

Operator *Le* in Chinese

**Complexity Within Simplicity
and Simplicity Within Complexity**

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CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS	V
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	VII
SYMBOLS, USED IN FIGURES	IX
PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS.....	1
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 PREVIOUS WORK	1
1.2 CONCEPT AND AIM OF PRESENT RESEARCH	3
1.3 HYPOTHESIS AND A BRIEF OUTLINE OF RESULTS	4
1.4 METHODOLOGY	6
1.5 INTERNAL STRUCTURE	6
2. SEEMINGLY PARADOXICAL SITUATIONS	7
2.1 MINIMAL PAIRS	7
2.2 WHAT <i>LE</i> DOES NOT MEAN	14
PART I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK(S).....	19
1. ASPECT.....	19
1.1 SITUATION ASPECT	20
1.2 VIEWPOINT ASPECT	36
1.3 NOTES ON NOUN PHRASES AND ADJECTIVES	37
2. TENSE	41
3. MODALITY	47
4. TEMPORAL INFORMATION IN CHINESE	49
4.1 THE LINGUISTIC FORMS	50
4.2 PRAGMATIC PRINCIPLES	59
5. PATTERNS OF TEMPORAL INTERPRETATION	61
5.1 DEICTIC PATTERN	62
5.2 DYNAMIC PATTERN (NARRATIVE DYNAMISM)	63
5.3 STATIC PATTERN (ANAPHORA)	64
6. DISCOURSE MODES AND ITS PASSAGES.....	65
6.1 CLASSIFICATION OF SITUATION ENTITIES	66
6.2 FIVE MODES	70
6.3 RELATING SITUATION ENTITIES AND PATTERNS OF TI TO DISCOURSE MODES	74
PART II: TREATMENT OF <i>LE</i> WITHING VARIOUS DOMAINS.....	77
1. OPERATOR <i>LE</i> IN RELATION TO SITUATION ASPECT.....	77
1.1 THE SCOPE OF OPERATOR <i>LE</i>	77

1.2	VERBAL <i>LE</i> IN RELATION TO SITUATION ASPECT	79
1.3	SENTENCE-FINAL <i>LE</i> IN RELATION TO SITUATION ASPECT	92
1.4	DOUBLE- <i>LE</i> IN RELATION TO SITUATION ASPECT	98
1.5	OPERATOR <i>LE</i> IN RELATION TO SITUATION ASPECT (UNIFIED VIEW).....	107
2.	OPERATOR <i>LE</i> IN RELATION TO VIEWPOINT ASPECT	121
2.1	THE ACTUALITY OF <i>LE</i>	122
2.2	THE HOLISTICITY OF <i>LE</i>	126
2.3	THE DYNAMICITY OF <i>LE</i>	127
3.	<i>LE</i> IN RELATION TO ADJECTIVES (STATIVE VERBS).....	129
4.	MODALITY AND <i>LE</i>	140
5.	VERB-FINAL CONSTRUCTIONS.....	145
6.	TEMPORAL INTERPRETATIONS.....	153
6.1	DEFAULT TEMPORAL INTERPRETATIONS	153
6.2	INFLUENCING TEMPORAL INTERPRETATIONS.....	155
6.3	PERFECT INTERPRETATIONS	172
7.	SENTENCE TYPES	175
7.1	DECLARATIVE SENTENCES	176
7.2	IMPERATIVE SENTENCES	183
8.	OPERATOR <i>LE</i> AND FOCUS.....	186
9.	<i>LE</i> IN SUBCLAUSES.....	193
9.1	SEQUENTIAL AND CONDITIONAL SENTENCES	193
9.2	OPERATOR <i>LE</i> IN SUBCLAUSES.....	196
10.	DISCOURSE LEVEL.....	197
10.1	DISCOURSE FUNCTIONS OF OPERATOR <i>LE</i>	197
10.2	FEATURES, DECREASING THE LIKELIHOOD OF <i>LE</i>	199
10.3	<i>LE</i> IN DIFFERENT DISCOURSE PASSAGES	201
PART III: TREATMENT OF <i>LE</i> ACROSS VARIOUS DOMAINS		205
1.	VERTICAL OVERVIEW OF <i>LE</i> IN RELATION TO DYNAMISM.....	206
1.1	ABSOLUTELY STATIVE ENVIRONMENTS	206
1.2	STATIVE, BUT POTENTIALLY DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENTS.....	207
1.3	DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENTS	209
2.	CONGRUENCE BETWEEN ELEMENTS	210
3.	RE-CONSIDERING MINIMAL PAIRS	215
4.	CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.....	220
4.1	FINDINGS	220
4.2	OPEN QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	220
REFERENCES.....		223

