwen (馬希文 1987) misses the point by mistaking the semantic head to be the syntactic head.

5.3.3 Shen Jiaxuan argues for the V as the syntactic head

Shen supports the view of the V as the syntactic head of the VR with the following four points:

1. The V is an open class component, the X is a closed class component.

That the V is an open-list class and the X is a closed class in the VX and V DE/BU X of Mandarin are verified empirically in several data sources that I compared and analyzed and which are further examined in 6.1. The directional which figures in the X position of the VX is an uncontroversial closed class of 27 items. The other adjectives and verbs which can figure in the X position number only a few dozen, while the verbs that can figure in the V position count well beyond several hundred. My own data analysis of the VX and the V BU X led to the same results that Shen draws: The most frequent Xs in the VX and the V BU X number around a mere two dozen items.

2. Phonetically, in the VR construction the primary stress is on the V. The X is often weakened to a neutral tone syllable (Chao, 1968; Lin Shou 林燾, 1957). We presented this in Chapter 1, in Chao’s study of the VR as a syntactically derived compound, and in Yu Min’s study of the V BU X in Beijing Dialect as lexical entities. However, it should be noted that with the insertion of BU, the primary stress shifts onto BU in declarative sentences.
3. Shen believes there is a test that is more effective in proving the VX is headed by V. In this test, Shen uses the perfective negative marker MEI (沒) ‘have not’ to negate either the V or the X to see whether the result is grammatically valid. The result is that the VX can be transformed into V MEI (沒) ‘have not’ VX, or VX MEI VX, but cannot be transformed into VX MEI X:

帽子吹掉了
maozi chui diao le
hat blow drop Ptl.
‘the hat was blown away.’

[…V MEI VX]
帽子吹沒吹掉?
maozi chui mei chui diao
hat blow did not blow drop
‘was the hat blown (or) not blown away?’

[…VX MEI VX]
帽子吹掉沒吹掉
maozi chui diao mei chui diao
hat blow drop did not blow drop
‘Was the hat blown away (or) not blown away?’

[*… VX MEI X]
*帽子吹掉沒掉
maozi chui diao mei diao
hat blow drop did not drop
‘Was the hat blown away not away?’

According to Shen, these examples show that, although the X carries predication, the syntactic head or the perfective aspect is an integrated part of the V, or at least the VX as a whole, but definitely not a part of the X alone.

4. Historically, the VX developed from serial-verb or coordinate verb constructions. It is the gradual weakening and bleaching of V₂, in V₁ + V₂ that finally
produced the fusion of the two verbs, resulting in V + Resultative (Cf. Yuan Yulin, 2000; Mei Tsulin, 1991; Shimura Ryoji, 1995; as cited in Shen, 2003: 21):

The serial verbs construction (連動式)

擊殺之

ji sha zhi
hit kill it
‘hit and killed it.’

→ The coordinate verbs construction (幷動式)

萬物滅盡/盡滅
wan wu mie jin/jin mie
million things extinct exhaust/extinct
‘all things extinct exhaust, all things exhaust extinct.’

→ The verb + resultative construction (動結式)

愁殺人
chou sha ren
worry kill person
‘worry a person to death.’

5.3.4 Why look for the syntactic head of VX?

In expanding VX into V DE/BU X, the interpretation of the meaning of the latter depends on the understanding of the former. For instance, if we follow the mainstream viewpoint that the V is the syntactic head of the VX, then insertion of the DE/BU should be considered as the expansion of the V. In that case, both the modality and the negative marker, i.e., DE/BU, should figure in the pre-V position. We have also discussed the viewpoint that the X is the head, or the predicate bearer, following Li Linding’s and James Tai’s analyses. Taking X as the head, or the information focus, is helpful in interpreting V DE/BU X because, as the expansion of the VX, the semantic scope of DE/BU inevitably projects onto the information focus X. The syntactic property of the X is defined by its relation with the V in the VX construction. The third perspective, where
the invisible functional category [BECOME] or [CAUSE] is the syntactic head of the VX, offers the most plausible opening for our interpretation of the DE/BU insertion into the VX.

5.4 Insertion of DE/BU into VR expresses the ‘attainability/non-attainability of R’

Xiong and Liu (2005) synchronize the latest generative and cognitive approach, and propose the invisible functional category [BECOME/CAUSE] as the syntactic head of the VX.

Based on Tai’s assertion that R is the center of predication and Xiong and Liu’s proposition that [BECOME/CAUSE] is the syntactic head of the VR, I propose to revise the meaning of the DE/BU insertion from “potential” to “attainability of R” in the VR, which is a qualification or a predication of the R. I further propose that this qualification of the R is comparable to the ‘finite’ form of the verb in many Indo-European languages.

5.4.1 The invisible functional category as syntactic head of the VR construction in Mandarin

The theoretical background of Xiong and Liu’s “functional category” is a combination of Chomsky’s Minimal Projection and Goldberg’s Constructional Grammar. The articulation between the syntax and the semantics is very complicated, and it is the focus of current general theoretical linguistic research. Two kinds of articulations are possible: one is between syntax and formal logic; the other is between syntax and lexicon. Xiong’s study concerns the latter. The articulation between syntax and lexicon may be
viewed according to two perspectives. One is the perspective of the predicate, in which
the conceptual structure of the predicate is analyzed. In the previous chapter, we
presented James Tai and Shi Yuzhi’s studies of the conceptual structure of the Chinese
verbs, the VR construction and some of its consequences in the system of Chinese
grammar. The other perspective is the argument structure. In this perspective, the level
and the order of the theta role are studied. Xiong’s study represents this latter perspective.

Zhu Dexi’s observations on the particularities of modern Chinese grammar
mainly involve the following (Zhu, 1982):

1. There is no direct and simple correspondence between a given lexical
category or a part of speech and the syntactical role it plays in a sentence.
2. The sentence structure and the phrase structure are the same, in principle.
3. The most salient feature of Chinese grammar is that it lacks overt
   morphological changes found in Indo-European languages.

However, these three points take the grammar of Indo-European languages as
their frame of reference. Consider the first for instance. In traditional grammar, we learn
that the subject is usually a noun and the predicate is usually a verb. Yet we do not
always find a one-to-one correspondence between a lexical category and the role it plays
in a sentence. According to Chomsky’s definition of the subject, the predicate and the
object, only the phrase can assume this syntactic role in a sentence. On the other hand,
the lexical category is defined mainly by semantic content rather than syntactic function.
Therefore, we cannot find a one-to-one correspondence between a lexical category and a
syntactic role in a sentence (Chomsky, 1999). This is not unique to Chinese.
On Zhu’s third point, Xiong observes that while the Indo-European languages mark syntactic functions overtly, Chinese may mark them with word order, lexical means, aspect markers, etc. Certain syntactic categories can have phonetic forms, such as the functional categories BECOME, which can be marked by DE (得) in VR, and CAUSE, which can marked by BA (把) in Mandarin. These functional categories do not have corresponding forms in English.

5.5 Structural Description: From VX to VR

In order to avoid the controversy over “X” being called “C” (the complement), I use the generally accepted ‘R’ (the resultative), which designates that the X following V is either the result state (resultative) morpheme or the directional morpheme.

5.5.1 VR has the stress pattern of a word, but the structure of a phrase

VR is considered to be a syntactically derived compound. Xiong and Liu provide the following evidence: Phonologically, VR has a stress pattern of disyllabic words, i.e., the first syllable is stressed and the second is not (Lin Shou, 1957; Chao, 1968). The only exception to this rule is when the second syllable is a directional morpheme and when they are at sentence final position (Lü Shuxiang, 1980). The typical VR forms a ‘front-stressed-rear-unstressed’ pattern, which is in complementary distribution with the phrase pattern (codas stressed) (Shen Jiaxuan, 2003 (3): 17-23).

If the VR is a compound, is the V or the R its head? If we determine the head by the lexical category of the element, then the head can be in either the left or the right position; if both components are verbs, they can both be the head at the same time.

Compare:
(1) 哭累
ku lei
cry tired, ‘cry’ verb, ‘tired’ adjective
‘cry (until) tired’

This is a V headed VR, with the V in front, i.e., Left Handed Head.

(2) 累哭
lei ku
tired cry, ‘tired’ adjective, (to the extent of) crying
‘tired to the point of crying’

If we believe that only the verb can be the head of a VR, and since ku (‘cry’) is a
verb, then this V headed VR will have its head in the back, i.e., the Right Handed Head

(3) 嚇哭
xia ku
scare cry, ‘scare’ verb, ‘cry’ verb
‘to scare (someone) to cry,’ ‘to be scared (to the extent of) crying’

Since both components are verbs, VR (3) can be classified as a dual headed VR.

The determination of the head by the component’s lexical category does not lead
us anywhere, since the syntactical behavior of the above three VRs are exactly the same.
None of them can escape from the above mentioned constraints for expansion, i.e.,
neither the V nor the R accepts expansion. On the other hand, syntactically all of them
accept the DE/BU insertion.

In *Generative Morphology*, Williams (1981, (12): 245-274) states that according
to the Right Hand Head Rule, the head of an endocentric\(^47\) compound is its right most
element. Fang Li (方立 1993) points out that in morphology, the center or head always
has a fixed position. In English, it is always located on the right. Di Sciullo and Williams
further point out that it is this head which determines the other morphological features of
the compound, such as the number, the part of speech, etc. If we apply this rule to a

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\(^{47}\) Endocentric means that the center or the head is within the entity.
Chinese VR compound, and take the R as the head, then what morphological information does the R carry for the VR? What part of speech is the R usually? To better understand the VR’s status as a word, we need to view it in the Chinese lexical system (Cf. 6.2.3 on detachable compounds 離合詞).

For our purpose of studying the DE/BU insertion into the VR, we need to adopt the notion that the VR is not a lexical item, but is a syntactically derived segment, which has an internal syntactical structure that can be expanded into a new syntactic construction.

If the VR is accepted as a syntactically derived segment, i.e., a phrase, then looking for its head may proceed through syntactical analysis.

5.6 Head of VR

Now in order to determine the syntactic significance of the DE/BU insertion, we must solve the problem of the syntactic head in its base structure, the VR construction first.

Recent research by Xiong and Liu (2005) on this question seems to shed some light on the long debated issue. Xiong and Liu propose that the syntactic head of the VR is the invisible functional category [BECOME], the cognate of ‘become’ (達成/變成) and [CAUSE], the cognate of ‘cause’ (致使). Their proposal supports my proposition that the syntactic property of the V DE/BU X construction is a judgment type of predication on this invisible functional category, with a slight caveat that the DE/BU insertion bears on [BECOME], not on [CAUSE]. I translate the function category [BECOME] as ‘reach out and arrive at the result of the R’ by means of the V; therefore, the insertion of the DE/BU
is a judgment on the attainability of R, the result of an irrealis event. This new view recasts the notion of ‘potential aspect’ (可能態) of VR and the notion of the ‘potential complement’ (可能補語). For the irrealis part of my proposition, the evidence comes from analysis of its context features and illocutionary types (to be discussed in chapters 6 and chapter 7). In this chapter, I concentrate on the internal structure of the base for DE/BU insertion, the VR, and the effect of this insertion.

5.6.1 Xiong and Liu’s View

As stated above, Xiong and Liu’s study combines concepts from the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995) with those from Cognitive Grammar and Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 2000) as the theoretical framework and argues that the invisible functional category [BECOME] and [CAUSE] should be the head of the VR construction, while the V only serves as an event pointer that merely carries the lexical and the background information of the event.

5.6.2 The “Invisible functional category” -- the Generative perspective

According to X-bar theory, all the Phrases, P, are the projection of their head, including the Sentences, S; the Head of S is the Temporal or the Time Phrase TP, while the head of the DP is D. For example, in the DP “the man”, the determinant “the” is the head. In the DP “John’s car,” before the DP hypothesis, “car” was the head which carried the lexical information of the phrase; now with the theoretical advance of the DP hypothesis of Minimal Projection, the head is instead “’s”, the functional category, which carries the syntactic function of the DP.
As for the head of a VP, according to the hypothesis of Head Filter, any V or O which has not successfully passed the filter of syntactical category, is not qualified to be the Head because some formal features it carries are unexplainable by syntactic categories. In other words, a lexical category will not become the syntactic head if it does not pass the Head Filter, i.e., the V in VP is not guaranteed to be the head by being a verb.

The Functional Category as Syntactic Head has a very important place in Minimalist theory. Chomsky (1995) stipulates the following VP projection diagram (Chomsky 1995, as cited in Xiong & Liu, 2005):

**Figure 5.1 VP projection diagraph (Chomsky, 1999)**

Putting (a) and (b) side by side, we observe an obvious parallelism: in (b) the D is the head of the DP projection, therefore in (a), by the same deduction, the functional category of small $v$ should be considered the Head of the $V_{\text{max}}$.

In terms of phrase structure, Chomsky introduces the notion of small $v$ as a functional category. This small $v$ assigns a thematic role to the external argument. Taylor (1996) further points out that the functional category should be the Head of the compound expression and the host of it should be the complement. In the case of VR, the
R will be the host of the functional category BECOME or CAUSE. In our case of V DE/BU X, then, the X will be the host of the functional category [NOT BECOME].

5.6.3 The Functional category as the syntactic operator

Xiong and Liu’s ‘Functional Category Hypothesis’ states that the functional category not only can motivate the movement of the arguments, it can also decide the fusion, the argument selection, theta role inversion and the thematic role assignment, etc.

5.6.4 The Invisible functional category as the head of the VR

In the VR construction, the small v, or its functional category is either [BECOME (達成)] or [CAUSE (致使)]. The following example shows how these functional categories select the arguments for the verb and assign a thematic role to them.

張三吃壞了肚子
Zhang san chi huai LE duzi
John eat bad Perf. Asp. belly

For the V = chi ‘eat,’ the functional category of the VR [BECOME] can select its argument from the {agent, patient, means, result, etc.}. Suppose [BECOME] selects the result R: huai ‘bad’ as argument, then it will also select the patient of the R: duzi ‘belly’

(a) chi (吃)‘eat’– BECOME: (duzi (肚子)‘belly, stomach,’ huai (壞)‘bad, ill’)
(b) chi (吃)‘eat’- BECOME – CAUSE: Zhang San ‘John’ (duzi (肚子)‘belly, stomach,’ huai (壞)‘bad, ill’)

Therefore the VR chi huai (吃壞) ‘eat bad’ in

張三吃壞了肚子
Zhang san chi huai LE duzi

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may be explained as:

(c) [John CAUSE [belly, stomach BECOME bad, ill]] by eat]

‘John became ill in his stomach because of eating (unclean/spoiled food)’

According to Xiong and Liu’s hypothesis of the functional category, since the predicate, R, is the argument selected by the functional category BECOME, it cannot be the head of the VP; since the VP is representational and the V only represents the lexical information, the V cannot be the head either. In other words, the R is the argument that the functional category BECOME selected for V.

Xiong and Liu select BECOME as syntactical head because this choice fits the Generative Minimalist theoretical framework, which states that “only the functional element can be the syntactic head.” The other advantage of this choice is that this functional head will preserve the important syntactic information, such as argument selection and thematic role assignment. In addition, if the V is selected as the head of the VR, William’s Right Hand Head Rule for endocentric compound will not be preserved. Since BECOME and CAUSE are invisible on the surface, saying they fit the Right Handed Rule means the arguments they select will figure on the right hand position on the surface.

5.6.4.1 Invisible functional category and its semantic component

The invisible functional categories [BECOME] and [CAUSE] correspond to the cognate ideas of ‘become’ and ‘cause’ semantically. This correspondence can cause confusion; however, it is a syntactic concept. It carries a definite lexical content and may be actualized on the surface in a tangible form. For example, in Chinese, the invisible
functional category [CAUSE] of the VR may be realized with the BA [把] construction, and [BECOME] may be realized with the DE [得] construction.

Example: BA realizes [CAUSE]:

妹妹哭醒了爸爸 → 妹妹把爸爸哭醒了
meimei ku xing le baba  meimei BA baba ku xing le
‘little sister woke dad up crying’ ‘little sister CAUSEd dad to wake by crying’

Example: DE realizes [BECOME]

妹妹哭啞了嗓子 → 妹妹哭得嗓子啞了
meimei ku ya le sangzi  meimei ku DE sangzi ya le
‘little sister cried her voice hoarse’ ‘little sister cried her voice BECOME hoarse’

On the other hand, the cognate or the semantic components of a word do not necessarily have a corresponding function. For example, the English word “kill” may be deconstructed into the semantic components CAUSE, BECOME, NOT ALIVE, etc. To extend “kill” functionally, we may only find corresponding functions such as [CAUSE] and [BECOME]. However, there is no corresponding functional category for “NOT ALIVE” to be found. In addition, the semantic component is part of the predicate, while the functional category is an expansion of the lexical head (the verb). The functional categories exist apart from the lexical categories, i.e., their existence does not depend on the lexical content of either the V or the R, but depends on their syntactical association.

5.7 Advantage of taking the invisible functional category as the head

This viewpoint takes into account the conceptual structure of predication in Chinese; that is, a necessary and adequate condition of modern Chinese predication is to render the event telic or bounded. However, it does not leave room for the explanation of
the syntactic operations, such as the insertion of aspect markers for the V, the qualifications of the R, or the insertion of the DE/BU, admitting that VR is generally accepted as syntactically derived construction.

The advantage of taking the invisible functional category as the syntactical head of the VR solves this issue. Its benefits are many. First, there is no one uniform head as far as the information focus is concerned. Secondly, the actual interpretation of the syntactical meaning depends on the concrete syntactic operation. For instance, the insertion of the DE/BU into the VR only bears on the invisible functional category of [BECOME], but not on the [CAUSE].

5.8 DE/BU and [BECOME]

With a given VX, whether its functional category is BECOME or CAUSE depends on various contexts. A cause can only be established after its effect is verified or verifiable. This means that only an actualized VX can legitimately select the functional category of CAUSE. In other words, when a VX is actualized, (for instance with the aspect marker LE to mark its accomplishment), the X becomes definite, verified or verifiable fact. It is illogical to establish a causative relation for a non-actualized event, therefore with DE/BU, the invisible functional category can only be BECOME.

5.9 The V DE/BU X and the negation

One frequent topic in the study of the V DE/BU X construction is the asymmetry. Two asymmetries are observed in this construction: One is in its form. Usually the positive form is considered the unmarked/zero form, then the matching negative form for
the positive V DE X should be V **BU DE** X, with the addition of negative marker BU, not the actual form V BU X, in which the original non-achievement marker DE is lost. The other is its usage asymmetry: Liu Yuehua’s empirical study (Liu Yuehua, 1980) reveals that the occurrence of the V BU X (the negative) is about 31 times more frequent then the V DE X (the positive). For this usage distribution asymmetry, Shi Yuzhi’s study *On the Symmetry and Asymmetry between the Negation and Assertion* (Shi Yuzhi, 1992/2001: Chapter 3) provides an adequate explanation.

