

ON THE EVOLUTIONARY MECHANISM OF
DISYLLABIC TRANSITIVE VERBS IN CHINESE

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ABSTRACT

In Modern Chinese, there is an increasing number of disyllabic transitive verbs in the structural configuration [Vo] where o can be a nominal, a verbal or an adjectival morpheme, such as 观光 (*guānguāng*: lit. 'see sight') 'sightsee', 投资 (*tóuzī*: lit. 'throw money') 'invest', 留心 (*liúxīn*: lit. 'leave heart') 'be careful of' and 注意 (*zhùyì*: lit. 'focus attention') 'concentrate on'. These compound verbs can take another element as their objects and yield expressions in the structural configuration [Vo₁+O₂]. From an evolutionary perspective, this corpus-based study attempts to explicate the syntactic as well as the semantic mechanisms behind the formation and interpretation of disyllabic transitive verbs. It is pointed out that (i) the [VN+O₂] type, which has the largest number, goes through three

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evolutional phases during which Noun Incorporation plays a crucial role; (ii) the [Vv+O₂] type is a nested complex structure, in which v is the object of V and is mostly transitive and hence capable to take one more object; (iii) although the above mentioned two types of compound verbs have different evolutional processes and mechanisms, they both indicate that there is a possibility that verbs can be converted from intransitive to transitive.

KEYWORDS

Disyllabic verb Object Transitivity Evolution Noun incorporation

1. INTRODUCTION

In Modern Chinese, there exists a kind of disyllabic compound verbs in the configuration [Vo]¹ such as

观光 (*guānguāng*: lit. 'see sight') 'sightsee'
 投资 (*tóuzī*: lit. 'throw money') 'invest'
 留心 (*liúxīn*: lit. 'leave heart') 'be careful of'
 注意 (*zhùyì*: lit. 'focus attention') 'concentrate on'

Interestingly, these compound verbs can take another constituent as their objects, e.g. a word or a phrase or a sentence, and yield expressions in the structural configuration [Vc+O₂], as shown below (all the Modern Chinese examples numbered (1)-(10), (13b), (14)-(16), (20)-(37) are from the Modern Chinese Corpus of the Center for Chinese Linguistics at Peking University;* all the Classical Chinese examples numbered (11)-(12), (13a), (13d), (17)-(19) are from the Classical Chinese Corpus of the same institution[†]).

- (1) 经营多元化的典型方向是，投资房地产、高尔夫球场或保龄球馆等。

jīngyíng duōyuánhuà de diǎnxíng fāngxiàng shì, tóuzī fàngdìchǎn, gāoěrfūqiú chǎng huò bǎolíngqiú guǎn děng.

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论汉语双音节动宾式及物动词的演化机制

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提要

现代汉语里有一类双音节动宾式 ([Vo]) 复合动词, 其中的宾语成分 o 可以是名词性语素、动词性语素等, 如“观光”、“投资”、“留心”、“注意”。鉴于这类动宾式动词可带宾语的数量在现代汉语中呈现逐渐上升趋势, 本文尝试对这种动词的演化机制和内因做出诠释。通过数据统计与分析, 本文指出: (1) [VN]式动词带宾语经历了三个演化阶段, 其中“名词吸收”起了关键作用; (2) [Vv]式动词带宾语是一种嵌套式动宾结构, 第二个 v 是第一个 V 的宾语, 本身又是及物动词, 故[Vv]具有带宾语的可能性; (3) 动宾式动词演化机制及过程并非完全相同, 但都反映了及物动词与不及物动词相互转化的可能性。

关键词

双音节动词 宾语 及物性 演化机制 名词兼并