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

Figure 1: Application of the notion “Three times”	46
Figure 2: Deictic pattern of interpretation.....	63
Figure 3: Dynamic pattern of interpretation	64
Figure 4: Static pattern of interpretation.....	64
Figure 5: Conceptual differences (achievement, new state, shifted activity)	83
Figure 6: Verbal -le in interaction with situation types	90
Figure 7: Sentence-final le in interaction with situation types.....	98
Figure 8: Double le in interaction with situation types.....	105
Figure 9: Double-le in relation to Reference Time.....	107
Figure 10: Sentence <i>Ta yijing si le</i> ‘He is already dead’ vs. <i>Ta turan si le</i> ‘He suddenly died’	111
Figure 11: Two additional rules at core level (my proposal).....	120
Figure 12: The holistic of le; Perfective vs. imperfective viewpoint aspect.....	127
Figure 13: Dynamic, static and comparative reading of the same sentence	133
Figure 14: Acceptability as result of compatible elements - an example	139
Figure 15: Default interpretation of bounded situations	147
Figure 16: Sentences with <i>le</i> expressing imminent situations	148
Figure 17: The same effect of <i>le</i> on stative situations on different levels	149
Figure 18: <i>Le</i> in generalizing stative - an example.....	150
Figure 19: Contribution of <i>yijing</i> in the sentence	170
Figure 20: Conflicting or strengthening in minimal pairs (<i>hai, you, le</i>).....	171
Figure 21: Perfect types	174
Figure 22: Zero-to-one dynamics on two levels	182
Figure 23: Distribution of operator <i>le</i> in different text types (n-times/10K items).....	202
Figure 24: <i>Le</i> in absolutely stative environments	206
Figure 25: <i>Le</i> in events as absolutely stative environment	207
Figure 26: <i>Le</i> in stative, but potentially dynamic environments.....	207
Figure 27: <i>Le</i> in dynamic environments	209
Figure 28: Manifestation of <i>le</i> in dynamic environments.....	209

Tables

Table 1: Overview of previous approaches.....	2
Table 2: Lexical level of situation aspect - verb classes (X&McE 2004).....	24
Table 3: Basic and derived situation types.....	34
Table 4: Two component system of NPs in general	38
Table 5: Two component system of Chinese NPs	39
Table 6: Some approaches to modality	48
Table 7: Overview of situation entities	69
Table 8: Distribution of operator <i>le</i> (Sketch Engine).....	78
Table 9: Comparison of verbal - <i>le</i> and double- <i>le</i> constructions	101
Table 10: Distinctive features of situation types.....	109
Table 11: Terminative and completive reading of accomplishments	119
Table 12: Distribution of constructions ‘X gao le’ vs. ‘X gao le D’ (SkE)	134
Table 13: Verb-final structures with operator <i>le</i> in Chinese.....	153
Table 14: Directional verb compounds and operator <i>le</i>	157
Table 15: Distribution of verbs within constructions with directional complement (SkE)	160
Table 16: Modal verbs and operator <i>le</i>	163

Table 17: Operator <i>le</i> in relation to directional phrases, locative phrases etc.	165
Table 18: Sentences with <i>shi</i> , <i>rang</i> or <i>jiao</i> (each sample: 500 items, source: SkE)	186
Table 19: Foregrounding Features of Aspect Markers	191
Table 20: Subordinate sentences with explicit temporal markers.....	194
Table 21: Ke's (2005) top 10 patterns with <i>le</i>	211
Table 22: Ma's (2006) additional patterns with <i>le</i>	212
Table 23: Mutual influence on the example of <i>hen</i> , <i>tai</i> and <i>yijing</i>	213

Syntheses of minor thematic units

Synthesis 1: Approach to Aspect in general (First part in Chap. 1).....	20
Synthesis 2: Classification parameters for situation aspect with some tests (Chap. 1.1-1.1.2)	23
Synthesis 3: Similarities and differences among verb classes (Chap. 1.1.3)	28
Synthesis 4: Rules leading to Sentential level (Chap. 1.1.4)	35
Synthesis 5: Viewpoint Aspect (Chap. 1.2)	37
Synthesis 6: Boundedness in adjectives and NPs (Chap. 1.3)	41
Synthesis 7: Tense in terms of Reichenbach's Three Times (Chap. 2)	46
Synthesis 8: Modality in general (Chap. 3).....	49
Synthesis 9: Temporal information in Chinese (Chap. 4-4.1.4)	58
Synthesis 10: Pragmatic principles (Chap. 4.2)	61
Synthesis 11: Patterns of temporal interpretation (Chap. 5)	65
Synthesis 12: Discourse modes and its passages (Chap. 6-6.1).....	70
Synthesis 13: Situation entities and patterns in discourse modes (Chap. 6).....	74
Synthesis 14: Characteristics of SLSs and ILSs and their interaction with <i>le</i> (Chap. 0 - States)	84
Synthesis 15: Operator <i>le</i> in relation to Situation Aspect (Chap. 1-1.5).....	114
Synthesis 16: Three features, assigned to operator <i>le</i> on aspectual level (Chap. 2)	129
Synthesis 17: Operator <i>le</i> in relation to adjectives (Chap. 3).....	140
Synthesis 18: Modal meanings of operator <i>le</i> (Chap. 4).....	145
Synthesis 19: Default temporal interpretations (Chap. 6).....	155
Synthesis 20: Sentence types and operator <i>le</i> (Chap. 7)	185
Synthesis 21: Interpretations of operator <i>le</i> on the discourse level (Chap. 10.11)	201


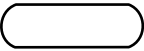
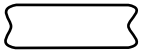

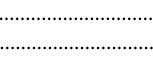










LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

#	The symbol # indicates that the sentence is unacceptable for the intended meaning
*	The symbol * indicates that the utterance is either structurally or semantically unacceptable to native speakers
(* x)	To be acceptable, the example must omit x
*(x)	To be acceptable, the example must include x
LE	Element 了 in Standard Chinese, regardless to its position in the sentence.
-le	One of the two homophonous forms of LE, used as verb suffix (i.e. verbal -le, suffix -le, verb suffix -le)
le	One of the two homophonous forms of LE, used as sentence-final element (i.e. sentence-final le, particle le)
(SkE)	Sketch Engine, a corpus of several languages, which also includes Standard Chinese. All examples marked with SkE are selected by me with my translation
(web)	Source of example are Chinese internet pages
Sit	Situations
E	Events, i.e. dynamic situations
S	States, i.e. stative situations
SitT	Situation Time
SpT	Speech Time
RT	Reference Time
3T	'Three times' (SitT, SpT and RT)
ILS	Individual-level state
SLS	State-level state
ACT	Activity
ACC	Accomplishment
ACH	Achievement
SEM	Semelfactive
CRS	Currently relevant state
D	Differential between the two compared items