### 5.9.1 Theorem/Principle of the assertive vs. the negative usage in natural language

(Shi Yuzhi, 1992/2001)

Shi finds that the logical reason for the V DE/BU X being used mostly in its negative form of V BU X is similar to the *jieyi* (介意) ‘to mind’ type of words in Mandarin, which have very weak assertive capacity because their semantic quantity is very small (emphasis added). This phenomenon is in keeping with the theorem/principle of the assertive vs. the negative usage in natural language. Shi explains that words with less assertive capacity have a greater chance of being used in a negative construction and words with greater assertive capacity have a greater chance of being used in an assertive construction. Words with medium assertive capacity have equal chance of being used in either the negative or the assertive construction. This observation is based on his deduction that the negation in natural language is quantity based. By ‘quantity based,’ Shi means that, similar to the physical world, where the matter or an event of a big quantity has a higher chance of existence, which means stronger assertion; the matter or the event with a small quality has a smaller chance of existence, which may be translated as a
strong negation; the matter or the event with medium quantity has equal chance if being used in either the assertion or the negation.

Shi further explains that the meaning of negation in natural language may be stated as “less than X [quantity]” or “not up to the X [quantity]”; therefore, the negation of a certain quantity will negate all the quantities equal or above this quantity. In other words, the smaller the quantity negated, the larger is its scope of the negation. For example:

他沒吃一點兒東西
他 did not eat a little [quantity of] food
‗He did not eat anything at all.’

沒有絲毫的讓步
mei you si hao de rangbu
did not have a thread hair’s concession
‗(He/she/they) did not give in at all’

“A little”, “thread” and “hair” are the very small quantity and when the negation bears on such a small quantity, the scope and the strength of the negation actually augments proportionally in the opposite direction, i.e., to the complete and absolute negation of the matter. In other words, to achieve the complete and absolute negation of any concept or any state of affairs, the best choice is to negate with the word of smallest semantic quantity in its conceptual or semantic quantity group.

In other words, the semantic quantity of a word or a phrase is comparable to the quantity of the matters in material world. The “semantic quantity” of a word is a relative quantity, which means it can be measured only in comparison with other words or expressions of the similar meaning or conception.
Shi then explains that in Mandarin there exists a group of words that are mostly or only used in their negative form. The representative of this group is *jieyi* (介意) ‘to mind.’ To demonstrate their semantic quantity Shi puts the words of similar meaning in a gradual scale with the one with lest semantic quantity at the left most position. For example:

Words express different degrees of something being impressed in the memory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>原意</th>
<th>記得</th>
<th>牢記</th>
<th>銘記</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ji**eyi</em></td>
<td>jide</td>
<td>laoji</td>
<td>mingji</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘to mind’ ‘remembered’ ‘hold fast in memory’ ‘carved in memory’

There are three commonly shared characteristics of this group of words. The first is the above-mentioned distributional fact that they mostly occur in negative form. Secondly, their positive form almost or exclusively occurs in interrogative sentences with the negative meaning and as rhetorical question. The third is that their capacity or power of negation is much greater or stronger than the other words in the same meaning group, i.e., those which are situated at the opposite pole of the assertive quantity scale. In the same sense, this latter group of words with great assertive quantity is more frequently used in the positive form due to their greater efficiency in the assertion.

Shi collected about 110 such words in literary works and found that 93 of them appeared in the negative form and all of these negative words appeared in declarative sentences. The positive form of the words in this group mostly occurred in interrogative sentences. That is, they are in complementary distribution: The negatives are in declarative sentences and the positives are in interrogative sentences. In addition, their negative form in declarative sentences cannot be switched to the positive form freely in
the same context. Liu Yuehua made similar observations in her study on the usage distribution of V DE/BU X (Liu Yuehua, 1980).

5.9.2 V BU X is the principle usage of the assertive vs. the negative pair V DE/BU X

With regards to V DE X vs. V BU X, Shi finds that this construction behaves exactly the same as the jieyi type of word. That is, they have very little semantic quantity, thus assertive power. He draws the following diagram to illustrate his point (Shi, 2001: 83):

Degree of the assertive/semantic quantity of V DE X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0.1</th>
<th>0.3</th>
<th>0.5</th>
<th>0.7</th>
<th>0.9</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L1</td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>L3</td>
<td>L4</td>
<td>L5</td>
<td>L6</td>
<td>L7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

L1 = absolute no P;
L2 = small possibility of P;
L3 = some possibility of P;
L4 = possible P;
L5 = more possibility of P;
L6 = high possibility of P;
L7 = assured P

According the above theorem of natural language negation, the less semantic quantity of assertion a word or a construction has, the greater its negation power or effect is. The negative form of the V DE X, the V BU X means no possibility at all, that is it is situated at the L1 position: ‘absolute no P.’ From the V BU X’s position or its assertive quality, Shi deducts that the positive form V DE X must have very little assertive quantity and therefore it should be at the L2 position: a little possibility of P. Shi surmises:

Here we found the logical solution for the DE construction [here Shi means the V DE X construction] being used more frequently used in its negative form: it is
similar to the *jieyi* ‘to mind’ group of words, which has a rather small assertive quantity. By the usage rule of the positive vs. the negative form in natural language, its negative form, V BU X, is sure to be used much more frequently than its positive form V DE X (Shi, 2001: 84).

The second characteristic of this type of words with a very low degree of assertive quantity is frequency in the interrogative. This is shown in that its positive form is used more frequently in the interrogative sentences, but hardly ever in an assertive sentence. The high usage occurrence of the V DE X in interrogative sentences is revealed in Liu Yuehua’s empirical study (Liu Yuehua, 1980), which finds the explanation in Shi Yuzhi’s analysis of the words’ assertive quantity as well.

5.10 DE/BU and the perfective aspect

While the mainstream predication generally changes atelic verbs into the telic or bounded aspect by either adding perfective aspect markers or using the VR construction, the insertion of BU as the negation marker (for non-discrete entities such as adjectives and unbounded verbs) between the V and the X reverses this process. In other words, the insertion of BU executes the negation of the telic aspect, or the bounded aspect of the construction by denying the attainability of X. If the transformation from the unbounded state to the bounded state of a verb can qualify as a predicate, the reversed transformation from the bounded state to the unbounded state of the V BU X (V BU R) is an equally legitimate predicate.

Using “attainability” means that the BU bears on the functional category of BECOME of the VX. It does not bear directly on the X, the center of predication. In other words, BU executes a shift of predication focus from the previous focus on X to the
present focus on BU. This means that the syntactic head or the invisible functional category [NOT BECOME] of the V BU X construction becomes the new focus.

5.11 V DE/BU X as modality: pragmatic analysis

Modality expresses the speaker’s attitude toward or the subjective involvement with the content of the proposition, therefore it can serve the function of predication alone. This brings us to our next issue: The V DE/BU X construction as the one of the major predicates in Chinese in the role of modality M in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.

5.12 Summary

I. The internal syntactic property and its significance comes from the invisible functional category [BECOME] of the VR construction, which is the ‘attainability of the result X by means of V.’

II. The insertion of DE/BU reverses the bounded or telic aspect of VR to imperfective, thus ‘non-attainability of the result X.’ DE/BU insertion converts VR to the YES/NO judgment of predication.

III. The ‘potential’ sense of V DE/BU X is pragmatically based both on its development and in its current usage. Thus, the interpretation of its meaning must take pragmatics into account. In other words, when the event, V, is in the irrealis mode or modality, V DE/BU X conveys a sense of non-attainability of the result X. When V is in the realis mode, it expresses a counterfactual event: The non-achieved and no longer achievable result X. In other words, when the event, V, is in the irrealis mode or modality, V DE/BU X conveys a sense of non-attainability of the result X, but when the V is in the realis mode, it expresses a counterfactual event: The non-achieved and no longer achievable result X.
CHAPTER 6

Data Analysis-Based Description of V DE/BU X Construction

6.1 Introduction

This chapter uses the available data from other empirical studies on the subject. It is composed of three parts:

1. The composition of the V and that of the X in the V BU X construction.
2. An ad hoc collection of lexical or idiomatic V BU X items.
3. The context features and illocutionary types of the V DE/BU X construction.

6.1.1 Theoretical framework and method of the corpus approach: Importance of the corpus for linguistic description and analysis

This section attempts to describe the primary data for contrastive analysis. Filipovic, one of the well-known scholars in contrastive analysis, points out the importance of the corpus approach (Filipovic, 1980):

a) A valid contrastive project cannot be considered complete before its result has been verified and completed with the help of some representative corpus.

b) Only a corpus can verify certain cases of doubtful grammar.

c) Frequency and distribution can be established only on the basis of a corpus.

In addition, “the material from a corpus may serve to verify the conclusions based on the theory,” because “without a corpus, it would be impossible to obtain a more or less complete list of all units which belong to some part of speech; such a list is important for contrastive analysis and its practical application.” He also specifies that although ideally “a standard corpus (with frequency and distribution specifications)” would serve the
purpose, “when conditions are restricted, one can start with a pilot corpus or small ad hoc corpus.” (Filipovic, 1980). These guidelines are appropriate for research on linguistic descriptions as well. In our study of V DE/BU X, only a corpus approach can sustain and validate a description of the V DE/BU X construction from the viewpoint of theoretical elaboration and that of its application in Chinese SL pedagogy.

6.2 Composition of the V and that of the X in the V BU X construction

6.2.1 Corpus material

In this section I will concentrate on the task of describing the lexical composition and usage distribution of the V DE/BU X construction in Mandarin. To gain a more general picture of how this construction works in the language, a quantitative analysis of a representative corpus for its distribution is necessary. The following secondary sources are used, and I have added further quantitative analysis and interpretation. For instance, the positive V DE X and the negative V BU X are not treated equally; rather, the negative V BU X is taken as the primary focus and V DE X is taken as the derived form. Consequently, my analysis is concentrated on V BU X.

6.2.2 Data source

1. Chao (1968). A Grammar of Spoken Chinese. In this book, Chao lists 155 resultatives, mostly adjectives in antonym pairs. This list is used for comparison with other lists of the X position elements.

48 Emphasis is mine.
2. Fan Jiyan (1963). “Structural Analysis of Post-Verbal Directional Elements.” I will use Fan’s collection of the V BU X items which do not have the positive V DE X and the collection of the V DE/BU X items that do not have the VX forms in this study to demonstrate the lexical part of this construction.

3. Li Linding (1992). “From Simple to Sophisticated Methods of Analysis: Analysis of Verb-Resultative Complement Sentence.” Li lists “lexical elements that are often used as resultative complements” in his study. I use this list for comparison with other lists for the validation of the X category membership of the V DE/BU X construction.

4. Liu Yuehua et al., eds. 1998. Directional Complement Explained. Liu uses a four million character corpus of modern Chinese literature, mainly novels and short stories of contemporary authors. Liu and her colleagues sampled all the VX directional sentences in this corpus for their manual. I will use the ‘potential form’ examples in Liu’s book as a mini corpus for the description of the V DE/BU X construction’s sentential context features and its illocutionary types. Although this mini corpus only contains the V DE/BU directional, it contains 413 authentic V DE/BU X sentences.

5. Yu Min (1988). “On the Word Category of the kan bu jian ‘look not see – unable to see’ and the zhao bu zhao ‘look for not find – unable to find’ in the Beijing Dialect.” In this article, Yu lists 10 categories of “tri-syllabic words” in the format of V BU X from the Beijing dialect. There are altogether 192 V BU X items in his collection, each of which is illustrated with a concrete sentence. I’ll present some of his examples to show his lexical approach to the subject and also compare them with other X lists.
6. Yu Shiwen, et al., eds. (2003). Grammatical Knowledge-Base of Contemporary Chinese: A Complete Specification, abbreviated as GKBCC in this dissertation. All the X items (the R) in its VR database are counted and analyzed to determine if they constitute the X membership in V DE/BU X.


6.2.2.1 Alternative construction “DE-LIAO/BU-LIAO”: VO is also a base for V DE/BU X formation

The bases that can have DE/BU inserted to form the V DE/BU X construction are:

1. V + Resultative (VR)
2. V + Directional (VD)
3. Detachable verb compound (Detachable)
4. V + Objective (where Obj. = NP) (VO)

This last category is usually not listed among the bases for the formation of the V DE/BU X construction. However, if we consider the DE-LIAO/BU-LIAO as an alternative form\(^{49}\) for the insertion to form the V DE/BU X construction (which I believe we should because the V DE-LIAO/BU-LIAO Obj. is no doubt a V DE/BU X construction both in its form and meaning), then the category of the V + Object (where Obj. = NP) should also be included as a base of the V DE/BU X construction.

6.2.2.2 Is the V DE/BU X a syntactical pattern or a lexical item?

Whether a given verb has the capacity to form a V + Resultative relationship with a lexically compatible resultative element X is not systematically signaled in dictionaries.

\(^{49}\) DE-LIAO/BU-LIAO = DE-X/BU-X, using LIAO for X.
in general. This is likely because such an association is considered to be lexically transparent and also is not considered a permanent association. As Chao puts it:

Most potential complements are transient words formed by infixion of ordinary separable V-R compounds. A limited number of potential compounds, however, occur either mostly or exclusively in potential form, with idiomatic meanings. A few occur only in negative form, the positive being either nonexistent or available only as back-formation (Chao, 1968: 457).

6.2.3 General summary of statistics and their interpretation

The first statistics below indicate approximately what percentage of verbs can form the VX association (the base for DE/BU insertion to form the V DE/BU X construction) and that the V in the VX is an open list, while the X is a closed list.

6.2.3.1 Data from Yu Shenwen et al., eds. (2003)


This manual is the most up-to-date and unique in the field of Modern Chinese grammar information (for parsing and tagging) and was compiled by Chinese grammar specialists and the Research Institute of Computer and Information Science of Beijing University. It contains 73,874 words and idioms and claims to cover 99% of the modern Chinese lexicon that appears in newspapers, radio, TV and internet publications. Its general database contains over 10,000 entries. Its 24 sub-databases are divided by part of speech. Besides the traditional categories, such as nouns, the verbs, adjectives, prepositions, adverbs, conjunctions, structural particles, etc., it also includes the sub-
databases of idioms, acronyms, prefixes, suffixes, bound morphemes, interjections, and punctuations. The databases which concern the present study are the verb-resultative (動結式分庫), which has a total of 952 entries; the verb-directional (動趨式分庫), which has a total of 1602 entries; and the detachable verbs (離和動詞分庫), which has a total of 158 entries.

6.2.3.2 Various types of VX and their % within the total verb pool of GKBCC

- Data source 1: GKBCC (2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Verb Base: Total entries</th>
<th>Verb + Resultative</th>
<th>Verb + Directional</th>
<th>Detachable Verb Compound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2147</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>1602</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data show that a little less than half (44%) of the verbs tagged in the GKBCC can form the VR construction, where the R can be either a verb or an adjective; three-fourths of the verbs can form a VD construction with one or more of the 27 simple or compound directional elements; and about 7% of the verbs can form detachable verb compounds.

In fact, form is the criterion for distinguishing between the directional and other resultative elements, because the directional category is a clearly defined closed list with a finite number of items. However, the syntactic function that the directional plays in the V DE/BU X construction is still essentially the resultative. Lü Shuxiang was the first to
identify them by their post-verbal position, which assigns them the function of “resultative verb” (Lü, 1944, 1984: 133). \(^{50}\)

- Data source 2: Liu Yuehua et al. (1998).

Out of a corpus of four million characters of modern Chinese literature, Liu Yuehua and her colleagues sampled 6156 verbs that associated with one or more directional (Liu, 1998: 422-700). Chao also observes that, “… most cases of predominantly potential compounds are of the directional type” (Chao, 1968: 457-8).

### 6.2.3.3 What are the verbs in the V position of the VX?

In section “6.6.2 Common First Verbs and Complements [in the V-R compound]” of his manual, Chao comments:

The V can be almost any verb, including any adjective. Verbs of very general meaning can have a greater variety of R. For example: *nong*(弄) ‘do with’, *gao*(搞) ‘do with’, *na*(拿) ‘take,’ *zuo*(做) ‘do, make,’ *da*(打) ‘strike’ and *bian*(變) ‘change,’ all of them can take adjectives such as *hao*(好) ‘good’ and *huai*(壞) ‘bad, […] (Chao, 1968: 441).

Theoretically, any activity and non-telic verb can figure in the V position of the VX. Scholars engaged in research on conceptual structures of Chinese verbs have indicated that almost all frequently used modern Chinese verbs are non-telic (James Tai, 2007; Shi Yuzhi (2004).

While all non-telic verbs are candidates for the V in the VX, Chao observes that the resultative X tends to fall into certain types, which constitute a closed list. “Since they

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\(^{50}\) Lü Shuxiang’s original text (1944, 1984:133): “即以 ‘吃得下饭’与 ‘吃不下饭’为例，动词之后显有三个成分，一表可能性之 浑与不，次为表方位之 上、下，表向背之 出、入、来、去，表起止之 起、住，表效验之 了、著、动、见，以及其他诸多限制动态乃至说明宾语之词，凡此种种皆以结束动词之势向为其作用，姑且称之为 结动词。”
express the result or end-point state, the majority of them are adjectives, even some adverbs.” Chao lists 155 such resultative X in his book, which I will use for comparison with the resultative X lists from other studies.

6.2.4 Combinability of the X with the V (GKBCC)

The VR sub-database in GKBCC may reveal the combinability of the X with the V. This VR sub-database contains 952 verbs. The VR criteria in the GKBCC, according to Yu Shiwen, its chief editor, is that the various VR tagged in this manual only include those in which the relationship between the V and the R is “bounded,” i.e., these VR are not freely extendable, like those in detachable compound verb sub-database. They also explicitly indicate that one of the grammatical properties of the VR is that the structure element DE/BU may be inserted between the V and the R. In this VR sub-database, the verbs are listed vertically in table form. Selected resultatives that can combine with these verbs to form a VR are listed horizontally, and then tagged individually. There are six generally tagged resultatives:

- liao (了) ‘to finish/accomplish/achieve’
- zhao (著) ‘to hit upon (the goal)’
- cheng (成) ‘successfully accomplished, changed to, became’ Xs which GKBCC tagged in this VR sub-database. They are the following:
  - dong (動) ‘to move, moved’
  - hao (好) ‘good, accomplished successfully’
  - de-liao (得了) ‘possible/capable/feasible to achieve, to finish or go an end’
Beside these six tagged resultative items, in the column of “frequently occurring examples” (常用例), we find a list of the most often encountered resultatives matched to each specific verb in the sub-database. I have inventoried these “frequently occurring examples” in addition to the above mentioned tagged resultatives. This yields a list of 23 resultative X, their combinability percentages and the total number of the listed verbs in GKBCC. For instance wan (完) ‘to finish, to complete,’ which is the synonym associated with cheng (成) ‘successfully accomplish,’ changed to ‘became’ in the disyllabic synonym compound word wancheng (完成) ‘to accomplish, to achieve successfully,’ and has a combinability percentage of 65%. This means 615 verbs in this 952 verb VR sub-database have combined with wan (完) at least once in the GKBCC corpus.

6.2.4.1 Affiliation of a given X with a group of verbs in the V position (Zhang Wangxi, 1999)

Why bother describing the V since it is an open list? Zhang’s Appendix lists a total of 356 verbs items which occur with his 1421 V BU X token. On the other hand, since the X is a closed list, to view the association of a given X with variety of verbs can reveal certain semantic properties of the X. In his Appendix VI, Zhang provides a table of the affiliation of a given X with a group of verbs. Seventeen frequently occurring X and their most frequently collocated verbs in the VX are listed to demonstrate the overlapping of semantic components between these associates of the X and the V.