Abbreviated References

B&W (2006)	Van den Berg and Wu (2006)
EC	Elementary Chinese. Revision Notes and Exercises. Centre for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language.
L&T (1981)	Li and Thompson (1981)
MEG	Mandarin Essential Grammar
PAVC1	Practical Audio-visual Chinese, Vol. 1 (1999).
S&E (2005)	Smith and Erbaugh (2005)
S&G (2006)	Soh and Gao (2006)
S&K (2005)	Soh and Kuo (2005)
X&McE (2004)	Xiao and McEnery (2004)
Y&R (2004)	Yip Po-ching and Don Rimmington (2004)

SYMBOLS, USED IN FIGURES

Symbol	Explanation
$A < B$	A precedes B
$A \leq B$	A precedes or equals B
$A > B$	A is posterior to B
$A = B$	A equals B
$A \leftrightarrow B$	Relation between A and B
	Situations, symbolized with a line, represent states
	Situations, symbolized with round-ended diagram, represent bounded events
	Situations, symbolized with curved diagram, represent unbounded events
	Situations, symbolized with this diagram, represent semelfactives . (A circle indicates an instantaneous event, which is (or can be) repeating; dots indicate open ends regarding repetition)
	Two levels , to which situations are assigned. Values in the square brackets [] indicate the meaning of levels
	Operator <i>le</i> contributes to zero-to-one change , i.e. from lower to upper level (note: value of levels is irrelevant here)
	Operator <i>le</i> contributes to one-to-zero change , i.e. from upper to lower level (note: value of levels is irrelevant here)
I ; T ; C	Inchoative; Terminative; or Completive reading
	Operator <i>le</i> cannot be applied
	Dotted vertical line indicates an instantaneous, unquantified change
	Full inclined line indicates an quantified change
	Bounding phrase (note: details are given in each figure separately)
	Future-oriented lexical means
	Closed temporal frame (e.g. <i>yi-nian nei</i> 'within one year')
	Open-ended temporal frame (e.g. <i>zi ... qi</i> 'since', <i>qunian lai</i> 'from last year on' etc.)
	Part of the situation, which is in focus

PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Previous work

LE in Mandarin Chinese has two homophonous forms. One is the particle *le*, which normally occurs at the end of a sentence; and the second is the verb suffix *le*, often written as *-le*, which follows a verb. The two forms with potentially different functions have led to four positions on LE in the literature. (B&W 2006: 17-59) Van den Berg and Wu (2006) presented a variety of approaches in a very systematic way. In order not to repeat the whole overview of previous research, their categorization is just briefly presented in Table 1. For further details, the reader should refer to their work. However, Table 1 differs from Van den Berg and Wu's description in one detail. I added Ljungqvist Arin (2003), because her work represents an important part in my research.

If I should place myself somewhere in this table, it would be in the third group, as well. I advocate the one-*le* approach. As Ljungqvist Arin says, "the presence of the Chinese marker *le* (postverbal or sentence-final) in a sentence can result in different temporal, aspectual and modal meanings." (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 67) I also follow her idea that "in itself, *le* has only an abstract meaning. Conceptual and contextual features determine the temporal, aspectual and modal interpretations of *le*." (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 67) When mentioning 'contextual features', one should keep in mind that context can be understood in a very narrow or loose way. One of the possibilities of why there are various meanings is that the particular interpretations come from the contexts rather than from the particle itself. (Chu 1998: 130)

Apart from the approaches presented in Table 1, there are in general two kinds of researches: macroscopic and microscopic. As 'macroscopic' I label those approaches which try to explain the essence of *le* through different theoretical frameworks while applying them to Standard Chinese.¹ These kind of researches give us cues as to what is common on the palette of diverse meanings and functions of *le*.

¹ I prefer the term 'Standard Chinese' used by Chappell (1988) to 'Mandarin Chinese', since it is called *putonghua* (普通话) in Chinese, and it means 'the common language'. It represents the official language of P.R. China. Nevertheless, the decision to use one or the other expression, should not influence the content of this book. The short term 'Chinese' also refers to the same thing.