With these examples, Zhang seeks to demonstrate that these affiliations are based on the commonly shared semantic components between that X and its verb associate. In addition, since the lexical content of the X has been drained to various degrees, the
interpretation of its lexical meaning becomes dependent on the semantics of its associated V. The V and the X are complementary in their aspects: The V is an activity verb in imperfective aspect, while the X provides an end point to the action and therefore marks the V with a perfective aspect. (cf. Table 6.2 Some V X associations in V BU X: Three most common X in Appendix I for details.)

**6.2.5 Inventory of the X**

I did not find any systematic investigation of the X in the V DE/BU X construction in literature. This lacuna likely stems from the intuitive feeling that “most potential complements are transient words formed by the insertion of ordinary separable V-R compounds” (Chao, 1968: 457).

For the X that is not a directional, but either a resultative verb, a state change descriptive adjective, or a telic verb, we do not have an empirically based exhaustive inventory such as Liu Yuehua’s manual of the directional (1998) can provide for the V DE/BU Directional. The most comprehensive empirical study of V BU X is by Zhang Wangxi (1999: 135-162), with the following limitations:

- Oral registered material is underrepresented. Zhang excludes a 400,000 character quasi-oral corpus from his study.
- The V BU LIAO is excluded.

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51 Here the X may be either a resultative verb or a changing state descriptive adjective, but not a directional.
52 The “quasi-oral” materials are soap operas, plays and other media texts. Zhang considers them “not authentic daily conversation, but artificial because as literature, they are considered processed.” (From telephone conversation with the author when I visited Beijing in spring 2010).
6.2.5.1 Calculation and interpretation of statistics from Zhang Wangxi’s study on V BU X

Zhang Wangxi lists his general statistics on V BU X in the appendixes of his study (1999: 135-162). My calculations in the following are based on his statistics.

- Zhang’s corpus size: 2,050,000 characters of modern Chinese Literature, including novels and prose.

Table 6.3 Count of the V items and the X items in the V BU X (Zhang, 1999: 151/160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V BU X (corpus size: 2,050,000)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total tokens</td>
<td>V inventory*</td>
<td>X inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1420</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All 356 Vs are listed in Zhang’s Appendix I, without a frequency count.

Table 6.4 The X composition and percentage (Zhang, 1999: 159-160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X inventory total item = 92* (100%)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X=Verb</td>
<td>X=Adj.</td>
<td>X=Directional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All 92 X are listed in Zhang’s Appendix III in separated categories with individual frequency counts.

Table 6.5 The V BU X items with five or more occurrences (Zhang, 1999: 160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V BU X</th>
<th>V token inventory *</th>
<th>V item</th>
<th>X item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total token</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in 1421</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in 595</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in 92</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All 48 V BU X are listed in Zhang’s Appendix IV with individual counts.

The above three tables show that in V BU X:

- V can be interpreted as an open list class: There are 356 V items out a total token of 1421 of V BU X sentences (Table 6.3).
• X can be interpreted as a closed list class: there are 92 X items out of the same number of tokens (Table 6.3).

• The composition of X is 32% verbs, 43% adjectives and 25% directionals (Table 6.4).

• There are 595 (42%) V BU X items occurring five or more times in Zhang’s corpus. Among these high occurring V BU X, only 15 X (16% or 1/6 of the 92 X items) are used in 595 (42%) of the 1421 V BU X tokens (Table 6.5, shaded columns). This concentrated distribution of the 15 highly occurring BU-X indicates that they should be treated as the lexical head of the V BU X construction and their specific meaning should be explained in dictionaries.

In order to establish more clearly what these X are, we need to compare the Xs from different lists, sort out the commonly shared members, and then tally their frequency, so that the following issues may be resolved:

1. The scope of X as a closed list,
2. An inventory of typical and most frequent X, and
3. Their combinability with the verb in VX and V DE/BU X.

6.2.5.2 Shared membership in Chao’s and Li Linding’s Lists

Lacking a corpus base sampling may put the validity of the X inventory in question. However, by using the commonly shared items in different X lists, we can still constitute a valid ad hoc core member inventory of the X as a starting point.
The lists compared are:

**A. Non-empirical, sourced from linguistic literature on the subject**

1. Chao (1968: 444-446):
   - “List of Common Complements,” total of 155 items, mostly adjectives in antonymous pairs (Chao, 1968: 6.6.2.).

   Chao’s two lists combined have a total of 160 items. The items in these two lists can all be in the X position.

2. Li Linding’s (1992: 162) list, in which they are called “lexical elements often used as resultative complements.”

   Li lists a total of 157 items in four separate categories in his study:
   a) Transitive verb: 9
   b) Intransitive verb: 56
   c) Adjective describing a change of state: 81
   d) Phrases: 11

   For this study, categories a, b and c are used, but d is not. So the number of items in Li’s listing is 146 and their respective percentages are:

   **Table 6.6 Composition of Resultative Complement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Transitive V</th>
<th>Intransitive V</th>
<th>Verb total</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

53 These counts and percentages are based on Li Linding, 1992: 162.
Li’s list confirms Chao’s list in that over half of the X items he listed are also adjectives.

Comparing Chao’s and Li’s lists yields the following result:

**Table 6.7 Shared Resultative X between Chao and Li Linding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>X total</th>
<th>common items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chao</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among these 75 common resultatives that both Chinese linguists listed, there is a better chance that they will contain the core members for the X we are looking for.

**6.2.5.3 X Members from GKBCC**

*B. Empirical, but without quantitative data*

GKBCC data collection: A total of 23 X items are collected from the V-R sub-database of GKBCC. Besides the six listed resultatives that GKBCC tagged in this sub-database of 952 verbs, the other 17 Xs are collected from the column of “examples of commonly used combinations.” Although these 23 Xs are not exhaustive of all the Xs in this sub-database, they represent the most frequent ones. These instances of the X do not have a frequency in GKBCC. The individual count and their percent reflect each X’s combinability scope with the V members of this V-R sub-database.
Table 6.8 First 12 most versatile X members from GKBCC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rank#</th>
<th>X=R</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>count</th>
<th>ability to associates with various V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>完</td>
<td>Wan</td>
<td>Finish</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>好</td>
<td>Hao</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>成</td>
<td>Cheng</td>
<td>Achieve</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>光</td>
<td>Guang</td>
<td>(run) out</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>掉</td>
<td>Diao</td>
<td>Drop</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>住</td>
<td>Zhu</td>
<td>stay, stop, hold fast</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>著</td>
<td>Zhao</td>
<td>hit, touch</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>清</td>
<td>Qing</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>壞</td>
<td>Huai</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>淨</td>
<td>Jing</td>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>够</td>
<td>Gou</td>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>錯</td>
<td>Cuo</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The # in the left column reflects X’s occurrence ranking.
Italic and bold items are GKBCC tagged resultatives.

6.2.5.4 X in V BU X (empirical and quantitative)

C. Empirical and quantitative data: The X in the V BU X (not the X in the VX association): Zhang Wangxi (1999: 159-160), Appendix III: “92 complements and their occurrences in the 1421 tokens of the V BU X samples.”

---

54 These counts are made from Yu Shiwen et al. Eds., 2003, GKBCC: 723-740.
### Table 6.9 Ten most common non-directional X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
<th>% in 1421</th>
<th>% in 913 *</th>
<th>In Yu (2003)</th>
<th>In Lü **</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>到</td>
<td>Dao</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>住</td>
<td>Zhu</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>見</td>
<td>Jian</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>清(楚)</td>
<td>Qing (chu)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>完</td>
<td>Wan</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>著</td>
<td>zhaò</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>動</td>
<td>dong</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>成</td>
<td>cheng</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>懂</td>
<td>dong</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>好</td>
<td>Hao</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The # in this table reflects the occurrence ranking in Zhang’s corpus.

* 913 are the total tokens of V BU X, where X may be either a verb or an adjective, but not a directional, in the pool of 1421 V BU X (Zhang Wangxi, 1999).

** Mentioned in Lü Shuxiang’s grammar manual (1999: 17) as most frequently encountered resultatives.

### 6.2.6 Commonly shared members of the five lists compared

Commonly shared non-directional X members (including verbs and adjectives)

Recapitulation of the lists compared:

1. Yu Shiwen et al., eds. (1999) GKBCC: 23 X items taken from the V-R sub-database with a total of 952 VX entries. These Xs include resultative verbs and adjectives. Their respective count of combinations with various V and the percentage of these V in the 952 VX pool are given.

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55 These counts are selected and quoted from Zhang Wangxi, 1999, pp. 159-160. I exclude the directional because we only use Yu Shiwen’s VR sub-database (GKBCC) for comparison.
2. Yu Min’s V BU X list (1988): Five non-directional X items, representing a total of 86 V BU X entries.


4. Li Linding (1992: 162): “lexical elements often used as resultative complements.” Li’s list contains a total of 146 items.

5. Zhang Wangxi (1999): Appendix III.2 and III.3, total of 69 X items regrouped into Verbs (29) and Adjectives (40), representing 913 V BU X tokens pool with their respective count and the percentage in the 913 V BU X token pool.

Results of comparing these five lists:
- 14 of Yu Shiwen’s 23 X (of VX) are found in Zhang’s list of 69 X (of V BU X). See Column [***] in Table 6.10 for shared members.
- 9 and 7 of Shiwen’s 23 X are found in Chao’s (column*) and Li’s listing (column**), respectively.
- Between Chao’s and Li’s common items that overlap with Yu Shiwen’s, there are six in common. They are:
  #2 hao (好) ‘good, well,’
  #4 guang (光) ‘(run) out, used up,’
  #8 qing (清) ‘clear,’
  #9 huai (壞) ‘bad, ruined,’
  #16 si (死) ‘dead,’
  #18 po (破) ‘broke’
Five of these six also occur in Zhang’s list. The only exception is #4: *guang* (光) ‘(run) out, used up.’

Four of Yu Min’s five non-directional *X* are found in Yu Shiwen’s 23 *X* except *jian* (見) ‘see’; four are found in Zhang’s 69 *X* list except *liao* (了) ‘finish/complete,’ which Zhang did not include in his data.

6.2.7 **Ad hoc core member inventory of non-directional *X*, the commonly occurring resultatives**

Using the shared membership from the list comparison, I establish the following ad hoc core membership inventory of the 16 non-directional *X*, which includes:

- The *X* items which appeared in two ~ five of the lists compared
- Two of the high occurring members of Zhang’s list: *dao* (到) ‘arrive at’ (28%)
  and *jian* (見) ‘see/seen’ (9%), the last two *X* in the following table, which only appear in Zhang’s list
- LIAO (了) ‘finish, complete’ which is tagged in Yu Shiwen, and mentioned only in Yu Min’s study
Table 6.10 Typical and most frequent non-directional resultative X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rank # in Yu</th>
<th>X in V-R</th>
<th>pinyin</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>X count</th>
<th>compatible % in 952 VX</th>
<th>X in V-R *</th>
<th>X in V-R **</th>
<th>X in V BU X ***</th>
<th>X count</th>
<th>% in 913 V BU X</th>
<th>rank # in Zhang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>全 Wan</td>
<td>Finish</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>好 Hao</td>
<td>good, well</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>成 Cheng</td>
<td>achieve/be come</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>光 guang</td>
<td>(run) out</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>掉 Diao</td>
<td>Drop</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>住 Zhu</td>
<td>stay, stop, hold fast</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>著 Zhao</td>
<td>hit, touch</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>清 Qing</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>壞 Huai</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>够 Gou</td>
<td>enough</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>死 Si</td>
<td>Dead</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>破 Po</td>
<td>Broke</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>了 Liao</td>
<td>finish/complete</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>動 Dong</td>
<td>Move</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>到 Dao</td>
<td>arrive at</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>見 Jian</td>
<td>See</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yu Shiwen’s items are referred to by their combinability ranking # in the left most column.

Shaded rows are non-shared members between Yu Shiwen’s and Zhang Wangxi’s lists.

“+” signals an item shared with Yu Shiwen’s list.
In fact, eight X items in this list are mentioned in Lü Shuxiang’s grammar manual (1999: 17) as “the most important and often used resultative complements” in V-R constructions. They are #22: dong (動) ‘move’; #20: liao (了) ‘finish, complete’; #7: zhao (著) ‘hit, touch’; #6: zhu (住) ‘stay, stop, hold fast’; #5: diao (掉) ‘drop’; #3: cheng (成) ‘achieve, become’; #2: hao (好) ‘good, well’; #1: wan (完) ‘finish, complete.’

6.2.8 Section summary

In this section, we used a quantitative approach to describe the V DE/BU X construction. With the available data mainly drawn from a current grammar manual and six other studies on the subject, we are able to confirm our observation that the V is an open list ensemble, and X is a closed list ensemble. Taking inventory of these non-directional X reveals that it is mainly comprised of approximately two dozen adjectives and verbs mostly used in the V-R construction. In addition, we identified 16 X items, which we sorted by comparing five lists of X (Table 6.10). We consider these 16 X to be the core or typical members of the X ensemble, which are most likely occur in the V BU X construction in modern Mandarin.

6.3 Lexical perspective

6.3.1. Yu Min’s 10 categories of the V BU X

Yu Min’s collection of 10 categories of “tri-syllabic V BU X ‘words’ in the Beijing Dialect” contains 192V BU X items, each with an example sentence (Yu Min, 1988). These 10 categories are:

1. V BU jian (V 不見) ‘V not seen’: Seven different Vs
2. V BU dong (V 不動) ‘V not move (neither Subj. nor Obj move)’: 10 items

3. V BU guo (V 不過) ‘V not “surpassed”’: 10 items

4. V BU xia (V 不下) ‘V not put into/not enough room for’: 13 items

5. V BU qi (V 不起) ‘V not able to afford it’: 15 items

6. V BU kai (V 不開) ‘V not able to be dispersed/spread’: 20 items

7. V BU zhao (V 不著) ‘V not able to hit/held it,’ ‘V cannot be done’: 30 items

8. V BU zhu (V 不住) ‘V not able to have it held fast’: 43 items

9. V BU shang (V 不上) ‘not able to achieve V: 39 items

10. V BU liao (V 不了) ‘V not able to accomplish/achieve it’: five items

Yu Min’s V BU X collection reflects the lexical contents and idiomatic nature of the V BU X ensemble, the degree of grammaticalization of the X and the semantic derivation of the X from its dictionary definition. Yu uses it to demonstrate his viewpoint that these V BU X are tri-syllabic words, which should be listed in dictionaries with their specific meaning. According to Yu, calling the BU-X the potential complement is both inadequate in representing its syntactic property and in informing its semantic contents and pragmatic effects.

Yu’s inventory is definitely a good representation of the V BU X construction, especially the lexical and idiomatic aspects of it in the Beijing Dialect, although questions many arise as to what extent it is idiosyncratic because Yu Min’s claims regarding V BU X do not have frequency statistics to back them up (cf. a sample of his presentation of his collection in Appendix II).

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56 Yu considers that V BU-LIAO is “too many to list,” so he only lists five idiomatic items in this category.
6.3.2 Yu’s four categories of non-directional BU-X and their range of combinability with a variety of verbs

Yu Min’s collection of the V BU X reflects one point that other lists do not. The V BU X count in Yu Min’s collection is for different Vs with the same BU-X. This represents the combinability of the BU-X with the variety of verbs. For instance, *jian* (見) ‘see, seen’ is only combinable with the verbs expressing the action of the sensual perception organs, i.e., that of the vision, hearing and smell (seven different V items). On the other hand, the more abstract the X is, the bigger its combinability with the variety of verbs. For instance, *zhu* (住) ‘stay, hold onto it’ combines with 43 different V; and *zhao* (著) ‘to hit upon, to hold fast on an object’ combines with 30 different V. The following counts of different Vs that combine with a given non-directional X in Yu Min’s collection demonstrate this point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cat.</th>
<th>Non-directional X</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Different V count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>zhu</em> (住)</td>
<td>stay, hold onto it</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>zhao</em> (著)</td>
<td>to hit upon, to hold fast to an object</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>dong</em> (動)</td>
<td>Move</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>jian</em> (見)</td>
<td>see, seen</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.3 Detachable verb compounds and the insertion of DE-LIAO/BU-LIAO

Zhang Miaomiao (張淼淼 2007) summarizes the research on ‘detachable words’ (離合詞) in recent years. The detachable compound category was first set apart in the

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57 These counts are made from Yu Min’s collection of V BU X from Beijing Dialect (Yu Min, 1988).
1950’s when Chinese linguists tried to establish the notion of ‘words’ in Chinese. The controversy was focused mostly on whether ‘detachable word’ should be regarded as words or as phrases because various elements can be inserted in between the two components of a detachable compound segment. These insertions are mostly of the order of syntactic operation, such as adding a modifier to the object of the VO type detachable compound, or moving the object of the VO detachable to the pre-verbal position, or inserting an aspect marker or a resultative to the verb of the VO type, etc. The current generally accepted definition is that these detachable compounds are word units, because first their usual form, the undetached form, follows the norm of modern Chinese word units – the disyllabic format. Secondly, the syntactic operations that can be performed on it, such as inserting verbal aspect markers or resultative elements after the verbal element, adding a measure word or other modifier to the noun element etc, will not alter the basic and original meaning of the unit (Wang Haifeng 王海峰 & Li Sheng 李生, 1999).

Theoretical issues aside, detachable compounds are also an important topic in Chinese SL teaching and machine translation research; hence, it is one of the six verb sub-bases in GKBCC and is discussed in various articles in Chinese SL circles (Rao Qin 饒勤, 1997; Wang Haifeng, 2002; Han Ming 韓明, 2003).

6.3.3.1 A brief view of the detachable compound verb sub-base in GKBCC

This sub-base contains 158 entries, about 1/10 of the total entries in the Usage Dictionary of Modern Chinese Detachable Compounds.\(^\text{58}\) Structural composition of the detachable compounds in it includes:

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\(^{58}\) Yang Qinghui (楊慶惠) et al., eds. (1995) 現代汉语离合词用法词典 (Usage Dictionary of Modern Chinese Detachable Compound). This dictionary was compiled for foreign students learning Chinese. 1738 entries
• The VO (verb + object) type: 98/158 (62%)

• The VD (verb + directional) type: 27/158 (17%)

• The VR (verb + resultative) type: 33/158 (21%)

Some of the major grammatical features of detachable compounds are the following:

1. All of the VO type detachable compounds allow post-verbal insertion of resultative elements, including the aspect markers LE and GUO. For instance:

   帮忙 → 帮完再來
   bang mang bang wan mang zai lai
   ‘help chores’ help finish chore again come
   ‘help’ ‘come again after (you) finish helping’ (with the chore)

2. All the VO-detachables allow the insertion of the object modifier.

   Ex. 帮忙 → 帮了個大忙
   bang mang bang le ge da mang
   help chore helped/gave one Cl. big help
   ‘help’ ‘helped a lot’

3. All the VO-detachables allow the object to be moved before the verb position.

   Ex. 帮忙 → 忙也幫不了多少
   bang mang mang ye bang bu liao duo shao
   Help chores chores yet help not accomplish much
   ‘help’ ‘(If we are/are unable to help much’

4. Almost all detachable compounds allow the insertion of the DE/ BU

   (151/158)

   Ex. 帮忙 → 帮得上幫不上忙?
   bang mang bang DE shang bang BU shang mang
   Help chores help possible arrive help not (possible) arrive chores
   ‘help’ ‘Able or unable to give a hand/help?’

are chosen from the corpus pool of 4066 detachable compounds defined in Modern Chinese Dictionary, and which are considered as “often used.”
From the above points 2 and 3, we see that all the VO type detachable verbs allow the insertion of post-verbal resultatives, as well as the addition of the noun modifiers, such as the quantity and the classifier of the object. However, most significant to the present study is point 4: Almost all detachable compounds (97% in this sub-database) allow the DE/BU insertion in the form of DE-LIAO/BU-LIAO to form the V DE/BU X (+ Object) construction.