TWO LE'S APPROACHES		
	VERBAL -LE	SENTENCE-FINAL LE
	Two different morphemes, many uses of both	
Chao (1968)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inchoativity (new situation, quality attained, excessive degree) • Command in response to a new situation • Progress in a story • Isolated event in the past • Completed action as of the present • Consequent clause to indicate situation • Obviousness (Chao 1968: 798-800)
	Two different morphemes and functions, each of them has unifying meaning	
Li and Thompson (1981)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently relevant state (change of state; correcting a wrong assumption; progress so far; what happens next; closing a statement)
Li et al. (1982)	∅	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfect
Andreasen (1981)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfectivity, foreground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfect, background
Chang (1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peak Event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourse-final particle; marker between sub-topical discourse units
Van den Berg (1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event viewed as a whole without attention to internal phasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actuality
Bisang and Sonaiya (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to a pre-constructed domain
Liu (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past tense
ONE LE APPROACHES		
	One morpheme, represented at different levels	
	FUNCTION OF LE	SITUATION/SCOPE/DOMAIN
Thompson (1968)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event, the whole series of events • One event of a series
Spanos (1979)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particular verb or phrase • Entire clause or sentence
Huang & Davis (1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundary marking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposition • Contribution to conversation
Shi (1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative anteriority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bounded Situations • Unbounded Situations
Chang (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspect marker with different focus location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-culmination point
Yang (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfectivity viewpoint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-culmination state • Non-stative situations • Stative situations
Ljungqvist Arin (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundary marker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verb phrase, event • The whole series of events
	One morpheme, realized as verbal or sentence-final	
Rohsenow (1978)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • atomic predicate 'come about' 	
Li (1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contrast to previous state 	

Table 1: Overview of previous approaches

As ‘microscopic’ I understand all the other researches which focus on just some specific level of this element. Some papers are focused only on some layers, analyzing *le* according to situation types, seeing it from aspectual level, syntactical perspective, discourse level, specific text types, diachronically etc. Recently, it has become very popular to research the meaning and usage of *le* through the prism of dialects. These kind of researches can offer a reader a lot of specific information about this element of the Chinese language.

Why did I just say ‘element’? The reason for it are conceptual differences among the linguists. There are not only different general approaches to this issue; linguists differ widely in their terminology, as well. For example, for the instances of LE at the sentence-final position, some papers are using the term *sentence-final le*, others *particle le*, others again *phrase le* etc. On the other hand, for the instances of LE at the post-verbal position, the terms like *verbal -le*, *suffix -le*, *word -le* etc. are used. It is also not united whether the hyphen should be written or not. The expression *marker le* is quite often present in the literature, as well. But it has to be specified, what *le* is marking, i.e. *marker of anteriority*, *marker of perfective aspect*, *marker of realization*, *marker of something*.

For these reasons, I have decided to call *le* ‘operator’. It will be shown later through the paper, how it is operating. Under the notion ‘operator’, I understand the following: a highly grammaticalized element, which acts on certain features of the relevant domain and assigns to them new features of the same domain. The scope and content of input determines the value of output, as the result of this projection.

1.2 Concept and aim of present research

My work differs from the above-mentioned approaches in that I try to link the macro- and microscopic level. I will gather several findings of previous researches, focus on common aspects in them and use these common aspects as the red line throughout the entire book. Further on, I will apply this reasoning to several specific situations, showing that diversity of meanings and functions is the result of one single principle. Therefore, in the first place I will not be looking for gaps in previous papers, but for the positive part of them. It just cannot be true that all of the researches made till now are wrong. I claim – in a bit stylized way – they are all right, just on different levels and to different extent. In order to strengthen my claims, several examples presented in this book are borrowed from well-known previous researches. Replacing them with similar examples from corpora would make no difference to discussion.

Let me mention some remarkable authors, first. Xiao and McEnery (2004) developed, on the basis of Dai (1997) and Smith (1991, 1997), an aspectual system for Chinese. Smith (2001) is also of great importance for understanding the temporal interpretation in Standard Chinese and passages in discourse. As to linking aspectual, temporal and modal level and for the idea of relevance, my paper was influenced by Ljungqvist Arin (2003) and Chu (1998). Regarding the conversational part, Van den Berg and Wu (2006) is an important source of information.

When looking for specific rules regarding the meaning and usage of *le*, one should in the first place mention Li and Thompson (1981) and Yip and Rimmington (2004), but should also not forget Chu (1998), Soh and Gao (2006), Ma (2006) and Chappell (1988) among many others, as well as several sources in Chinese. When searching for information in Chinese grammar books, one will note that Chinese grammar books sometimes run over 10 pages with numerous individual examples of its specific usages without a clearly defined explanation of its grammatical functions that everyone agrees upon. This is exactly the same, what Ma (2006: 21) has observed in her research.

1.3 Hypothesis and a brief outline of results

My hypothesis is composed of two parts. First, I assume that there is just one operator *le* in Chinese, which has a unique meaning and function. Because it is operating on different levels and is interacting with other lexical means, it manifests itself in a variety of different readings. Therefore, an utterance that contains *le* might get a terminative or an inchoative reading, can result in perfective reading, is in general understood as located in the past, might be interpreted as a changed state etc. Some other readings on the modal and discourse level result from the same principle, as well. In order to understand why the application of this principle results in a variety of readings, we must first take a closer look at different environments. In other words, the idea of single principle operating beyond various situations, and complex application as result of interaction of several factors, could be paraphrased as “simplicity within complexity, and complexity within simplicity”.

My second assumption is related to the way, that lexical means interact with each other. I suggest that only elements with compatible features produce acceptable sentences. Contradictive features would result in some strange or unacceptable forms. I will call this assumption ‘**principle of compatibility**’. Moreover, the presence of an element with a certain feature may increase the likelihood for another element with the similar feature to appear. Similarly, some elements may decrease the likelihood for the presence of other elements, if they are different in nature. Therefore, some lexical means may increase the probability of *le* to be present, whereas some other lexical means may decrease this probability.

In this book, I will show that operator *le* actually has one single function, i.e. it contributes to change in dynamics. It provides zero-to-one dynamics to stative situations and one-to-zero dynamics to dynamic situations. This principle can be observed on different levels. Consequently, because operator *le* contributes to change in dynamics, it requires environments, which are at least potentially dynamic. This claim will be incorporated in several passages of this book.

In Part II, Chapter 1, I will focus on situation aspect and will show that operator *le* results on *inchoative* reading on one hand (i.e. zero-to-one dynamics), and *terminative* or *completive* reading on the other hand (i.e. one-to-zero dynamics). Termination and completion are the matter of semantics and are not directly related to operator *le*. Chapter 2 will touch the viewpoint aspect, where operator *le* results in *perfective* reading (as opposed to ‘imperfective reading’). Since *le* may produce many readings, when combined with adjectives (stative verbs), I will devote Chapter 3 to

this issue and present two patterns, where *le* can appear. Depending on context, sentences with operator *le* might get *completive* reading (one-to-zero dynamics), express discrepancy between reality and expectations or deviation between actual situation and norms (zero-to-one dynamics). These last notions are seizing on the level of modality, which will be further discussed in [Chapter 4](#).

In [Chapter 5](#), I will mention verb-final constructions, which allow many interpretations just because of the fact, that operator *le* may be placed post-verbally and sentence-finally at the same time. In such cases, it is difficult to determine just one reading, since different environments can easily change the proper reading.

[Chapter 6](#) will add to the contemporary discussion a variety of temporal interpretations and will show that it is the Bounded Event Constraint and Simplicity principle of interpretation, that makes bounded situations by default interpreted as past events, and therefore (we) foreigners mistakenly tend to use *le* as marker for past tense events.

In [Chapter 7](#), I will focus on different sentence types, especially on declarative sentences. I will show that narrative sentences favor inclusion of *le*, because they are semantically dynamic and therefore compatible with *le*. They normally include one-to-zero dynamics. On the other hand, descriptive sentences represent stative meanings, which results in omitting *le* in descriptions. The same is true for expository and evaluative sentences. The Chinese language also has *le*-expository sentences, which are a typical example for zero-to-one dynamics. Namely, they always carry the implication of some form of change or a reversal of a previous situation, which is nothing but zero-to-one dynamics.

[Chapter 8](#) will show that many interpretations depend on speaker's focus. In causative constructions, after verbs of saying with direct and indirect quotations and similar environments there is no place for *le*, since the presence of *le* would break up a set of elements, which are forming one unit, and in addition, the weight of utterance is on the following part, anyway. This is also the reason, why *le* is favored in foregrounded sentences, but not backgrounded sentences.

[Chapter 9](#) will show, that also *le* in complex sentences, indicating anteriority, is actually an implication of one-to-zero dynamics to the first event, which is a temporal or logical condition for the second event.

On the discourse level, operator *le* is said to mark boundaries between discourse units, indicate peak events etc, which is a very abstract manifestation of one-to-zero dynamics. This will be briefly mentioned in [Chapter 10](#). I will strengthen my idea of the correlation between the 'amount' of dynamics and probability of operator *le* with a test, in which genres operator *le* is to be expected and in which not.

In Part III, I will summarize my ideas with the vertical overview of dynamics, and show that (1) absolutely stative environments are not compatible with operator *le*; (2) in stative, but potentially dynamic environments, *le* implicates zero-to-one dynamics; and (3) in dynamic environments *le* results in a one-to-zero dynamics.

1.4 Methodology

After comparing and analyzing several studies, I will present a framework, which will later help us to understand the nature of operator *le* (Part I, Chapters 1-6). This framework is actually a mosaic of several frameworks, since many researches are focusing just on one aspect of operator *le*. To show the unifying nature of operator *le*, one has to include as many layers as possible. My proposal will be strengthened with some results based on two corpora, Sketch Engine and UCLA.

Sketch Engine is a corpus query system for several languages, including Chinese. The corpus is part of the Chinese Gigaword corpus from the Linguistic Data Consortium. It includes journalism material from Xinhua News Agency of Beijing and Central News Agency of Taiwan from the 1990s and 2000s. Sketch Engine includes 706.427.624 tokens of simplified Chinese and 706.428.333 tokens of traditional Chinese. The UCLA Chinese Corpus has total 687.634 tokens with more diverse structure, what is important for the issue of operator *le*. The samples in the corpus are all collected from written Chinese available from the internet, during the period of 2000-2005, though some texts may have been converted from paper-based publications in earlier years. File types are matched as closely as possible to the Brown corpus model, with some variations (e.g. adventure fictions) to accommodate Chinese characteristics. It covers the following genres: press (reportage, editorials and reviews), religion, skills, trades and hobbies, popular lore, essays and biographies, reports and official documents, academic prose, general fiction, mystery and detective stories, science fiction, adventure stories, romantic fiction and humor.

1.5 Internal structure

The present book is divided into three major parts. In the first part, the focus will be on several layers, which I consider important to understand the issue of operator *le* properly. Because my aim is to link abstract with specific, I will not save space at crucial chapters. Even though a reader might not be familiar with some of these issues, it should be possible for him/her to follow the debate in the later parts. In other words, the first part will serve as theoretical skeleton for this book. To rephrase the general idea from the previous subchapter: I will not follow any specific theoretical framework, but will ‘create’ one during the discussion.

The second part will focus on previous statements about the functions and meanings of *le*, rules relevant to the usage, as well on the results, which will be the outcome of working with language databases. Queries will serve as confirmation or denial of some assumptions. At the end, I will try to sum up all the details and link them with the red line of present research.