Here special emphasis is placed on the VO type of detachable compound for two reasons. One is that the VO type accounts for the majority of detachable compounds. In the GKBCC detachable verbal compound sub-database, the VO type accounts for 62% (vs. the VD type 17% and the VR type 23%). Secondly, with the VO type detachable compound, to form the V DE/BU X construction, the insertion should be the DE-LIAO/BU-LIAO ‘possible accomplish, achieve’/‘not possible to accomplish, not possible to achieve’ instead of the bare DE/BU ‘possible/not possible.’ The GKBCC fails to specify this point and merely marks the insertion of a simple DE/BU in this sub-database. This may be a simple mistake; however, it raises a theoretical point needing clarification: The verbal base for the DE/BU insertion has to be in the perfective aspect, while the usual VO compounds in Chinese are in the imperfective aspect, i.e., they are activity verbs without an accomplished aspect. To accept the DE/BU insertion, these VO must be converted to the VR type by adding a perfective aspect marker or a resultative element to the verb in it. The default resultative marker is usually LIAO (了) ‘accomplish, finish,’ which may be regarded as the stressed form of the perfective aspect marker LE. In other words, the X in the transformation of the VO type detachable compound in the V DE/BU X construction is most likely LIAO. LIAO is also a synonym of WAN (完) ‘finish,’ and
we often encounter them both in the disyllabic word *wan liao* (完了) ‘finish,’ ‘the end.’ Recall that in 6.1.7, where we sketched a closed list of the X in the V DE/BU X construction with 16 members, the X with the widest combinability scope is WAN. In fact, the V DE/BU X construction can be paraphrased as “V DE/BU LIAO” or “V DE/BU WAN,” which represents its syntactic and semantic essence in a more concrete form. In addition, the insertion of the DE-LIAO/BU-LIAO for the VO type detachable is significant also because it proves that it is the attainability, with the focus on the result X, not the possibility, with the focus on the act V, that the V DE/BU X construction is concerned with. In addition, from the Structuralist’s viewpoint of Immediate Constituents, the meaningful segmentation of the V DE X and the V BU X is V // DE-X and the V // BU-X, not *the V-DE / X and *the V-BU // X.

### 6.3.4 Lexical and idiomatic V DE/BU X

Diachronically, the development of a grammatical pattern tends to gradually undergo a process of bleaching its semantic contents and becomes finally a syntactic construction independent of its context for its interpretation. This is also the case of the V DE/BU X construction (Cf. 5.5, also Shen Jiaxuan 2004). However, before the completion of its grammaticalization, a grammatical pattern in actual usage distribution is always a continuum with one extreme composed of the context independent regularity and the other composed of context-dependent and lexically charged items, which need to be learned individually as new words. The lexical and idiomatic V DE/BU Xs are such instances, the meaning of which are not transparent to non-native speakers and need to be learned individually. This is probably why nearly all general presentations of the V
DE/BU X construction in grammar manuals inevitably mention the idiomatic or lexical instances of it (Chao, 1968: 457; Lü Shuxiang, 1999: 17; Fan Jiyan, 1963: 160).

Yu Min’s collection of 192 V BU X items was meant to be an amendment to the Modern Chinese Dictionary for this construction’s Beijing Dialect derivation. For this purpose, Yu Min first provides the current dictionary definition of each X, which heads the categories in his article. Then he exemplifies each V BU X item with at least one concrete utterance from Beijing Dialect. Are all Yu Min’s 192 V BU X items unique to the Beijing Dialect? We have seen that all ten categories of V BU X in Yu Min’s collection can be found in both Zhang Wangxi’s V BU X data and in GKBCC (Cf.6.1.7.1 and 6.1.7.2).

By comparing Yu Min’s collection and the examples in Chao, Lü, and Fan’s descriptions of the idiomatic V DE/BU X construction, we can perceive the following special features as characteristic of the idiomatic V DE/BU X dictions:

- When the directional is used in its extended meaning rather than its cognate meaning, it often forms an idiomatic expression (Lü, 1999:17).

- When they only have the V DE/BU X forms, but have no VX form, they are fixed rather than transient (Fan Jiyan, 1963: 160).

(Cf. Appendix III “Ad hoc collection of the idiomatic V DE/BU X” for concrete examples.)

With regards to Yu Min’s collection of the 192 V BU X items from the Beijing Dialect, I think that it can serve as an initial small data source for further investigation into the V DE/BU X construction in Mandarin.
It would be very useful for SL Chinese pedagogy if an inventory of the V DE/BU X idiomatic expressions could be established. For such a task, the following project for an empirically based usage manual of the V DE/BU X construction may be envisaged:

- First, constitute a quantitatively valid corpus of oral registered material for the sampling of the V DE/BU X.
- Then, according to the theoretical guidance elaborated on in this dissertation, find its usage distribution.
- Select the entries by frequency.
- Illustrate the entries with well-selected representative utterance examples.

6.3.5 Section summary

In this section, we first presented Yu Min’s collection of the V BU X in the Beijing Dialect and the significance of the X’s scope of combination with the verb V. Next, we presented and discussed the detachable compound verbs as the base of the DE/BU insertion for the formation of the V DE/BU X construction with the detachable compound sub-database of GKBCC as a framework. Finally we have the discussion and presentation of the V DE/BU X idiomatic expressions, with a mini ad hoc collection for demonstration purposes (in Appendix III) and a brief outline for a project of a usage manual of the idiomatic V DE/BU X expressions.

6.4 Sentential context and illocutionary type of the V DE/BU X

In this section, we mainly focus on finding the distribution of the V DE/BU X construction’s sentential context and illocutionary type, using the sentences (approximately 410 sentences) found in Directional Complement Explained (Liu Yuehua
et al., eds., 1998) as corpus material. Although the Xs in these sentences are only
directionals, they still represent the V DE/BU X construction to a large extent. As
discussed earlier, the directional is a lexically defined category; the function they play in
the V DE/BU X construction is essentially the same as the other elements appearing in
the X position. Be it an adjective or a telic verb, they all fulfill the function of expressing
the result of the V. These 413 V DE/BU X sentences, which Liu calls the “potential
form,” are sampled out of a four million character corpus of modern Chinese literature,
mainly novels and short stories by contemporary authors. The collection is not exhaustive,
but representative as Liu uses it as examples for various directional constructions.

6.4.1 Sentential contexts and illocutionary features of V DE/BU X

The following is a list of the sentential features and illocutionary types that can be
quantified from Liu Yuehua’s 413 V DE/BU X directional sentences:

1. Whether the V DE/BU X is in negative, positive or interrogative form.

2. Association with LE: Whether it is the verbal LE₁ (glossed as Perf. Asp.) or
the sentential LE₂ (glossed as Ptl.); whether LE is in the same clause as V DE/BU X or
appears in another adjacent clause providing reasons or conditions for it or if LE appears
in both, the presence of LE qualifies the sentence as realis in its temporal interpretation
because LE functions as a temporal deictic at the discourse level, anchoring the action of
the V to the speaker’s speech time, which has a real-world time reference.

Ex. 腿不行了, 冬天出不来 (Liu, 1998: 52)
tui bu xing LE, dongtian chu bu lai LE.
‘(Her) legs are no longer good; (she) is no longer able to go out in winter.’

3. Following DE (得), the complement marker: When V DE/BU X follows DE, it
functions as other adjectives expressing the extent of the result.
Ex. 跑得喘不上氣来
pao DE chuan bu shang qi lai
run DE breath not up air/breath come
‘Run (to the degree/extent of) being unable to catch one’s breath.’

4. Preceding DE (的), the subordination marker of the noun or nominal phrase:

Elements preceding this DE normally serve as an attribute of NP (做定語), and as such they are considered a lexical block, not subject to syntactic analysis.

Ex. 你不要想做做不到的事.
ni bu yao xiang zuo zuo bu dao de shi
you not want think do do-not-arrive DE thing
‘Don’t try to do things which are impossible.’

5. IF, or the hypothetical sentence, marked by various hypothetical conjunctions, such as ruguo (如果) and yaoshi (要是), etc.

Ex. 十點以前攻不下這個城市，全盤計劃就打亂了. (Liu, 1998: 145)
shi dian yi qian gong bu xiazhe ge chengshi, quan pan jihua jiu da luan le.
ten o’clock before attack not down (achieve) this city, entire set plan would be messed up
‘(If we) cannot take possession of this city before 10 o’clock, (then) the entire plan will be upset.’

6. The evidence or the reason given for the non-attainability of X. These are usually provided in adjacent sentences: The V DE/BU X of this type mostly belongs to epistemic modality, i.e., judgment by inference.

Ex. 繩子太短，行李捆不起來. (Liu, 1998: 351)
shengzi tai duan, xingli kun bu qi lai
rope too short, luggage tie not up come
‘The rope is too short; the luggage cannot be tied up.’

7. Emphatic conjunctions LIAN…DOU/YE (連…都/也) ‘even ... also V BU X.’ The V BU X used with this emphatic conjunction is mostly for its rhetoric effect.
Ex. 連飯都吃不飽，更不用提上學了。
LIAN fan DOU chi bu bao, geng bu yong ti shangxue le
(Concern/regard) food even eat not full, further not mention go to school
‘There isn’t even enough food; going to school is out of the question’

8. Interjections or other emphatic adverbs (語氣詞) expressing the emotional
attitude of the speaker.

Ex. 她根本聽不進去。
ta genben ting bu jin qu
she at all listen not enter go
‘she isn’t open to it at all’
6.4.2 Survey results summary

The following table shows the sentential and illocutionary features in Liu Yuehua’s 413 V DE/BU X directional sentences.

Table 6.12 Contextual and Illocutionary Features of V DE/BU X (directional) sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*</th>
<th>Contextual features/illocutionary types</th>
<th>Occurrence count</th>
<th>Co-occurred</th>
<th>Minus co-occurred</th>
<th>Total token</th>
<th>% in 413 V DE/BU X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>92.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>~LE in clause A</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>16.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~LE in clause B</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Post DE (得 complement marker)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>before DE (的 nominal subordinate marker)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>IF hypothetical</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Evidence/reason-why</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>23.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>LIAN…(连) Emphatic conj. ‘connect, even’</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DOU/YE… (也) Emphatic conj. ‘also’</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Modality adverbs</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-occurred with NENG (能) ‘can’</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Numbers in this column correspond to the numbers in the list in the above section
Summary and discussion of the results:

**Feature 1:** The first three rows in the above table indicate that sentences with the V DE/BU X construction are predominantly negative (93%). This is a little lower than Liu Yuehua’s result. Her first study on V DE/BU X (1980) has a positive vs. negative occurrence ratio of 1:30, which comes to about 3% positive vs. 97% negative. For the positive V DE X we have here, 13 out 22 are interrogatives and they mostly (10 out 13) are rhetorical questions. In Liu’s earlier study, 28 out 35 interrogative V DE X are rhetorical questions. Therefore, with regards to positive, negative and interrogative distribution, generally speaking, our results are in agreement with those of Liu Yuehua’s previous empirical and quantitative study of V DE/BU X (Liu Yuehua, 1980).

**Feature 2:** The count of V DE/BU X in association with LE: 18 out of 70 have LE in two clauses, though V DE/BU X usually appears in the last clause. These 70 V DE/BU X sentences having LE in them account for about 17% of the 413 total. This percentage signifies that a little less than 1/5 of V DE/BU X should be classified in the realis category for its temporal interpretation, because, as mentioned earlier, LE functions as a temporal deictic at the discourse level, anchoring the action of the V to the speaker’s speech time, which has a real-world time reference. In the negative form, which is the basic form of the V DE/BU X construction, the result X of the action V is not achieved; therefore, the V BU X sentence with LE in it expresses a counterfactual event in the past or present related to the speaker’s speech time. However, this counterfactual event is verified because of its temporal status, so it should not be interpreted the same as a V BU X sentence in the irrealis category. The irrealis is ‘potential’ in the sense that its V BU X event is not yet verified temporally or not verifiable because it is in the imagination.
Features 3 and 4: V DE/BU X construction mainly serves as the predicate of the sentence, however, it may be used as a lexical block and to attributes the NP when it appears before DE (得), the nominal subordinate marker. It may also play the role of a complement of the VP when it appears after DE (得), the complement marker. These usage distributions are reflected in rows numbered 3 and 4. The percentage of these usages are only about 2.5% in Liu Yuehua’s directional V DE/BU X here, although Zhang Wangxi has indicated that in his corpus, about 15% of V BU X are in the attributive usage category (Zhang Wangxi, 1999).

Feature 5: The hypothetical (row # 5) V DE/BU X sentences number number 34. Together with the interrogatives (row #2), these two categories of V DE/BU X sentences number 55 (one co-occurrence count is subtracted), which comes to about 13% of the total. I count these two categories as irrealis because both the IF hypothetical V DE/BU X and those of the interrogatives are events temporally unverified or unverifiable of their actualization.

The most significant count is Feature 6: The evidence or reason in connection with V DE/BU X. There are 98 out of 413 (23.7%) sentences with V DE/BU X construction which explicitly provide the evidence or the reason for this construction in the adjacent clause. These statistics constitute a very strong argument in favor of my interpretation, which is regarding the V DE/BU X construction as an epistemic modality in the form of judgment by inference. We will have a more detailed discussion about this interpretation in 7.5.3.

Feature 7: The count of the V DE/BU X construction used in connection with LIAN…DOU/YE… for an emphatic effect is very salient as well. There are 53 such
sentences, which come to almost 13% of the 413 total. LIAN…DOU/YE is a rhetorical device mostly used in oral registered texts. By putting the common-sense expected event or the object in the post LIAN position and the unattainable event (V BU X) in the post DOU/YE position in contrast, this structure emphasizes the V BU X for a strong stylistic effect.

**Feature 8**: Co-occurrence with modality adverbs also has a relatively significant count: 31, which comes to about 7.5% of the 413 total.

Actually, from a pragmatic perspective, both Feature 7 and Feature 8, as well as the rhetoric interrogatives (10 sentences), can be considered as modality means, reflecting the speaker’s attitude toward the proposition or his/her effort to make a rhetorical or persuasive effect. In this sense, these three categories may be counted together as the category of rhetorical V DE/BU X. Subtracting their overlapping count of five, the three groups add up to 89, which comes to about 21.55% of the 413 total.

**6.4.3 Pragmatic profile of V DE/BU X**

In sum, the counts of these contextual and illocutionary features with Liu’s 413 V DE/BU X sentences cannot be considered exhaustive, because they are done by one subject (the researcher), whose judgments regarding criteria such as which should be included as modality adverbs, etc. may be biased, or at the least, not yet verified by others in the linguistic community. However, they have at least an indicative value in reflecting an approximate distribution of the V DE/BU X construction’s sentential context and illocutionary features. Although quantitatively and qualitatively these data are not conclusive, they are adequate for a preliminary analysis and description of the V DE/BU X construction’s pragmatic profile as follows:
In its usage, the first division should be drawn by the temporal criterion whether the V DE/BU X event is a *realis* (association with LE) or *irrealis* event (hypothetical and interrogatives, etc.). When it is a *realis* event, a verified counterfactual, it is fundamentally incompatible with its current ‘potential’ appellation and interpretation. The count (70/413) and percentage (17%) of this *realis* counterfactual usage of V DE/BU X is a non-negligible fact.

Secondly, as for its greatest usage distribution, almost one-quarter (23.7%) are in the sentential format of ‘(because of, or caused by) the reason/the evidence, (therefore) V BU X.’ This distribution led us to consider the V DE/BU X construction as an epistemic modality in the form of judgment by inference, which is very likely motivated by pragmatic reasons yet to be explored in depth.

The third significant count is the pragmatic perspective count of 89, or 21.55% of the 413 total, including the rhetorical interrogatives (10), the emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE… (53), and modal adverbs and various interjection particles (31). This count of V DE/BU X’s sentential context and illocutionary features distribution reveals that one of the essential motivations of this construction must reside in pragmatics, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

**6.4.4 Section summary**

In this section, a preliminary survey of the V DE/BU X construction’s sentential context features and illocutionary types are presented, using the 413 ‘potential form’ illustration examples from Liu Yuehua’s ‘Directional Complement Explained’ (Liu Yuehua, 1998) as a mini corpus. Some results are comparable with Liu Yuehua’s earlier
empirical study on the subject,\textsuperscript{59} such as the distribution of the positive vs. negative vs. interrogative forms. Other results are original and result from the current research. These consist, for instance, in sorting these V DE/BU X sentences with \textit{realis} (association with LE) vs. \textit{irrealis} (hypothetical and interrogatives, etc.) parameters; counting their illocutionary types, such as association with emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE… and rhetorical questions; as well as counting the ‘evidence – judgment’ chain sentence pattern in which about a quarter of V DE/BU X construction appeared. An in-depth discussion and interpretation of these results is the work of Chapter 7, where the V DE/BU X construction will be put into pragmatic perspective, in addition to the syntactic and semantic perspectives that we have discussed in previous chapters.

\textsuperscript{59} Liu Yuehua, 1980.
CHAPTER 7

V DE/BU X in Modality and Pragmatic Perspectives

7.1 Refocusing the description of V DE/BU X with its context and illocutionary features

The sections in this chapter are not following or building up one single line of argument, although by the end they lead to the same point: V DE/BU X’s potential meaning is based on its *irrealis* nature, which is defined mainly by the construction’s sentential context and illocutionary features I collected and presented in 6.3.

This order of presentation has been followed because of the nature of the object in question: i.e., on the one hand, V DE/BU X’s various properties do not fit neatly into a single description frame and on the other hand, quantitatively, the data I analyze is not conclusive.

With regard to section 7.2, it may seem unproductive to review at length the current name ‘potential’ and its ambiguity and inadequacy in representing V DE/BU X’s semantic properties. However, what I want to show is that the network of meaning (or semantic fields) of which ‘potential’ is an integral part is relevant. One line is its temporal reference (Palmer’s usage); the other is its modality reference (Jespersen’s notional moods). With one foot in each field, ‘potential’ brings both its relevant properties, i.e., its atemporal nature and its role in modality, into play. Here might be the secret (or the maze) of the long life of ‘potential’ for the designation of the V DE/BU X construction.

Section 7.2.5, “A stratified syntactic-semantic definition of V DE/BU X construction” summarizes previously discussed points. Here, the focus can be set on *irrealis* and other heterogeneous sentential contexts and illocutionary types of evidence.
I will then use various frames of description, such as TAM, and that of the hierarchization of qualification dimensions, to present its qualificational properties in section 7.3.2.

The co-occurrence with LE, the *realis* temporal deictic, is the argument for the atemporal nature of V DE/BU X. This argument is supported by the empirical evidence I found in my data. The examples of this co-occurrence also show, on the one hand, how the temporal reading can override the modality reading for its interpretation and on the other, why the absence of the *realis* deictic can lead to its *irrealis* (thus ‘potential’ or the modality) reading by default.