In the last part I will expand the issue of *le* to some other fields and point out the work that remains to be done. I will indicate possible correlations with some other characteristics of Chinese language.

At several places throughout the book, I will try to summarize and sketch some important information at the end of each chapter or subchapter. Such parts are labeled “Synthesis”, are entitled and have information about the scope of each part. Syntheses in Part I present mainly general

knowledge and ideas from different authors, which I follow in my work, whereas syntheses in the second part represent guidelines for the nature and usage of operator *le*. If the reader wants to recall major ideas of each chapter, it should be enough for him/her to take a look at syntheses.

Because many features, related to operator *le*, will be presented in a graphical form, I will illustrate the patterns of temporal interpretation in the same way. I find it very convenient to use visual means to strengthen my ideas, especially because I propose that operator *le* indicates change in dynamics on all levels. Note as well, that all symbols in Figures are presented on page (ix) and will be used several times when integrating operator *le* to discussion.

Due to lack of time and the scope of research, this book does not include the diachronic aspect of operator *le*. It does not discuss different opinions among scholars as to whether verbal *le* and sentential *le* have the same origin or not. For the same reason, dialectal differences are not mentioned here, although researches of dialects can reveal many interesting information about language and are very valuable for the comprehensive understanding of the selected issue.

2. SEEMINGLY PARADOXICAL SITUATIONS

Despite numerous rules, it still seems to be unclear, what operator *le* is expressing and what not, where it should be placed and where not, and when does it mean what. Let us look first at some minimal pairs. In some cases, one form is acceptable and the other one not; some pairs may result in different interpretation; and some express actually the same idea.

2.1 Minimal pairs

Type 1: acceptable vs. unacceptable

If one wants to express the meaning ‘smiling, the old man shook his hand’, one should repeat the verbal part of the *doushou* ‘shake hands’. Otherwise, the sentence would be ungrammatical.

- (1) * 老人笑着抖了手。
* Lǎorén xiào-zhe dǒu-le shǒu
Intended: Smiling, the old man shook his hand. (X&McE 2004: 63)
- (2) 老人笑着抖了抖手。
Lǎorén xiào-zhe dǒu-le dǒu shǒu.
Smiling, the old man shook his hand. (X&McE 2004: 63)

The situation is quite similar in the examples (3) and (4) below, where the verb *xunshi* ‘look around’ alone is not enough for the meaning ‘he looked around’.

- (3) * 那汉子左右巡视了，低声说……
 * Nà hànzi zuǒyòu xúnshì-le, dīshēng shuō ...
Intended: That man looked around, and said in a low voice ... (X&McE 2004: 75)
- (4) 那汉子左右巡视了一番，低声说……
 Nà hànzi zuǒyòu xúnshì-le yīfān, dīshēng shuō ...
 That man looked around, and said in a low voice ... (X&McE 2004: 75)

To express the meaning that ‘someone was worried for someone else’, one cannot simply say *A danxin le B*, but should expand this sentences with a time span.

- (5) * 我担心了你。
 * Wǒ dānxīn-le nǐ.
Intended: I worried about you. (S&G 2006: 110)
- (6) 我担心了你两天。
 Wǒ dānxīn-le nǐ liǎng-tiān.
 I worried about you for two days. (S&G 2006: 110)

Although a quantified noun phrase is supposed to bound the event, one of the following two sentences is not acceptable.

- (7) 张三买了一本书。
 Zhāngsān mǎi-le yī-běn shū.
 Zhangsan bought a book.
- (8) * 张三倒了一棵树。
 * Zhāngsān dǎo-le yī-kē shù.
Intended: Zhangsan chopped the tree down. (Lin 2004b: 13)

The sentence ‘He grew three centimeters in a year’ is only acceptable if operator *le* is used. Without it, sentence would be ungrammatical.

- (9) 他在一年内高三公分。
 Tā zài yī-nián nèi gāo-le sān-gōngfēn
 He grew three centimeters in a year. (Lin 2004a: 2)
- (10) * 他在一年内高三公分。
 Tā zài yī-nián nèi gāo sān-gōngfēn
Intended: He grew three centimeters in a year. (Lin 2004a: 2)

Let us look at two other interesting examples, with identical structure. One of them is acceptable, one of them not.

- (11) 我昨天画了一张画，可是没画完。
Wǒ zuótiān huà-le yī-zhāng huà, kěshì méi huà-wán.
I painted a picture yesterday, but I didn't finish it. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 26)
- (12) * 我吃了一条鱼，可是没有吃完。
Wǒ chī-le yī-tiáo yú, kěshì méiyǒu chī-wán.
I ate a fish but I didn't finish it. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 27)

It can happen that some sentences sound perfectly well in some contexts, but are not acceptable in others.

- (13) 星期六我们去我很喜欢的中国饭馆吃饭了。
Xīngqīliù wǒmen qù wǒ hěn xǐhuān de Zhōngguó fànguǎn chīfàn-le.
On Saturday we went to my favorite Chinese restaurant to eat dinner. (Cui 2003: 6)
- (14) 上个周末我回家看我妈妈和妹妹，
星期六我们去我很喜欢的中国饭馆吃饭（*了），
在饭馆我们吃了很多很多好吃的菜。
Shàng-ge zhōumò wǒ huíjiā kàn wǒ māma hé mèimei,
xīngqīliù wǒmen qù wǒ hěn xǐhuān de Zhōngguó fànguǎn chīfàn(*-le),
zài fànguǎn wǒmen chī-le hěnduō hěnduō hǎochī-de cài.
Last weekend I went home to see my mom and sister;
On Saturday we went to my favorite Chinese restaurant to eat dinner;
In the restaurant we ate lots of delicious food. (Cui 2003: 6)

Meaning 'the price we paid for it was too high' can be expressed in several similar ways, but one should not assume all the parallel structures are grammatically acceptable.