V DE/BU X’s meaning as an epistemic modality may be better illustrated with the imagery of the conceptual perspective for English dynamic modality ‘can’ and the deontic ‘may’ (7.5.2). Its co-occurrence with evidence may be regarded as another supporting argument for its epistemic nature (7.5.3).

Finally, I propose that its pragmatic motivation resides in the *irrealis* sentence type in which it appears and that this pragmatic motivation can be one of the reasons for its productivity/popularity (7.5.4).

**7.2. Reviewing the current usage of ‘potential’ in linguistic literature**

**7.2.1 Palmer’s usage of ‘potential’: Not yet actualized event**

What does ‘potential’ mean in current linguistic literature? Palmer in his book, “Mood and Modality,” (2001) used ‘potential’ for the following instances: One is in linguistic context, meaning ‘have not taken place’: “Deontic and dynamic modality refer to events that are not actualized, events that have not taken place, but are merely potential
(event modality)” (2001: 70). The other is when he quotes ‘potential’ as one of the grammatical categories, mainly in the description of American Indian languages: “Even more like indicative/subjunctive is the system described for Takelma (South Oregon) by Sapir (1922: 94) […]\(^{60}\) Here there are six ‘tense-mode’—‘aorist,’ ‘future,’ ‘potential,’ ‘inferential,’ ‘present imperative’ and ‘future imperative’” (2001: 151, 158).

From these quotes, we can deduce that Palmer’s usage of ‘potential’ as linguistic terminology mainly designates the grammatical category which ‘refers to events which are not actualized, events that have not taken place.’ ‘Potential,’ used in this sense, only partially covers V DE/BU X’s grammatical properties – it mainly denotes its imperfective aspect, rather than its temporal reference. Actually, V DE/BU X by itself is atemporal. Its temporal interpretation depends on the temporal deictic in its sentential context. The temporal deictic is the anchorage point tying the sentence time to real world time through the speech act. Whether the event in a sentence is tied or not to the real world time depends on whether there is a temporal deictic present in it. The notion of temporal interpretation is better conveyed by the semantic categories \textit{realis} vs. \textit{irrealis}. With V DE/BU X construction, there are two separate semantic properties we should distinguish. One is aspectual, which is internal in construction, rooted in its invisible functional category of VR, the base of its formation and related to DE/BU insertion, which operates on this invisible functional category. The other is proper temporal, which is external in the sense that it is determined by clues in its sentential context.

\(^{60}\) This is probably the earliest contemporary linguistic usage of ‘potential’ with temporal reference; Y. R. Chao draws from it for the description of Mandarin V DE/BU X.
7.2.2 Using ‘potential’ in an attempt at cross-language modality description

In McShane’s usage, ‘potential’ as mood means ‘capacity to perform X skill,’ which would be the equivalent of Chinese modality HUI (會) ‘know how to’ and NENG (能) ‘can, capable of.’

Jespersen developed a list of notional modes in his attempts to represent a ‘universal’ modality category (1963: 320). In his paradigm of notional moods, ‘potential’ belongs to the group of modalities that ‘contains no element of will,’ and the illustration example for it is ‘he can speak’ (1963: 320-321). Here we shall note that the distinction of modalities which contain or do not contain elements of will may be understood as the opposition between the dynamic and deontic modalities (containing element of will) on the one hand, and the epistemic modality (containing no elements of will) on the other.

Following Jespersen, computational linguistics scholars have also taken up ‘potential’ as one of the terms of their notional moods paradigm. Their reasons for

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Containing an element of will:</th>
<th>2. Containing no element of will:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jussive</td>
<td>go (command).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsive:</td>
<td>he has to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obligative:</td>
<td>he ought to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory:</td>
<td>you should go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precative:</td>
<td>go, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hortative:</td>
<td>let us go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive:</td>
<td>you may go if you like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promissive:</td>
<td>I will go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optative (realizable):</td>
<td>May he be still alive!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirative (unrealizable)</td>
<td>Would he were still alive!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional:</td>
<td>In order that he may go.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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choosing familiar terms for the modalities is to facilitate the usage of layman native speaker informants whose meta-language information on their mother tongue is solicited […]. Although their goal is to build up a knowledge-elicitation system for machine translation, their rationale for establishing such a knowledge-elicitation system is comparable to the teaching of grammar in SL pedagogy and the method they use can also serve us as a guide, that is, “wedding the extensive theoretical and descriptive research […] with practical approaches to guiding an untrained informant through this non-trivial task” seems to be Chao’s practice when he chose ‘potential’ as a label for the Mandarin V DE/BU X construction.

In Table 7.1, I present their list of universal moods in its entirety for two reasons. One is that it can serve as a notional backdrop for mood and modality in general. The other is that this table has a **Function** column explicating the *nuance* these moods express and this is something which cannot be found in Jespersen’s list. They believe that these functions “lie at the heart of each mood,” and “if such nuances cannot concisely be expressed in L, then L does not use that grammatical mood.”
### 7.2.3 V DE/BU X viewed in the frame of notional universal moods

**Table 7.1 Notional universal moods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood Name</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Indicative</td>
<td>Expresses actions that actually did take place, are taking place or will take place.</td>
<td>Cinderella <em>married</em> the prince.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Conditional</td>
<td>Non-factual conditions upon which something else is contingent.</td>
<td>If <em>I had had</em> ham, I would have made ham and eggs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Consecutive</td>
<td>Events that result from other actions or events.</td>
<td>I think, therefore <em>I am</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Dubitative</td>
<td>The probability that someone will perform the given action.</td>
<td><em>He will arrive</em> tomorrow (with the nuance of uncertainty).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hortative</td>
<td>Functions much like the imperative but usually includes the speaker.</td>
<td><em>Let's go!</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Imperative</td>
<td>Requests, orders, or commands</td>
<td><em>Take my hand.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Inferential</td>
<td>Used when the speaker assumes (based on the available evidence) that what he is saying is true, but he is not absolutely certain.</td>
<td>All the test results were negative, so my headache <em>must have been</em> due to stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Intentional</td>
<td>The notion &quot;in order to make action/event X comes about.&quot;</td>
<td>Boris has to be back at seven <em>in order for Stella to meet</em> her lover at eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Monitory</td>
<td>A warning.</td>
<td><em>You shouldn't</em> go outside dressed like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Narrative Re-narrated, Indirect Indicative</td>
<td>Conveys that what is being said was not personally witnessed by the speaker and thus the speaker cannot vouch for its truth.</td>
<td>I <em>heard that he demolished</em> his car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Obligative, Deontic</td>
<td>Expresses an obligation to perform the action</td>
<td><em>You must call</em> Stella, Boris!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Optative</td>
<td>Non-factual events, ones that might take place.</td>
<td>Yes, Boris, you <em>may call</em> Stella.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Permissive</td>
<td>Permission to perform the given action.</td>
<td><em>You might tell</em> Boris about Stella.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Potential</td>
<td>Someone's ability to perform the given action.</td>
<td><em>He can speak.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Predictive</td>
<td>Indicates that although the speaker is not certain that the event he is speaking of will occur, he thinks it is likely enough to make the prediction.</td>
<td><em>I bet that Stella will marry</em> Boris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Promissive</td>
<td>Promises.</td>
<td><em>It will be done.</em> (with the nuance &quot;I promise&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Subjunctive</td>
<td>A non-factual mood used when the content of the clause is being doubted or supposed rather than definitively asserted. It often occurs in sentences containing a clause in the conditional mood.</td>
<td>If <em>I were</em> you, I wouldn't rob that bank.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

63 Quoted from McShane et al., 2004: 73. The title of the table and the shade are my addition.
In gauging the semantic components and modality meanings of V DE/BU X against the functions of these ‘universal’ moods in this table, we discover two things. One is that neither its core meaning ‘have no possibility,’ nor its modality meaning ‘judgment on the attainability of result X of an irrealis event’, has much common ground with the function of #14 ‘Potential’ mood in this table expressing “someone's ability to perform the given action.” The other is that V DE/BU X in actual usage appears as a predicate in the four shaded moods in this table, i.e., #2 Conditional, #7 Inferential, #15 Predictive and #17 Subjunctive. This comparison just shows it seems impossible to fit the Mandarin V DE/BU X construction with one single function of these ‘universal’ moods on the one hand, and its current name ‘potential complement of VR’ is not supported by this cross-language semantic network of modality on the other.

We could imagine that when Chao chose ‘potential’ as the grammatical designation for the Mandarin V DE/BU X construction, i.e., ‘potential complement of VR compound in Chao’s original term (Chao,1968), he could have considered all of the above: Aspect-temporal, in the tradition of Sapir – Palmer, and modality, in the tradition of Jespersen and recent computational linguistics. In our analysis, both properties, i.e., those of aspect-temporal and those of modality, are present in V DE/BU X. However, to have all these properties conveyed by the single term ‘potential complement’ was bound to fail. In addition, we have already seen the misleading effect of using ‘potential’ as the grammatical appellation for Mandarin V DE/BU X in Chinese SL pedagogy in Ch 2.2.1 (footnote 13), viz., that students would rather use NENG ‘can’ and BU NENG ‘cannot’ where V DE X and V BU X should be employed. I have discussed the aspevtual or the internal properties of V DE/BU X in Chapter 4 in detail. In the following section, I will
present my proposition for defining its properties in a stratified frame in order to have them clearly represented.

7.2.4 A Stratified syntactic-semantic definition of V DE/BU X construction

The English word ‘potential’ is based on the Latin root ‘potere,’ which refers to the agent’s capacity to do things. When it is used to designate the V DE/BU X construction, its literal translation in Chinese grammar terms is KE NENG TAI (可能態) ‘possibility modality,’ or NENG XING BU YU [能性補語] ‘possibility complement’ (of the VR).

We have seen in Chapter 4 that the R’s ‘complement’ status in VR has been fundamentally questioned. Though it is not yet settled, the alternative view point has become well known. In this alternative view, the R in VR is the real predication and the information focus, while V is rather the background theme, the known information, or just a dummy in some occasions. The recent generative approach (Xiong and Liu, 2005) further proposes that the syntactic head of VR is the invisible functional category ‘BECOME’ (達成), cognate of ‘become,’ or BECOME/CAUSE (使成), cognate of ‘cause it to happen’ or ‘make it happen’ in VR. With regard to DE/BU insertion, I propose that the structure element DE/BU operates only on BECOME, and not on CAUSE, because the V in V DE/BU X is non-volitional (Ma Qingzhu, 1985/2002: 160-191). In addition, this structure element has a sentence qualification function in that it works as any TAM markers which can actualize the VR to the utterance level. In particular, since it specifies the speaker’s judgment on the attainability of the result, X, and the ‘judgment on X ability’ belongs to the epistemic modality, therefore, the DE/BU insertion is a modality expansion of VR’s syntactic head [BECOME].
With V being non-volitional, and ‘potential’ being mainly compatible with a volitional agent or subject, using ‘potential’ to represent the meaning of V DE/BU X construction will likely cause misunderstanding.

DE in V DE/BU X is not void of its original lexical content, “obtain”, which denotes that the object of it is desirable. Because ‘potential’ implies that the agent of the V is volitional, with this lexical residue of ‘obtain,’ some researchers are misled in pursuing the proof that there is a semantic constraint on X of the V BU X construction, i.e., the X needs to be positive and desirable (Zhang Wangxi, 1999).

The central theme of DE/BU insertion is BU. It is a shortened form for BU DE, the negation of attainability of X. Its positive counterpart V DE X is a back formation for interrogatives and rhetorical sentences.

With the above mentioned reasoning, my definition for the meaning of the V DE/BU X construction is stratified in four layers.

I. V DE/BU X is atemporal by itself; therefore, its temporal interpretation depends on the temporal deictic in its sentential context. When it is used in association with LE, the realis temporal deictic, it expresses a counterfactual event, the actuality (or non-actuality) of which has been verified syntactically. In this case it cannot express the ‘potential’ meaning per se, since ‘potential’ refers to the event, the actuality of which has not been verified.

The counter-factual interpretation is derived from its historical origin (negation of actualization). Defining this construction as atemporal solves the paradox of calling it ‘potential’ when it expresses ‘counterfactual’ in its negative form in a
sentence marked by the past or present deictic. The counterfactual meaning of V BU X is context-determined. It is no longer its main usage in modern Mandarin.

II. When the *realis* temporal deictic is absent in its sentential context, and when there are other modality indications (in the form of lexical, syntactic or illocutionary, such as hypothetical, interrogative, emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE…, etc., pointing to indefinite qualification), such a V DE/BU X sentence belongs to the semantic category of *irrealis*. Then its default modality interpretation will kick in.

The default interpretation of V DE/BU X consists in the following:

a. It is in assertive mood and belongs to epistemic modality category.

b. It expresses the ‘judgment on the attainability of result X, of an *irrealis* event.’ Or the ‘judgment on the non-attainability of result X of an *irrealis* event,’ because the negative V BU X is the root form of this construction.

III. The “attainability” part of its definition comes from the analysis of its internal structure, the invisible functional category BECOME of VR, the base for its formation. While the insertion of DE, the partially grammaticalized aspect marker, marking BECOME as possible, thus “attainable”, nonetheless the insertion of BU operates on BECOME, and the result is a NON-BECOME; thence the “non-attainability” of X. Aspectually, both V DE X and V BU X are imperfective.

IV. The pragmatic motivation of V DE/BU X resides in the *irrealis* nature of the sentences in which this construction appears. This *irrealis* nature is determined by various context features and illocutionary elements, of which I made a preliminary count in the corpus.
Although Liu Yuehua notes that in usage, V BU X negates NENG V ‘can V,’ where ‘can’ includes capacity, volition and possibility, it is not to be considered a dynamic modality on par with the dynamic root modality ‘can’ because as an assertive act, the V DE/BU X construction does not commit the speaker to its truth value. Rather, it disengages the speaker’s responsibility for its truth value by virtue of its irrealis nature, i.e., this V DE/BU X event is either not yet verified or non-verifiable.

I propose to classify the V DE/BU X construction at the usage level as a pragmatically motivated modality, asserting the speaker’s personal judgment or opinion. This is often done, according to evidence, but leaving the ‘voice’ register empty; therefore the assertion made sounds impersonal or universal, such as words heard in movies -- the voice of an external commentator.

Using ‘potential’ (可能) to represent the meaning of the V DE/BU X construction: “The judgment of the virtual attainability of the result (X) of an action or event (V)” is bound to be misleading because people would associate KE-NENG ‘may-can → possible’ with the Chinese modal verb NENG, ‘can,’ the prototype dynamic modality. However, the lexical content of the NENG requires that the subject of the verb or of the sentence must be an agent that has a volition component, for instance, an animated being which can exercise its will. In actual use of the V DE/BU X construction, we found the subject of the V is always devoid of such a volitional component (Ma Qingzhu, 1985/2002: 160-191) and the pragmatic motivation for using the V DE/BU X construction is possible precisely because the non-attainability of result X is beyond the willpower of the agent (Liu Yuehua, 1980).
Therefore, I hope that a revision of V DE/BU X’s current appellation as ‘potential’ will remedy the confusion about whether the V DE/BU X construction is a negative form of the dynamic modality, ‘can,’ involving the agent’s volition and desirability of the result, X (Zhang Wangxi, 1999), or an epistemic modality, ‘judgment on’ the attainability of virtual result X (by means or through the path of V), or to be more precise, the assertion of ‘the non-attainability of virtual result X.’ The latter is my proposition.

7.3 V DE/BU X semantic category is irrealis

7.3.1 Irrealis as a semantic category in Chinese

7.3.1.1 Mood vs. modality; temporal vs. illocutionary act

According to Nuyts, who wrote the introductory chapter to the book Expression of Cognitive Categories: The Expression of Modality (Frawley et al., eds., 2006), on the one hand, “Modality differs from tense and aspect in that it does not refer directly to any characteristic of the event, but simply to the status of the proposition” (Palmer, 2001:1), but on the other hand:

Mood is used in a number of different ways in the literature, most importantly to refer to the inventory of basic utterance types in a language, such as declarative, interrogative, imperative, optative, etc., and to capture distinctions such as indicative vs. subjunctive or realis vs. irrealis.

In addition:

[…] both these phenomena show relations to the traditional modal categories, but there are different views as to how to see them. Bybee et al. (1994) essentially includes both these categories in the domain of modality, assigning separate modal subcategories to each. Palmer (2001) takes a comparable position. Others exclude them from the modal territory, assigning the issue of utterance types to the domain of illocutions (e.g., van der Auwera and Plungian 1998) and
considering notions such as indicative vs. subjunctive or realis vs. irrealis as formal categories of grammatical expressions of modal notions, along with other expressive devices, such as auxiliaries, adverbials, etc. In the latter view, modality is a semantic notion, but mood is a grammatical one (Nuyts, in Frawley et al., eds. 2006: 8).

7.3.1.2 Mithun’s definition of ‘irrealis’ is in perfect accordance with Lü Shuxiang’s definition of V DE/BU X’s ‘potential’ property

The first semantic qualification I propose for replacing ‘potential’ is “irrealis.” To fully understand the significance of this qualification, we need to trace back what Mood and Modality mean in general, and what irrealis signifies in Chinese, in particular.

In comparison with the ambiguity and the traditional connotations associated with ‘potential,’ for the designation of V DE/BU X’s semantic qualification, I found that the terms ‘realis’ vs. ‘irrealis,’ according to Palmer “have the advantage that they are obviously technical, so their use avoids any possible connotations of the more familiar terms. For Mithun (1999: 173) the distinction is that “the realis portrays situations as actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through direct perception. The irrealis portrays situations as purely within the realm of thought, knowable only through imagination” (Palmer, 2001:1). Mithun’s definition of ‘irrealis’ accords perfectly with Lü Shuxiang’s definition of V DE/BU X construction’s ‘potential’ property, that it designates ‘the possible event in the imagination’ (‘懸想之可能,’ Lü, 1999).
7.3.1.3 Irrealis as a qualification at modality level solves the form vs. meaning mismatch

To qualify V DE/BU X as *irrealis* signifies that its previous semantic qualification as a ‘potential’ complement of VR verbal complex at the morpho-syntactic level has been displaced to a different level, the level of mood and modality. This displacement is not trivial in the sense that it resolves:

- The argument that Yu Min raised with regard to the absence of formal carrier of ‘potential’ in V BU X’s surface or the phonological structure; and
- The semantic paradox that V BU X in the negative form of ‘potential’ as a verb complement actually denies the actualization of the verb it is supposed to ‘complement.’

Yu Min says:

There are 4 pieces of information in ‘*kan bu jian*’: 1. use the eye to capture the information (*kan* ‘look’); 2. to receive the information (*jian* ‘see’); 3. negation (*bu*); 4. possibility/potential (?). There are only three carriers of information in this unit: ‘look,’ ‘see’ and ‘not,’ where is the carrier for ‘potential’? (Yu Min, 1988)

Yu Min’s solution is that the carrier of ‘potential’ meaning is in the super-segmental phonetic feature of tri-syllabic word stress pattern “314.” In other words, because the ‘potential’ property of this construction is not transparent in its surface form, Yu proposes to treat the construction as a lexical entity.

Some Chinese linguists have already pointed out that the ‘potential’ property of V BU X is not manifestly carried out by any of it surface or formal constituents. Lu Zhiwei (1957) says that “in the potential construction [V BU X], BU carries its lexical content of
‘negation,’ but the ‘potential’ meaning is endorsed by the construction [as a whole]” (as
between its semantic content and surface constitutes is that there was a DE in V BU X
previously, i.e., at the surface level, it should be, or had been ‘V BU DE X,’ but the DE
has been dropped along the road of development. The ‘potential’ property remains with
the construction even after its formal carrier DE has been omitted. Omission without
alteration of the original meaning is a natural consequence of language change, because
meaning is an integral part of a network matrix, under the pressure of the economy
principle (or the principle of least effort). Forms undergo constant change, so that
although V BU X does not have an overt constituent corresponding to its ‘potential’
significance, it still expresses this meaning of modality in actual usage because it is an
essential part of the V DE/BU X function. Many scholars have studied this structural
asymmetry and provided dialect evidence for this positive vs. negative mismatch (Jiang
Shaoyu 蔣紹愚, 1995; Wang Guosheng, 1998; Wu Fuxiang 2002a, 2002b; Cao Xiuling,
2005a).

Now with ‘irrealis’ as a semantic qualification for V DE/BU X, we delegate the
‘formal’ carrier of the ‘potential’ property to the superior or more abstract level, the level
of the mood, which is determined by its utterance type or illocutionary elements. This
avoids the paradox pinned down by Yu Min that V BU X actually means ‘impossible to
accomplish or achieve X’ by the path or means of V, while its name of ‘potential
construction’ signifies ‘the possibility of realization of X’ through the action V. The
delegation of its ‘potential’ designation to a superior semantic level can be grounded in
diachronic evidence, as we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4. Thus the construction V BU X
originally expressed a counterfactual event - the negation of actualization of an event in the ‘past’ or ‘present,’ i.e., in the realm of realis. Only later on, when V BU X is found in different contexts with indefinite or future time references is the meaning of ‘potential’ construed in a case-by-case basis.

Actually, the studies of V DE/BU X have always been carried out along the line of this intuitive perception that the carrier of ‘potential’ is invisible in its formal feature per se. This perception can be confirmed from both diachronic and synchronic empirical studies. Diachronically, as we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, the ‘potential’ meaning, or rather the modality interpretation of the construction has gradually come into existence only through more and more frequent usage with the irrealis interpretation depending on cues from its context. Synchronically, both Liu Yuehua’s (1980) and Zhang Wangxi’s (1999) empirical studies have carried on the line of looking for clues of its potential meaning in contexts and they both tried to interpret it with the modality verbs, such as NENG ‘can’ and KEYI ‘may’ as frames of reference.

7.3.2 V DE/BU X viewed in TAM (Tense, Aspect, Mood) perspectives

TAM are sentence qualification elements usually part of or attached to the verb or the predicate of the sentence. This means they are considered syntactic elements, internal to the predicate, such as the tense or modal auxiliaries with verbs in English, or qualificational elements of predication, such as the aspect markers or the sentence final LE in Chinese. V DE/BU X construction often serves as predication by itself; therefore, to know how it is viewed in a the TAM perspective can help us better understand its syntactic properties. According to Palmer, modality “is a category that is closely associated with tense and aspect in that all three
categories are categories of the clause and are generally marked within the verbal complex” (Palmer, 2001:1). However, “Modality differs from tense and aspect in that it does not refer directly to any characteristic of the event, but simply to the status of the proposition.” In general, modality belongs to irrealis. For instance, English ‘realis’ is a VP unmarked by modality.

7.3.2.1 The position of the modal categories among the TAM or qualificational categories in general

Nuyts also proposes the following schema that we can use to situate various qualificational properties of V DE/BU X construction:

Typological research (e.g., Foley and Van Valin 1984; Bybee 1985; Hengeveld 1989; Van Valin 1993) has demonstrated that there is a strong tendency for TAM markers to be ordered according to a cross-linguistically recurrent semantic pattern, viz. in terms of their relative extension of semantic scope […]. Similar observations apply to other combinations of qualificational dimensions. These semantic relations among categories are, moreover, not accidental (in the sense that they would just vary depending on the individual example), but systematic, within and across languages. This systematicity can tentatively be rendered in terms of a hierarchization of the most important qualificational dimensions […] as in (14)

**Figure 7.1 Hierarchization of the most important qualificational dimensions**

(14) > Evidentiality
   > Epistemic modality
   > Deontic modality
   > Time
   > Quantificational aspect [frequency]/dynamic modality
   > Qualificational aspect [internal phases]
   > V (parts of the) STATE OF AFFAIRS

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More formalized variants of such a hierarchy have been proposed in the context of functional grammar models (Van Valin 1993; Dik 1997) […] What the schema in (14) does show is that the modal categories systematically have a wider semantic scope than categories such as time and types of aspect. It also shows that the juxtaposition of the categories of time, aspect and modality in treatments of TAM marking is somewhat misleading: Modality is at a higher level of abstraction than time and aspect, and only specific modal categories can be put on par with these latter qualificational categories” (Nuyts, as cited in Frawley et al., eds. 2006: 19). 64

With this notion of the hierarchization of the most important qualificational dimensions as a framework, we can see better the syntactic and semantic properties of the V DE/BU X construction.

### 7.3.2.2 Semantic and syntactic properties of V DE/BU X viewed in the hierarchization of qualification dimensions

The addition of ‘irrealis’ to V DE/BU X’s semantic properties to replace the notion of ‘potential’ entails an extended systematic view of this construction, which should include a cognitive and a pragmatic dimension. The following schematic sketch is my attempt to arrange various syntactic and semantic properties of this construction within the framework of the hierarchization of qualification dimensions, which I presented in the above section.

---

64 Underlines are mine.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Various qualification properties of V DE/BU X construction</th>
<th>“→”, “?” or “Ø”</th>
<th>Hierarchization of the most important qualification dimensions (Nuyts, 2004:8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>irrealis as semantic category in Chinese can be determined by various lexical, syntactic and illocutionary elements: Ex. association with emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE…</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>&gt; evidentiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One out four times, evidence can be found in its adjacent clause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment on ‘~ability’ (assertive mood)(^65)</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>&gt; epistemic modality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(atemporal by itself) Context temporal deictic</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>&gt; deontic modality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take precedence in its interpretation (ex. LE)</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>&gt; time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[frequency]/dynamic modality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neg. [BECOME] X: event that has no been actualized aspect-wise (atelic, non-bounded)</td>
<td>DE/BU(^66)</td>
<td>&gt; qualificational aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[internal phases]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible functional head [BECOME], originated from DE’s cognate(^67) and in VR construction</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>&gt; V (parts of the) STATE OF AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“→” Indicates “fit with”, “Ø” stands for “non-existent.”

I have dealt with the three bottom layers of qualification dimensions of V DE/BU X in previous chapters. In the following sections, I will concentrate on its modality.

\(^{65}\) ‘Assertive’ mood with the content of judgment may serve as the bearer of epistemic truth (van der Schaar, 2007).

\(^{66}\) From comparative perspective, insertion of DE/BU can be construed as the R’s (the resultative or the V\(_2\)) ‘spec’ or ‘inflexion,’ comparable to those inflexion qualifications of English verb.

\(^{67}\) The sense of actualization developed from the cognate of DE: ‘obtain’ > ‘be able, be permitted’ > root possibility (Sun Chaofen, 1966, in Frawley 2001: 120).
qualification, i.e., that of *irrealis*, which may be indicated by either lexical, syntactical or illocutionary elements.

7.3.3 1 Indications of V DE/BU X being in *irrealis* mood: Utterance Type

Utterance and illocutionary types belong to the study of pragmatics. The classification of sentences from the perspective of pragmatics includes the following four types:

- Imperative
- Interrogative
- Expressive: emphatic/exclamation
- Declarative/assertive

‘Imperative’ definitely belongs to *irrealis*, because the demand or the order expressed by an imperative refers to an event that has not occurred yet. With regard to V DE/BU X, Fan Jiyan in his thorough study on V + Directional constructions (Fan Jiyan, 1963) has already pointed out that ‘all V + Directionals which have imperative forms accept DE/BU insertion, and therefore can to be extended to the V DE/BU X construction. Since imperative implicitly refers to events that have not yet occurred, the compatibility of V DE/BU X’s formation with imperative form confirms this construction’s *irrealis* nature.

The ‘interrogative’ mood represents an inquiry about uncertain information, doubt, etc. It, therefore, also belongs to the realm of *irrealis*, especially when it provides no definite temporal information of the event in it. The interrogative form of V DE/BU X is V DE X V BU X, which is a YES/NO type of question, soliciting the prediction, the
estimation or the judgment on the attainability of X. In Liu Yuehua’s investigation, 28 of 35 V DE/BU X interrogatives and in the preliminary analysis of the mini-corpus, 10 out of 22 are rhetorical questions. This seems to indicate that a V DE/BU X interrogative is essentially a pragmatic device.

7.3.3.2 Lexical and syntactical indications of irrealis

‘Emphatic’ mood expresses the speaker’s feelings and emotions. It adds emotional information to the utterance and solicits the empathy of the listener. The emphatic meaning can be expressed by lexical means, such as modality adverbs or phrases such as ‘it’s a pity’ (kexi 可惜), ‘if not for’ (yaobushi 要不是); etc.; by syntactic structures, such as the emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE…, which is often in association with the V DE/BU X construction, or by the stylistic means, such as rhetorical questions, or by interjections and exclamations expressed by the modulation of intonation. Actually, the presence of illocutionary elements, especially the emphatic type of illocutionary elements, in sentences with V DE/BU construction is very common. In our preliminary analysis (5.3.3), we counted the following illocutionary features in V DE/BU X sentences:

- rhetorical interrogatives (10)
- the emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE… (53)
- modal adverbs and various interjection particles (31).

The sum of these illocutionary elements is 89, which occupies 21.55 % of our corpus sentences. This percentage definitely indicates that the association of V DE/BU X with illocutionary elements is inherent, instead of accidental. Upon closer scrutiny, I found that most of the sentences containing emphatic illocutionary elements do not
provide any definite temporal deictic information. Therefore to classify these sentences as *irrealis* with overt temporal criteria will not work. On the other hand, considering the mood and modality perspectives, and since all modalities belong to *irrealis*, V DE/BU X’s association with the emphatic mood confirms our perception of its *irrealis* nature from a different angle.

In the above we saw that the distinction between *realis* and *irrealis* can be established from different perspectives: Either from the perspective of modality, i.e., by illocutionary features of the sentence, or from that of temporal deixis.

To distinguish whether a sentence is *realis* or *irrealis*, the primary criterion is its temporal deictic which is established by the speech act. The time when a speech act is performed establishes an ‘absolute’ time, which can serve as a temporal frame of reference. By referring to this speech time, other definite temporal deictic references, such as ‘future,’ ‘present’ and ‘past’ can be established. The correspondence between ‘future’ or the indefinite and *irrealis*, ‘past’ and ‘present’ or the definite and *realis* are understood by default. When V DE/BU X is used as a predicate in a simple and un-embedded declarative sentence, without any overt temporal marking, it definitely refers to a non-actualized or unattainable event, by its aspectual property, that of the imperfective and indefinite. Therefore, it should belong to the *irrealis*. 
7.4 Temporal deictic and V DE/BU X

7.4.1 Counterfactual reading of V DE/BU X: Temporal reading overrides modality reading

We have seen in previous chapters that the VR, the base for DE/BU insertion for V DE/BU X formation, has an in-built aspectual quality of bounded events, i.e., it is telic. We also inferred that the insertion of DE/BU operates on the invisible functional category [BECOME] of this VR, predicting the achievement of the X or denying its possible actualization in its perfective aspect or to its telic end point. Since the insertion operates on the internal aspectual structure of VR, we therefore define the meaning of V DE/BU X construction as affirmation (with DE) or denial (with BU) of the attainability of X. This is an aspectual + modality reading of it. The aspectual reading is based on the syntactic property of VR construction, with DE/BU insertion to reverse the perfective aspect of VR to an imperfective aspect of V DE/BU X. The modality reading of it comes from the speech act part which we would like to support with *irrealis* classification of the construction.

However, this modality reading of DE/BU insertion into VR does not work in a sentence with a concrete *realis* temporal deictic, such as LE, because this temporal deictic, rooted deeper in the hierarchy of the most important qualificational dimensions quoted in the above, will override the modality or the ‘potential’ reading of the construction in a concrete utterance.
7.4.1.1 The temporal framework of Mandarin

Robert Cheng has noticed that the temporal dimension in natural language, or ‘tense’ in syntax, often does not coincide with conceptual categories. For instance, in conceptual structure, TIME is presented in three compartments of [PAST], [PRESENT] and [FUTURE], while in Japanese and Mandarin, the temporal division is only in two: the past (過去) vs. the non-past (非過去). According to Cheng, Taiwan Min also has a binary division, but it is realis vs. irrealis (Cheng, 2005 manuscript).

Systematic studies on irrealis in Chinese are rather recent in Chinese linguistic research. Two recent doctoral dissertations\(^\text{68}\) have been devoted to this topic. The following definitions of irrealis in Mandarin are mainly drawn from Wang Xiaolin’s works:

*Realis* and *irrealis* are normally considered concepts in philosophy. In philosophy, in all the domains of possibility, *realis* is the only verified domain, while *irrealis* means all the rest of the non-verified or non-verifiable domains. Linguistically, the concepts of *realis* and *irrealis* reflect the opposition between the actualized and not yet actualized events in semantics, with the temporal deictic in the utterance as a frame of reference. The categories of *realis* and *irrealis* are discrete and binary: An event is either in *realis*, or in *irrealis*. However, for concrete cases, a given construction can be construed as *realis* in one context and *irrealis* in another (Wang Xiaolin 王曉凌, 2009: 1).

7.4.1.2 Semantic interpretation of the irrealis mood

The use of *irrealis* moods, such as the subjunctive mood, the conditional, etc. in many Indo-European languages, indicate that something is not actually the case, such as necessity, possibility, requirement, wish or desire, fear, or as part of counter-factual

\(^{68}\) Li Min 李敏, 2006; Wang Xiaolin 王晓凌, 2007.
reasoning. In this sense, *irrealis* verb forms are used when speaking of an event which has not happened, is not likely to happen, is otherwise far removed from the real course of events, or its happening is not verifiable. For example:

If you *had done* your homework, you wouldn't have failed the class.

Here *had done* is an *irrealis* verb form.

Some languages have distinct grammatical forms that indicate that the event described by a specific verb or verbal form is an *irrealis* verb. However:

“‘Indicative’ and ‘subjunctive’ are formal and inflexion features, which do not exist in Chinese, well known as a morphologically poor language. For Chinese, *realis* and *irrealis* should be more judiciously considered semantic categories than *that of grammatical*” (emphasis added; Wang Xiaolin, 2009:10).

Therefore, the marking of the *irrealis* category in Chinese has to be found elsewhere among the other qualificational elements.

Semantically, the V DE/BU X construction was originally interpreted as the ‘negation of actualization’ in sentences with ‘past’ or ‘present’ temporal deictic or context clues. In Middle Chinese, the negation of actualization may take either the form V BU X or the form of V WEI (未) X, while in modern Mandarin, its usual form is MEI (YOU 沒有) VR.

The common ground for V BU X to be interpreted either as ‘potential’ or as the counterfactual event is that both interpretations presume an imagined but aspectually non-actualized event. The difference between the two is that the former is in the domain of *irrealis*, thus it is not yet verified or is non-verifiable (indefinite). The latter is in the
domain of realis, thus, in the speaker’s mind, it is verified even if it is a non-actualized event. Being counterfactual means that it is necessarily grounded in the past.

According to Wang Xiaolin, ‘irrealis’ is a linguistic concept, while ‘counterfactual’ is a logical concept, which verifies the linguistic event according its real-world counterpart. The identity in forms of the two easily gives rise to confusion.

For the study of V BU X, the distinction of the one from the other is very important for a correct understanding of V BU X’s semantics. Depending on its contexts, V BU X can be either construed as ‘irrealis’ or ‘counterfactual.’ Synchronically, irrealis is the defining semantic feature for the ‘potential’ interpretation, while diachronically, ‘counterfactual’ is the original semantic property of this same construction when it first appeared around the Han Dynasty period. The dependence on context for its interpretation of either ‘potential’ or ‘counterfactual,’ i.e., as ‘irrealis’ or as ‘realis’ has not fundamentally changed with V BU X ever since its development in Middle Chinese.

To sum these points up:

1) Chronologically, the interpretation of V DE/BU X construction is developed from the negation of actualization of R (or V₂) in VR in realis contexts to the negation of the attainability of R in VR in irrealis contexts.

2) Its semantic interpretation in modern Mandarin, the ‘‘potential,’ is based on the ‘irrealis’ illocutionary clues in its context.

3) Pragmatically speaking, the irrealis nature of V DE/BU X motivates its modality usage, mostly as emphatic or as impersonal assertions of epistemic judgments for prediction, an estimation that the other negative auxiliary BU HUI (不會) ‘not likely to happen’ also expresses.
7.4.2 Counterfactual V BU X examples

The following V BU X examples are taken from the “General Guide of Directional Complements” (Liu Yuehua, 1998: 52). They are presented under the rubric of ‘potential’ in this book, which is the current designation for all the V DE/BU X constructions. However, because there is a sentence-final LE in them, which marks the V BU X event in them as realis, therefore these V BU X actually designate the non-actualized events in the past, so they should be considered to be expressing a ‘counterfactual’ event, not a ‘potential’ event.

(1) 可惜, 他再也回不來了.
kexi, ta zai ye hui bu lai LE
It’s a pity, he again return not come hither Ptl.
‘It’s a pity that he can/could never (be able to) return.’

(2) 腿不行了, 冬天出不來了.
tui bu xing LE, dongtian chu bu lai LE.
Leg not work Ptl. winter exit not come hither Ptl.
‘(Her) legs are no longer good, (she) can no longer go out in winter.’

The events ‘return’ and ‘go out in winter’ are considered non-actualized past events because the sentence final LE in them marks the events in such sentences as having happened in real time. In other words, the temporal deictic LE indicates that the events, here the non-happening of the events, have been verified temporally in syntax. The sentence does imply that, in previous winters, she could go out.

7.4.3 Counterfactual V DE/BU X and realis temporal deictic: Empirical evidence

I have touched on V DE/BU X’s association with LE in 5.3.3, where we found that in our corpus of 413 V DE/BU X sentences, there are 70 that have LE in their sentential context. Since LE functions as a temporal deictic, anchoring the temporal
frame of reference of the sentence to the speaker’s speech time, real world time, therefore a sentence with LE belongs to the domain of realis. Here our analysis of data reveals that there are about 17% of V DE/BU X constructions that are actually used with LE in its sentential context and thus fall into the realis domain and therefore should be interpreted as counterfactual instead of ‘potential.’ Thus its temporal reading, which yields a counterfactual event, overrides its modal significance, i.e., that of being judged attainable.

Diachronically, these counterfactual usages of V BU X construction reflect its development from originally expressing a non-actualized event in the past or present to expressing a non-actualized event in future or in the imagination.

However, one argument for reading these sentences as expressing ‘potential’ can be made through the illocutionary elements present in them, in particular the sense of ‘it’s a pity’ in (1) and the feeling or the undertone of regret in (2). Actually the presence of illocutionary elements in sentences with the V DE/BU construction is common, as we saw in the counts I discussed in 6.3.3:

- The rhetorical interrogatives (10)
- The emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE… (53)
- Modal adverbs and various interjection particles (31).