- (15) 我们为他付出的代价太大。
Wǒmen wèi tā fùchū de dàijià tài dà.
The price we paid for it was too high.
- (16) 我们为他付出的代价太大了。
Wǒmen wèi tā fùchū de dàijià tài dà le.
The price we paid for it was very high. (X&McE 2004: 131)

- (17) 我们为他付出的代价很大。
 Wǒmen wèi tā fùchū de dàijià hěn dà.
 The price we paid for it was very high. (X&McE 2004: 131)
- (18) * 我们为他付出的代价很大了。
 * Wǒmen wèi tā fùchū de dàijià hěn dà le.
 The price we paid for it was very high. (X&McE 2004: 131)

From the sentences below, the first one is acceptable with *le*, the second one not.

- (19) 明天我就开除了他。
 Míngtiān wǒ jiù kāichú le tā.
 I'll expel him tomorrow! (L&T 1981: 213)
- (20) * 明天就下雨了。
 * Míngtiān jiù xià yǔ le.
 It will rain tomorrow.

The occurrence of operator *le* on the post-verbal position is more restricted than that of *le* on the sentence-final position. There is a restriction on verbal *-le* co-occurring with adverbs expressing habituality, such as *changchang* 'often'.

- (21) * 他常常看了电影。
 * Tā chángcháng kàn-le diànyǐng.
 a. He often watches movies /
 b. He often watched movies.² (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 69)
- (22) 他常常看电影了。
 Tā chángcháng kàn diànyǐng le.
 a. He often watches movies now /
 b. He has started to go to the movies often (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 69)

Although the first pair of sentences is acceptable without question, one cannot just add *le* and expect it to be still acceptable.

- (23) 他很累。
 Tā hěn lèi.
 He is very tired. (Chang 2003: 98)

² The optional variation b. was added by me.

- (24) 他很好客。
Tā hěn hàokè.
He is very hospitable. (Chang 2003: 98)
- (25) 他累了。
Tā lèi le.
He got tired. (Chang 2003: 99)
- (26) * 他好客了。
* Tā hàokè le.
Intended meaning: He became hospitable. (Chang 2003: 99)

Type 2: Acceptable with different meanings

Sometimes, pair of sentences with and without *le* are acceptable, but produce different interpretation.

- (27) 树高十公分。
Shù gāo shí-gōngfēn.
State: The tree is ten centimeters tall. (Lin 2004a: 1)
- (28) 树高了十公分。
Shù gāo-le shí-gōngfēn.
Change of state: The tree grew ten centimeters. (Lin 2004a: 1)

Compare the following sentences and different meanings they express.

- (29) 张三病了。
Zhāngsān bìng le.
Zhangsan got ill. → inchoative reading (X&McE 2004: 109)
- (30) 张三病了两天。
Zhāngsān bìng-le liǎngtiān
Zhangsan was ill for two days. → perfective reading (X&McE 2004: 109)
- (31) 张三病了两天了。
Zhāngsān bìng-le liǎngtiān le.
Zhangsan has been ill for two days. → perfect reading³ (X&McE 2004: 109)

³ For detailed discussion of terms perfective, perfect etc. see chapter 2.

With the same so-called “double-le” construction one can achieve different readings. A description at the end of every sentence gives us additional ideas how to understand it.

(32) 我在那里住了两个月了。

Wǒ zài nàlǐ zhù-le liǎng-ge yuè le.

I've lived there for two months (now).

(L&T 1981: 270)

→ I came to that place two months ago, and in these two months (up to now) I've been living there. It is implied that I will keep living there from now on, but actually there is no such guarantee.

(33) 香港老板卷着我们的钱逃走了三天了。

Xiānggǎng lǎobǎn juǎn-zhe wǒmen de qián táo-zǒu-le sāntiān le.

The proprietor from Hong Kong has run away with our money for three days

→ Three days ago, the proprietor ran away with our money. Since he is gone, three days have passed till now.

The example (12) from above is repeated here again. There is another similar sentence, which is acceptable, but with slightly different meaning.

(34) 我吃了一条鱼，可是没有吃完。

Wǒ chī-le yī-tiáo yú, kěshì méiyǒu chī-wán.

I ate a fish but I didn't finish it.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 27)

(35) 我吃了鱼，可是没有吃完。

Wǒ chī-le yú, kěshì méiyǒu chī-wán.

I was eating fish, but I didn't finish.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 27)

Type 3: Acceptable with the same meaning

Sometimes, no matter which structure is used, the meaning stays the same. Both sentences below successfully express the occurrence of an action that took place yesterday. (Ma 2006: 3)

(36) 昨天晚上我们看电影。

Zuótiān wǎnshàng wǒmen kàn diànyǐng.

Last night we saw a movie.