The sum of these counts is 89 or 21.55 % of the 413 total. The percentage suggests that this association of the V DE/BU X construction with illocutionary elements is inherent instead of accidental. Therefore, in my opinion, the modality reading of the V DE/BU X seems to be more conclusive, despite numerous counterfactual usages in our corpus.
7.5 V DE/BU X belongs to epistemic modality

7.5.1 Classification of Chinese modality

Sentence Qualification is the interface that links the lexicon to the syntax to produce grammatical utterances. Mood and Modality, as one of the three major means (TAM) of sentence qualification, has not been given enough attention in SL Chinese pedagogy, partly because a systematic description of it place is lacking. V DE/BU X construction has an odd place in the system of Chinese modal verbs in that:

1. Formally it is unique because it is formed by the insertion of DE/BU into VR, rather than appearing directly in front of it, like other modal verbs.

2. It is predominantly in negative form and according to Liu Yuehua, it acts as the negative form of the root modality NENG, ‘can,’ in usage. i.e., as its negative counterpart.

3. Cognitively, it expresses a judgment on the attainability of the result, X, of VX, which is an epistemic modality in the sense that it does not concern either the ‘force’ that the dynamic modality, such as ‘can,’ does or the obligation or prohibition, such as deontic modality ‘must,’ does.

4. It is pragmatically motivated by its irrealis nature engendered in its impersonal voice.

Following is a comparison table which sets forth Palmer’s classification of modality and Wang Xiaolin’s inventory and classification of Chinese modal verbs within Palmer’s classification framework. I also indicate where I would put V DE/BU X in this system of Chinese modality.
Table 7.3 Palmer’s modality classifications vs.  
Wang Xiaoling’s inventory of Chinese positive modal auxiliaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Propositional modality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic (認識)</td>
<td>Speculative (?推測)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keneng 可能 ‘possible,’ neng 能 ‘can,’ hui 會 ‘will (happen), keyi 可以 ‘may,’ haoxiang 好像 ‘it seems’; <strong>V DE/BU X</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deductive (推斷)</td>
<td>hui 會 will, yinggai 應該 ‘should’; <strong>V DE/BU X</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptive (假設)</td>
<td>(Not listed in Wang. In Chinese this category can be expressed by hypothetical adverbs: yaoshi 要 is ‘if,’ and conditional: ruguo 如果 ‘if,’” etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidential (實證/理據)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>According to Wang, in Mandarin, evidential is not expressed by modality (Wang, 2009: 70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event modality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deontic (義務)</td>
<td>Permissive (允許)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neng 能 ‘can,’ keyi 可以 ‘may’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obligative (義務)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yao1 要 ‘want,’ yinggai 應該 ‘should,’ gai 該 ‘should,’ yingdang 應當 ‘should,’ bixu 必須 ‘must,’ dei 得 ‘have to’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dynamic (動力)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abilitive (能力)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hui 會 ‘know how to,’ neng 能 ‘can’ nenggou 能够 ‘can, able to,’ gan 敢 ‘dare to’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volitive (意願)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yao2 要 ‘want (desire),’ yuanyi 願意 ‘want (willing),’ qingyuan 情願 ‘would rather,’ leyi 樂意 ‘happy to’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* **V DE/BU X** is my addition to the table

According to my reading of V DE/BU X construction’s modality significance, which is “the judgment on the attainability of the result X”, it should be classified in the
category of epistemic modality, in both speculative and deductive groups, together with
*hui* (會, will), with the meaning of prediction of what will probably occur.

One piece of evidence that the V DE/BU X construction is an epistemic modality
can be drawn from the comparison with other modern Chinese dialects. In Southern Min,
the equivalent of Mandarin’s V BU X *chi bu bao* (吃不飽 eat not full, not have enough to
eat) is [zja be peng], the cognate of BU in *chi bu bao* in Southern Min is [be]. This word
may be historically related to the negative [m] and [e] (解, know how to), as [be] in
Southern Min means ‘not know how,’ or ‘will not happen,’ which is a predication of a
future event (Norman, 1989: 337, as cited in Mei, 2000: 253).\(^69\)

The general semantic feature of future events is their indefiniteness. They are
closely and intrinsically linked with modality. For instance, in Chinese, future events are
mostly marked by modal auxiliaries, such as HUI (會 know how to), YAO (要, will) for
prediction, etc. Notice that the cognate of the Mandarin HUI (會 is [e] 解, know how) in
Southern Min. In addition, the position of this [be] is the same position of the DE/BU
insertion, i.e., post V and in front of X (or \(V_2\)). Note that it is not in front of VX, which is
the usual modal verb position.

### 7.5.2 V BU X viewed in the conceptual perspective of ‘Force’ (can) vs. ‘Barrier’

*(may)* (Peng Lizhen 彭利貞, 2005a)

With regard to the assertive quantity of modal verbs in the negative, Peng says
that when expressing ‘capacity,’ the negative of NENG and KEYI are not ‘BU NENG’

\(^{69}\) In addition, in the current character transcription of Min, [be] can also be written out with the fused
chacter 勿会, which literally means ‘not know how.’
and ‘BU KEYI’ because these negative forms express interdiction. For KEYI, there is no negative form because the assertive quality of KEYI is very big. According the theorem of natural language negation (Shi Yuzhi, 2001), KEYI does not co-occur with any negative operator in its capacity of expressing the modality meaning of ‘absence of barrier.’ Peng quoted the illustration Sweetser (1990: 51), used to demonstrate the semantic distinction between ‘can’ and ‘may’ in English. Sweetser adapted the concept of “force” vs. “barrier” that Talmy uses to explain the overlapping meanings of ‘can’ and ‘may,’ the root modality in English. Sweetser’s illustration is this: The situation of these modal verbs is likened to a car in a garage to be driven out. The gas in the tank is likened to ‘can’ and the open door is likened to ‘may.’ The former represents the driving force, while the latter presents the absence of barrier. Both conditions are necessary for the action to take place. Peng Lizhen believes that this illustration is also apt for Chinese modal verbs NENG ‘can’ and KEYI ‘may.’

However, with regard to V BU X, in her empirical study, Liu Yuehua suggested that it was the predominant negative form of NENG VR (R is result state, end point of an action) when this latter expresses ‘capacity,’ ‘volition’ and ‘possibility’ (Cf. 2.3). We have mentioned that the assertive quality of V BU X is very small (Cf. 5.8), as a negative modality counterpart of NENG VR, how would it fit into this conceptual picture of ‘force’ vs. ‘barrier’ of the root modality ‘can’ and ‘may’? In my opinion, V BU X carries exactly the opposite condition that ‘KEYI’ represents, i.e., the absence of barrier in this situation, because V BU X is best construed as having barriers blocking the road leading to the end point or the result of the action. Since the road is blocked, the natural deduction would be the judgment that the result X is non-attainable, i.e., V BU X. In
other words, the negative form of KEYI ‘may,’ the absence of barriers should be \text{V BU X}, which means ‘no possibility at all’ because there are barriers blocking the road.

If the dynamic modality ‘can’ may be viewed as ‘Force,’ and Deontic modality (permission) may be viewed as absence of ‘Barrier,’ then the recognition of the barrier and subsequent judgment of \text{V BU X} may be best construed as an Epistemic modality.

“Having barriers blocks the action from reaching its achievement” finds more accurate representation in the French phrase ‘\textit{ne pas arriver a faire quelque chose}’ and Italian ‘\textit{non riuscir + a + verb infinitive}.’ However, in English it can only be translated with the semi-modality paraphrase or peripheral means of ‘unable to,’ which is the generic or default translation of \text{V BU X} in English.

\textbf{7.5.3 Judgment reached by deduction: \text{V BU X} associated with ‘evidence’}

In our mini-corpus, we have many instances of this type of \text{V BU X} sentence, which we demonstrated in 6.4.1 with the following example:

\textbf{Ex.} 錦子太短，行李捆不起來. (Liu, 1998: 351)
\text{Shengzi tai duan, xingli kun bu qi lai}
\textit{Rope too short, luggage tie not up come}
\textit{‘the rope is too short; the luggage cannot be tied up.’}

Among our sentential feature counts of \text{V DE/BU X} in 5.3.3, this type has the biggest count: 98 out 413, which accounts for almost one quarter (23.7\%) of our mini-corpus. By the percentage of its distribution, it seems that it is not far fetched to consider this type of \text{V BU X} to be one of its typical usages. Why is \text{V BU X} construction mostly used in this sentence pattern? Looking closely, we find that there is a hidden logical reasoning in this sentence pattern, which may be interpreted as:

‘Because of,’ or ‘caused by the reason,’ or ‘in the evidence of’ \text{P}, ‘therefore’ \text{V BU X},’
although the reasonings in these interpretatinos are not manifested on its surface.

We have defined the V DE/BU X construction as ‘judgment on the attainability of result X.’ A judgment by nature is a subjective operation, which involves the speaker’s epistemic faculties and which is based on deduction or inference. Pragmatically speaking, since the V DE/BU X construction expresses a judgment on the part of the speaker, the need to provide the evidence for it must be compelling because the speaker wants his/her V DE/BU X statement to be convincing. One of the most convincing arguments for a judgment is to show the evidence or the reason why one came to it. Here, with this sentence pattern, we see that the evidence by which V BU X judgment is arrived at is announced explicitly in its adjacent clause. In other words, at the discourse level, if we take V BU X as a judgment, its evidence is provided. I suggest that this salient sentence pattern, or the configuration of the close association between V BU X and the evidence or the cause of it, has two significances. On the one hand, being part of the argumentative reasoning, V BU X’s irrealis nature, (thus ‘potential’) is confirmed; on the other, the cause or the evidence being in the impersonal or universal voice, pragmatically motivates this construction.

7.5.4 Pragmatic motivation of V DE/BU X: Pragmatic motivation is substantiated by the irrealis nature of the construction, i.e., generic reference rather than specific or definite

According to Vanderveken, the proper task of Pragmatics is to explain our capacity to perform and understand non-literal illocutionary acts (Vanderveken, 2001: 52).
I suggest that the *irrealis* nature of V DE/BU X sentences entails an impersonal or universal voice, which can be interpreted as the pragmatic motivation of this construction. How does this impersonal or universal voice come about in V BU X sentences with an *irrealis* reading? One explanation may be found in Fan Changrong’s research on referential qualification of *irrealis* sentences (Fan Changrong 樊長榮, 2009).

According to Fan Changrong, in recent years, research on qualificational properties and on referential/deictic elements in Chinese, in particular, reveals that syntactical, lexical and contextual are the three major kinds of factors contributing to it (Fan Jiyan 1985, Li Linding 1988, Xu Tongqiang 1997, Zhang Bojiang 張伯江 2000). Shi Yuzhi (2002) proposes that with regards to the interaction between the syntax and the lexical, by default, a pre-verb N is automatically assigned or comprehended as definite and a post-verb N as indefinite. However, lexical marking takes priority over structurally assigned references.

Based on research done by others and after analyzing the samples from a 1,800,000-character corpus, Fan proposes four types assertive sentences which share the *irrealis* features.

1. Habitual
2. General phenomena and regularity, such as laws of Nature
3. Social and ethic norms
4. Definitions and properties

Fan finds that except sentences involving individual habitual acts, deictic-wise, all the above *irrealis* type sentences only have indefinite, non-specific or generic references. Fan further claims that in *irrealis* assertive sentences, the referential qualification of the
utterance shrinks, i.e., its definite deictic disappears. Fan thus concludes that while in *realis* assertive sentences, the distinction between the definite vs. indefinite reference exists, in *irrealis* sentences, this distinction disappears. In this latter, only the distinction between individual vs. generic references survives.

We have noticed that from our V DE/BU X sentences collection, especially from Yu Min’s collection of V BU X sentences in the Beijing Dialect, there are quite a few instances of V BU X idiomatic expressions in the form of proverbs and idioms (諺語格言) such as the following:

**Ex. 兔子尾巴長不了**

tuzi weiba chang bu liao  
rabbit tail long not achieve/finish  
‘(The affair is like) the rabbit’s tail; it won’t last’

**沙漠裏種不出牡丹**

shamo li zhong bu chu mudan  
desert inside cultivate not exit peony  
‘Peonies cannot be cultivated in the desert.’

**胳膊擰不過大腿**

gebo ning bu guo datui  
armp twist not pass leg  
‘The strength/power of the arm is no match for that of leg’

**是福不是禍,是禍躲不過**

shi fu bu shi huo, shi huo duo bu guo  
be fortune not be disaster, be disaster escape not pass  
‘If it is not a disaster, it must be good fortune; should it be a disaster, there is no escaping it’

Obviously, the deictic qualification in these sentences is generic rather than specific, and with generic reference, their impersonal or universal voice is obvious.
Although I did not survey the mini-corpus from the angle of referential properties at the sentential level, I have since counted other sentential contexts’ elements and discovered that over half of the V DE/BU X sentences surveyed can be classified as *irrealis* (Cf. 5.3.3). With Fan’s conclusion in mind, i.e., that in *irrealis* assertive sentences, the referential qualification of the utterance shrinks, the distinction between the definite and indefinite deictic disappears and only the distinction between individual vs. generic reference survives, we can speculate that most of these *irrealis* V DE/BU X sentences may only have indefinite or generic reference qualification, and thus an impersonal voice.

Pragmatically, indefinite or generic deictic references, which will be understood as an impersonal or universal voice, disengage the speaker’s commitment to the truth value of the assertion. To be more precise, the non-attainability of the X is beyond the speaker’s volitional power because the V BU X construction presents it as an objective inevitability. From this viewpoint, Fan’s finding supports our perception that the pragmatic value or motivation of V DE/BU X, as a typical *irrealis* sentence type, is to disengage the speaker’s commitment and responsibility for the truth value of the utterance and by the same token affirm that it is an impersonal opinion, a *general* assessment, judgment or predication.

Another way to interpret this impersonal voice is Liu Yuehua’s point that the non-attainability of the result embodied in V BU X is beyond the speaker’s willpower. However, when the ‘will’ (願) and ‘can’ (能) are used in the explanation of it, with ‘potential’ as its appellation and without properly laid out demonstrations of its usage, it

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70 Liu’s original words in Chinese are *fei bu yuan ye, shi bu neng ye* (非不愿也, 实不能也) ‘not (because) not willing, actually not can.’
is easy to misconstrue this construction as having to do with volition and capacity. In other words, one of the disadvantages of using ‘potential’ to designate V DE/BU X is masking its aspectual and pragmatic motivation.

7.6 Summary

In chapter 4, I presented the first part of my description of V DE/BU X, which concerns its internal syntactic structure and the insertion of DE/BU into the VR construction. In chapter 5, I took an empirical approach by analyzing relevant data and discussing its significance. In chapter 6, I concentrated on the second part of my description of this construction: its modality interpretation based on its sentential contexts. In order to better situate my description of V DE/BU X construction in modality and pragmatic perspectives, in this chapter I first briefly reviewed the relevant literature on Mood, modality and realis vs. irrealis as semantic categories (7.1.1-3). Using irrealis as semantic qualification for V DE/BU X, which is a property of the whole proposition rather than an internal part of the construction, helps solve the mismatch between the phonological form and semantic contents that Yu Min points out (7.3.1).

In the second part of this chapter, in order to justify my proposal to revise the current nomination of ‘potential,’ I went into detail of the linguistic usage of this term (7.2) and compared two lines of usage: one from Palmer’s book, “Mood and Modality”; and the other from computational linguists’ use of Jespersen’s notional universal moods, which is based on its etymological cognate, ‘capacity for performing a skill.’ Chao’s choice of ‘potential’ for describing V DE/BU X construction could have comprised both lines of meaning when he described this construction as the ‘potential complement of the VR compound’ (Chao, 1968). However, for representing the syntactic, semantic AND
pragmatic properties of V DE/BU X that I have described in this study, ‘potential’ is inadequate.

In the third part of this chapter, I attempted to describe V DE/BU X in TAM, i.e., qualificational perspective (7.3.2), along with empirical data (presented in 5.3). The following points were discussed:

- This construction is atemporal by itself, therefore its temporal interpretation depends on the temporal deictic in its sentential context. When it is used in association with LE, the realis temporal deictic, it expresses a counterfactual event, the truth value of it has been verified temporally in syntax; therefore it cannot express the ‘potential’ meaning per se, since ‘potential’ refers to events that have not been verified in actuality.

- When the realis temporal deictic is absent in its sentential context, and when there are other semantic, syntactic or illocutionary indications, such as the hypothetical, interrogative, emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE…, etc., pointing to indefinite qualificational references, such a V DE/BU X sentence shall belong to the semantic category of irrealis, then the default modality interpretation will kick in.

- The default interpretation of V DE/BU X consists of the following:
  a) It is in assertive mood and epistemic modality category.
  b) It expresses a ‘judgment on the attainability of result, X, of an irrealis event.’ To be more precise, it should be the ‘judgment on the non-attainability of result X of an irrealis event’ because the negative V BU X is the root form of this construction.
The addition of ‘irrealis’ entails an extended view of this construction, which should include a cognitive and pragmatic dimension. In the last part of this chapter, I presented how V BU X can be viewed in the conceptual perspective of ‘Force’ (can) vs. ‘Barrier’ (may), borrowing Talmy’s image for English modal verbs ‘can’ and ‘may.’ In my opinion, V BU X carries exactly the opposite condition that ‘KEYI’ (may) represents: while ‘may’ represents the absence of barriers, such as in a “The car in garage may be driven out” situation, V BU X is best construed as presenting barriers to the end point or the result of the action, which naturally leads to the conclusion of ‘no possibility at all.’ This is what the V BU X says in its essence.

What are the barriers? In this chapter, I have discussed the most salient sentence pattern discerned within the mini-corpus analysis, the V BU X with ‘evidence’ or the ‘reason why’ in its adjacent clause. The association between V BU X and the evidence or the cause of it is significant for two reasons. First, being part of the argumentative reasoning, V BU X’s irrealis nature, (thus ‘potential’) is confirmed; second, the cause or the evidence being in the impersonal or universal voice pragmatically motivates this construction. The pragmatic motivation of the construction may be viewed from another angle, that of referential qualification.

In the last section of this chapter, I have discussed the referential qualification of irrealis sentences with V BU X. Using proverb types of V BU X sentences as examples, I demonstrated how the generic reference rather than specific or definite in such a sentence can engender an impersonal or universal voice. This impersonal or universal voice disengages the speaker’s commitment to and his/her responsibility for the truth value of
the utterance, consequently this assertion of V BU X is understood as an impartial opinion, a *general* assessment, judgment, or predication.

### 7.7 Conclusion

V DE/BU X Construction in Mandarin: From ‘potential’ to ‘have no possibility’

Yu Min’s article (1988) protesting V BU X being called a ‘potential complement,’ where the actual meaning negates the actualization of the V into X, first inspired my research into this construction. Having reached the end of my dissertation, I would summarize what this construction expresses with one phrase: “There is no possibility (of X).”

Actually, the mismatch between its current name, ‘potential,’ and the meaning it expresses would not bother Chinese native speakers since they would never make the error that SL Chinese students frequently make—using BU NENG ‘cannot’ in the place where V BU X should be employed.

V BU X is a highly complex construction to dissect according to theoretical linguistics and its current designation as a ‘potential complement of the VR compound’ obviously has a practical consequence for SL Chinese teachers and students. It is complex because it is a real-world linguistic object that challenges any neat and clear-cut definition from one single theoretical perspective. From my research, we have seen that its various properties can be viewed on at least 4-5 levels:

1. Lexical vs. syntactical: It manifests both properties. While most V DE/BU X are transient items and transparent in their meanings, some V DE/BU X do not have their base form, VX, and their meanings are idiomatic, i.e., to be learned individually (Cf. 5.2).
2. Syntactically, it is formed by inserting DE/BU into a VR construction, with the latter being a recently recognized key construction, the status and function of which, in the system of Chinese grammar, are not uniformly agreed upon. Its description is far from complete. With aspect as a primary qualificational dimension for Chinese verbs, the VR is considered to be a grammatical operation that qualifies a verbal event by transforming a bare atelic or activity verb V into a telic, thus bounded event in its aspect, with the R as the resultative end state. The insertion of DE/BU ‘possible/not (possible)’ reverses this perfective qualification back into an imperfective aspect of the state of affairs, which can be comprehended as ‘have’ or ‘have no possibility’ when the verbal event is imagined or subjectively projected, i.e., when it is in an irrealis proposition.

3. From the perspective of TIME as qualificational dimensions, since V DE/BU X by itself is atemporal, its qualification needs to be found at the sentential context level. For instance, when it occurs with LE, the realis temporal deictic, it expresses a counterfactual event—a non-actualized or not yet achieved VR at the time of the utterance—which is incompatible with ‘potential’ constructions. The co-occurrence of V BU X with LE occupies nearly one fifth (17%) of the V DE/BU X sentences we analyzed in our corpus. This fact both reflects its context-dependent nature for temporal interpretation and its semantic development path from expressing the non-actualized event in the realis context to that of expressing non-attainability of an imagined event, which is qualified by various irrealis types of syntactic and/or illocutionary elements in context.
4. From the modality perspective, the picture is even more complex. While ‘potential’ as modality ‘contains no element of will’ in Jespersen’s sense, V DE/BU X in Mandarin has been construed as having an element of will because of the translation of Chao’s initial nomination (the ‘potential’ KE NENG has the character NENG ‘can’ in it) and also because Liu Yuehua’s empirical study on it chose ‘can,’ the typical or canonic modal verb as the measuring rod or reference of comparison. From my research, primarily from data analysis, the arguments supporting its modality status come from its sentential context and illocutionary features, such as in hypothetical sentences, used in association with emphatic conjunction LIAN…DOU/YE… or other modal adverbs and particles, in rhetorical interrogatives, etc. which confirm the *irrealis* nature of the construction. Mostly, because it is in the assertive mood and of a judgment type (like in answering a YES/NO question), V DE/BU X should be classified in the category of epistemic modality, which expresses the speaker’s opinion.

5. With regard to an opinion, or epistemic modality at large, the underlying logic is to provide evidence for it. Actually in its usage distribution, we found in our data analysis that approximately one out of four times (23%), the ‘barriers’ leading to the judgment of ‘have no possibility,’ i.e., the evidence or the reason why is explicitly announced in its adjacent clause. On the other hand, in my opinion, it should be taken as representing a collective consciousness rather than a particular individual. Hence my speculation that V DE/BU X construction is pragmatically motivated is based on the *irrealis* nature of its sentence type distribution. With the impersonal or universal voice in *irrealis* sentence types, which is produced by its
indefinite or generic reference qualification, V DE/BU X is disengaged from its charge of being an assertion of a person’s opinion, prediction or judgment.

SL Chinese students’ errors inspired Liu Yuehua’s empirical study (1980) 30 years ago, resulting in a classic on the subject. Liu’s conclusion, based on her empirical analysis of contemporary Chinese literature, is that it expresses ‘not because it is not desirable, but it is actually not reachable or achievable’ (fei bu yuan ye, shi bu neng ye - 非不願也，實不能也). Did her result, i.e., her definition of this V DE/BU X construction help SL Chinese teachers and students in their handling of it? From my own experience as a SL Chinese teacher for some years, and especially from teaching at the intermediate level when this construction should be mastered, I found Liu’s definition inadequate. The problem with Liu’s line of research is that it lacks a larger theoretical perspective. In contrast, I consider my research on V DE/BU X construction in Mandarin to bear mostly on its theoretical aspects and thus have filled a lacuna in its description.

These theoretical aspects consist of the following:

- From the structural viewpoint, the insertion of the modality element DE/BU operates on the invisible functional category [BECOME] of VR, reversing the perfective aspect of it back to the imperfective, thus non-achieved and/or unachievable aspect of X (5.9). This assertion is supported by diachronic (4.2.2) and dialect comparison evidence (4.4).

- The V DE/BU X’s sentence qualification function is situated at the modality level. This assertion is empirically based, with my own data analysis of its sentential features and illocutionary type (6.3, 7.3.3.2)
- An empirical data-based structure description is attempted, which includes the composition of the V, the membership of the X and the distribution of the bases for its formation (VD, VR, the detachable verb compound, etc. See section 6.1)

- Its lexical aspects, such as used as attributives in pre-DE and as adverbials in post-DE positions are also discussed (see section 6.3). Its idiomatic usage is also documented with an ad hoc collection in Appendix II.

Certainly well designed and more thorough empirical studies still need to be accomplished before its theoretical description can be settled. I hope that my research offers a productive contribution to the understanding of this highly complex construction in Mandarin, and acknowledge that there is far to go in terms of actual application of this research to SL Chinese pedagogy. Coming from the perspective of SL Chinese pedagogy, I am challenging Chao’s initial nomination of ‘potential’ for Mandarin V DE/BU X construction and Liu Yuehua’s definition of its semantic content with my findings; yet I continue to learn from and follow the tradition these and other great Chinese linguists and scholars have started. Their honesty, integrity and practical orientation in the field of Chinese linguistics research offer an exemplary model.
## APPENDIX I

### Table 6.2 Some V X associations in V BU X: first three highly occurred X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Meaning of X</th>
<th>Verbs in association with</th>
<th>Shared Semantic components of V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>住 1</td>
<td>Steady/hold fast</td>
<td>抱 bao ‘hold by arms’; 記 ji ‘remember’; 拉 la ‘pull’; 立 li ‘stand’; 拿 na ‘take, hold’; 站 zhan ‘stand’, 保 bao ‘keep safe’; 抓 zha ‘grab/hold (by hand)’</td>
<td>Make/cause (it) steady/hold fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>住 2</td>
<td>zhu 2</td>
<td>Stay on the same point/stop</td>
<td>熬 ao ‘endure’; 憋 bie ‘hold (from release)’; 藏 cang ‘hide’; 存 cun ‘store’; 放 fang ‘put in storage’; 打熬 da’ao ‘endure (hardship)’; 呆 dai ‘stay’; 蓋 gai ‘cover’; 間 guan ‘close’; 隱 man ‘hide (information)’; 耐 nai ‘endure’; 忍耐 rennai ‘tolerate, endure’; 躺 tang ‘stay on bed’; 閒 xian ‘stay from work’; 坐 zuo ‘sit’; 難 nan ‘challenge with questions or difficulties’; 鎖 suo ‘lock up’; 遮 zhe ‘cover, hide it from’</td>
<td>Make/cause (it) stay on the same point/Stop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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71 This table is attached to section 6.2.4.1. It is extracted from Appendix VI of Zhang “Semantic Conditions for the Realization of the ‘V BU C’ construction.” Zhang Wangxi, 1999: 162.
| 住 3  | zhu, | Enough strength/able to resist/equal to the task | 吃劲 chi zhu jin ‘withhold’; 挡 dang ‘bar, fence off’; 抵挡 didang ‘resist, fence off’; 頂 ding ‘hold against’; 管 guang ‘manage, keep under control’; 堅持 jianchi ‘continue’; 禁止 jizhi ‘forbid’; 經受 jishou ‘experience, endur’; 攔 lang ‘stop (it) from ongoing’; 留 liu ‘keep’; 攬 long ‘keep somebody’s support by reward’; 噪 qiang ‘chock’; 壓 ya ‘hold down’; 沈 X 氣 chen zhu qi ‘stay calm’; 收 shou ‘hold back’; 拴 shuan ‘tie up’; 挺 ting ‘hold to it’; 捂 wu ‘cover’; 嚇唬 xiahu ‘scare’; 掩飾 yanshi ‘cover, hide’; 抑制 yizhi ‘inhabite’; 支持 zhichi ‘support’; 制止 zhizhi ‘make (it) stop’; 止 zhi ‘stop’; 忍受 renshou ‘tolerate, bare out’; 受 shou ‘endure’; 阻擋 zudang ‘prevent (it) from progress’ | Make/cause (it) have enough strength/able to resist/equal to the task |
|---|---|---|---|
| 85 | jian | Perceived by the sense organ | 看 kan ‘look’; 望 wang ‘look afar’; 聽 ting ‘listen’; 閱 wen ‘smell’; 尋找 xunzhao ‘look for’ | Make/cause (it) to be perceived by the act of V |
| 27 | dong | Change location | 按 an ‘press down’; 搬 ban ‘move (object); 冲 chong ‘hit/push (by the current of); 開 kai ‘drive/operate’; 扛 kang ‘carry (on the shoulder); 拉 la ‘pull’; 拿 na ‘take’; 挪 nuo ‘move (object); 爬 pa ‘move on all fours’; 拖 tuo ‘drag/haul/tow’; 挖 wa ‘dig’; 扯 che ‘tear’; 載 zai ‘load’; 幹 gan ‘work, do’; 指揮 zhihui ‘command’; 刨 pao ‘open hard earth | Make/cause (it) change location |
“_” underlined verbs are VO type, where the resultative X will come in between the V and the O.

“*” X occurrence count in Zhang’s data of 1421 V BU X sentences

with a pick’; 邁 mai ‘step/walk’; 喊 han ‘yell’; 嚥 ken ‘bite’; 賣 mai ‘sell’; 走 zou ‘walk’
APPENDIX II

Yu Min’s collection of V BU X items in his original layout

Following is a sampling of Yu Min’s V BU X items in his original layout. The concrete utterances and explanations of them are omitted.

1. **V BU-JIAN** *(V不見): V bu jian 'V not see’*

“The dictionary has two meanings for BU JIAN:

1. not see (the person);
2. (the object) is missing.”

Yu lists two meanings of JIAN ‘see, seen’ for his V BU JIAN items with a total of 7 items with different Vs:

JIAN\(_1\): ‘see’ as coda part, designating that the action of the sense organ receiving the signal has completed.

1. 看不見 kan bu jian ‘look not JIAN (see)’;
2. 瞧不見 qiao ting bu jian ‘look not JIAN (see)’; variation.
3. 瞅不見 chou bu jian ‘look not JIAN (see)’; variation.
4. 聽不見 ting bu jian ‘listen not JIAN (hear)’;
5. 開不見 wen bu jian ‘smell not JIAN (perceive it)’

JIAN\(_2\): encounter, meet.

6. 遇不見 yu bu jian ‘encounter not JIAN (achieved, met)’
7. 夢不見 meng bu jian ‘dream not JIAN (met in the dream)’

2. **V BU-DONG** *(V不動): V bu dong ‘V not move’/‘V not move (an object)’*

“The dictionary has four meanings for DONG:

1. Change position;
2. Change state;
3. Chi BU-DONG ‘eat not move’ means ‘do not have enough room to finish the foodx’; \(^{73}\)

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\(^{72}\) Yu Min 1988: 247-249.

\(^{73}\) For this meaning, personally I never say ‘chi bu dong,’ but ‘chi bu xiaqu’ instead.
4. A V B not move, which is a causative case (A makes/causes B move).”

Yu listed three meanings for DONG in his V BU-DONG with a total of 10 items with different Vs:

DONG\textsubscript{1}: change position; displacement

1. 飛不動 fei bu dong: fly not move ‘flutter the wings but be unable to take off’

Yu Min wrote a comment here: “I don’t understand that for those people who advocate the notion of “verb complement” in Chinese, why they cannot sense/feel that the meaning of ‘fly’ and of ‘not move’ are diametrically opposite when they say ‘not move’ complement ‘fly.” (Yu, 1988: 248)

2. 走不動 zou bu dong: walk not move ‘trying to move the legs but be unable to succeed in walking’

3. 打不動 da bu dong: fight not move (to fight physically) in 打架打不動了 da jia da bu dong le ‘no longer be able to fight physically’

4. 爬不動 pa bu dong: crawl not move

DONG\textsubscript{2}: (an object) not move; the object cannot be moved

5. 攴不動 chan bu dong: help a person physically not move (be unable to move him/her)

6. 啃不動 ken bu dong: bite with a lot of effort not move (be unable to bite a piece off)

7. 弄不動 nong bu dong: try (something) but not move (be unable to do something)

8. 推不動 tui bu dong: push not move

9. 嚼不動 jiao bu dong: chew not move (be unable to chew through)

DONG\textsubscript{3}: neither A (the agent) nor B (the patient) moves, i.e., both the agent and the patient stay at the same place

10. 背不動 bei bu dong: carry on the back not move ‘neither the carrier nor the carried move’
# APPENDIX III

## An ad hoc collection of the idiomatic V DE/BU X

(Attached to section 6.2.5)

Following are an ad hoc collection of the V DE/BU X idiomatic expressions from the grammar manuals and research articles on the subject. Those that in V BU X form are from Yu Min’s collection. For the V DE/BU X having the same X, they are regrouped by X.

“*” marks the V DE/BU Xs which do not have a VX form.

“**” marks the V DE/BU Xs which have a VX form, but this VX has different meaning than their V DE/BU X counterpart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V DE/BU X</th>
<th>VX</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 吃得消/吃不消 | 吃消 | chi xiao  
| chi DE xiao/chi BU xiao | chi xiao  
| eat DE digest/eat not digest | ‘able/not able to deal with (it)’ |
| 跑不動 | 跑動 | pao dong  
| pao BU dong | pao dong  
| run not move | ‘run (&) move’ (co-ordinate verbs) |
| 過得去/過不去 | 過去 | guo qu  
| guo DE qu/guo BU qu | guo qu  
| pass DE go/pass not go | ‘get by alright (tolerably)/cannot get by’ |
| 說不過去 | 說過去 | shuo guoqu […]  
| shuo BU guo qu | shuo guoqu […]  
| speak not pass go | talk past |
| ‘beyond the common sense/social norm’ | ‘talk about the past’ |
| 想得到/想不到 | 想到 | xiang dao ‘think about […]’  
| xiang DE dao/xiang BU dao | xiang dao ‘think about […]’  
| think possible arrive/think not (possible) arrive | ‘expected/unexpected’ |
坐得下/坐不下  →  **坐下
zuo DE xia/zuo BU xia
there is enough room to sit,
‘there is not enough room to sit’

X = JI 及 ‘reach at’

來得及/來不及  →  *來及
lai DE ji/lai BU ji
come DE arrive/come not arrive
‘have/not have enough time (to do something)’

等不及  →  *等及
deng BU ji
wait not reach
‘can no long wait (for something)’

措手不及  →  *措手及/措手得及
cuo shou BU ji
response hand not reach
taken by surprise’

X = SHANG 上 ‘up’

犯得上/犯不上  →  **犯上
fan DE shang/fan BU shang
offend DE up, offend not up
‘worth it/not worth it’

說得上/說不上  →  *說上
shuo DE shang/shuo BU shang
speak possible up/speak not up
‘can/cannot be called (considered) as’

X = KAI 開 ‘open, spread out’

忙得開/忙不開  →  *忙開
mang DE kai/mang BU kai
busy DE open/busy not open
‘manageably busy/unmanageably busy’

想得開/想不開  →  **想開一點兒
xiang DE kai/xiang BU kai
think able open/think not (able) open
‘accept/unable to accept a tragic event’
‘think open a bit,’ ‘don’t take
it to heart’
X = QI 起 ‘up, rise’

對得起/對不起 → *對起
dui DE qi, dui BU qi
‘match up with the favor,
‘not match up with the favor’

還得起/還不起 → *還起
huan BU qi/huan BU qi
return not up (afford)
‘unable to return (either a concrete object
or an abstract one, such as a favor)

閑不起 → *閑起
xian BU qi
leisure not up (afford)
‘unable to afford the leisure of’

買不起 (also 吃不起) → *買起
mai BU qi (chi BU qi)
buy not up (afford)
‘unable to afford (something)’

了不起 → *了起
liao BU qi
finish not up
‘outstanding, most admirable’

X = ZHAO 着 ‘hit up, touch’

管不著 → *管著
guan BU zhao
manage/control not hit (the target)
‘none of your business’

用不著 → *用著
yong BU zhao
use not hit (the target)
‘not needed’
犯不著  
†fan BU  zhao
offend not hit (the target)
‘not worth it’

X = ZHU 住 ‘stay, hold unto it’

对不住  
†dui BU zhu
match not stay/hold
‘not match up with somebody’s trust or favorable opinion, or a good turn.’

靠不住  
†kao BU  zhu
rely/lay against not stay/hold
‘unreliable’

保不住  
†bao BU  zhu
prevent/protect not stay/hold
‘unable to keep something from going wrong, not guaranteed’

招架不住  
†zhao jia BU  zhu
defense off not hold
‘unable to hold up to an attack’

X = LIAO 了 ‘finish, complete’

受不了/受得了  
†shou BU  liao/shou DE  liao
receive/bear out not with
‘unable/able to bear something’

走不了/跑不了  
†zou BU  liao/pao BU  liao
walk not achieve/run not achieve
‘unable to (walk/run), unable to get away (with doing something)’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verb Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>丢不了</td>
<td>diu BU liao</td>
<td>lose not achieve; ‘won’t lose (something)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>辦不了</td>
<td>ban BU liao</td>
<td>do (something) not achieve; ‘won’t be able to do something’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>管不了</td>
<td>guan BU liao</td>
<td>manage/control not achieve; ‘won’t be able to manage/control something’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>比不了</td>
<td>bi BU liao</td>
<td>match up to not achieve; ‘won’t be able to match up with (something)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>錯不了</td>
<td>cuo BU liao</td>
<td>make a mistake not achieve; ‘won’t make a mistake/miss something’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>少不了</td>
<td>shao BU liao</td>
<td>miss (something/someone) not achieve; ‘cannot do without something’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>免不了</td>
<td>mian BU liao</td>
<td>avoid not achieve; ‘cannot/unable to avoid something, inevitable’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>解决不了</td>
<td>jiejue BU liao</td>
<td>solve (something) not achieve; ‘unable to solve [something]’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>照顧不了</td>
<td>zhaogu BU liao</td>
<td>take care of not achieve; ‘unable to take care of [something]’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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agent and the patient in the initial position in the Middle Chinese Period.


Yu, Min 俞敏 (1988). 北京口語“看不見”，“找不著”一類的詞 [On the word categories of ‘kan bu jian’ (unable to see) and ‘zhao bu zhao’ (unable to find) in the Beijing Dialect]. *Fanyan [Dialects 方言]*, 4, 247–256.


Following chapters deal directly with V DE/BU X:
Ch. 7: Semantic Conditions for the Realization of the “V BU C” construction (pp. 125–162)
Ch. 8: The Prototype Category of “V + Adj.” Construction (pp. 163–185)
Ch. 9: Semantic System of V-Complement Constructions (pp. 186–211)


Frequency Dictionaries and Lexicons