(Chu 1998: 6)

- (37) 昨天晚上我们看了电影。
Zuótiān wǎnshàng wǒmen kàn-le diànyǐng.
Last night we saw a movie.⁴ (Chu 1998: 6)

How is it possible, that sometimes the position of operator *le* does not influence the meaning of the utterance? See the pair of instances below:

- (38) 他们刚刚到达了山顶。
Tāmen gānggāng dàodá-le shāndǐng.
They just reached the top of the mountain. (S&G 2006: 107)

- (39) 他们刚刚到达山顶了。
Tāmen gānggāng dàodá shāndǐng le.
They just reached the top of the mountain. (S&G 2006: 107)

In a series of situations two apparently incompatible particles can be used in an utterance, but its meaning will not change. Particle *le* is used for perfective aspect, whereas particle *zhe* occurs in imperfective sentences.

- (40) 墙上挂了一幅画。
Qiáng-shàng guà-le yī-fú huà.
On the wall hangs a painting. (L&T 1981: 215)

- (41) 墙上挂着一幅画。
Qiáng-shàng guà-zhe yī-fú huà.
On the wall hangs a painting.

As we saw above, two crucially different particles, *le* and *zhe*, can sometimes be interchangeable. But this is not always the case. Compare sentences below.

- (42) 他知道了这个回答。
Tā zhīdao-le zhè-ge huídá.
He knows the answer. (He has found out the answer.) (Ljungqvist 2007: 227)

- (43) * 他知道着这个回答。
* Tā zhīdao-zhe zhè-ge huídá.
* He is knowing the answer. (Ljungqvist 2007: 227)

⁴ Unquantified objects will not always be acceptable by all native speakers in a simple sentence with verbal *le*, i.e. sentence like this one. (I am grateful for this note to Marita Ljungqvist.)

2.2 What *le* does not mean

Postverbally used *le* is most frequently said to be expressing *perfective aspect*, it is often associated with *past tense*, but since these definitions cannot cover all situations, it is sometimes labeled as the marker for *completion* or *actual aspect*. However, there are many counter-examples to each definition, and in this section, I will present a few of them.

The reason for this subchapter is not to overthrow any of these definitions, but to make the reader aware that none of these definitions is perfect. There are always situations that do not fit into some categorization. On the other hand, I fully agree that sentences with *le* often express perfective aspect, past tense, completion or actual aspect (among other things). It is therefore not justified simply to deny these meanings. Later, I will show that both sides are right. Operator *le* DOES produce these meanings, but on different levels.

V-*le* does not mean PERFECTIVE ASPECT

In literature, verbal *-le* is often considered a perfective aspect marker; however, Zhu (1982: 69), Lu et al. (1984: 317) and Liu (2005: 209) among others point out this claim is challenged by examples like (44)-(46) below. They say that these examples denote a state that can never be bounded temporarily, spatially or conceptually, and as such, cannot be understood as perfective aspect.⁵

- (44) 短了一寸。
Duǎn-le yī-cùn.
(Something) is one inch shorter. (Liu 2005: 210)
- (45) 头发白了一点儿。
Tóufa bái-le yī-diǎnr
The hair becomes a little grayer than before
The hair becomes a little grayer than the standard value of gray assumed for the hair
The hair becomes a little grayer than some specific person.' (Liu 2005: 210)
- (46) 这朵花儿红了一点儿。
Zhè-duǒ huā hóng-le yīdiǎnr.
This flower is a little redder than before
This flower is a little redder than the standard value of redness assumed for the flower
This flower is a little redder than some specific flower.' (Liu 2005: 215)

⁵ Liu (2005) also presented several other arguments, which further strengthen this claim. For details, see the original.

V-le does not mean PAST TENSE

Li and Thompson (1981: 214) give us evidence why verbal *-le* does not express past tense. Their arguments are:

First, post-verbal *le* does not signal past tense, since we find it in non-past perfective sentences as imperatives, in sentences indicating simple futures, and in future or conditional sequence-of-action sentences. (L&T 1981: 213)

- (47) 喝了他。
Hē-le tā.
Drink it. (= imperative) (L&T 1981: 213)
- (48) 明天我就开除了他。
Míngtiān wǒ jiù kāichú le tā.
I'll expel him tomorrow. (= simple future) (L&T 1981: 213)
- (49) 他开了门你就进去。
Tā kāi-le mén nǐ jiù jìnqù.
When he opens the door, you go in. (= future sequence of action)
If he opens the door, you go in. (= conditional sequence of action) (L&T 1981: 213)

Second, many sentences expressing past events need not have any *-le*, for example bounded events with perfectivizing expressions. (L&T 1981: 214)

- (50) 昨天他跳在床上。
Zuótiān tā tiào zài chuáng-shàng.
Yesterday he jumped onto the bed. (L&T 1981: 214)
- (51) 他把肉切成小块。
Tā bǎ ròu qiēchéng xiǎo kuài.
S/he cut the meat into small pieces.⁶ (L&T 1981: 214)

Third, events that are not explicitly bounded also do not occur with *-le*, even if they refer to past time. (L&T 1981: 214)

- (52) 他们前天叫我在这里等。
Tāmen qiántiān jiào wǒ zài zhèlǐ děng.
The day before yesterday, they told me to wait here. (L&T 1981: 214)

⁶ Compare also similar sentences on the page 116.

- (53) 昨天夜里我梦见我母亲。
 Zuótiān yèlǐ wǒ mèngjiàn wǒ mǔqīn.
 Last night I dreamed about my mother. (L&T 1981: 214)
- (54) 我们到百货公司去买东西。
 Wǒmen dào bǎihuò gōngsī qù mǎi dōngxī.
 We went to the department store to buy some things. (L&T 1981: 215)
- (55) 他问我你年轻的时候在哪里念书。
 Tā wèn wǒ nǐ niánqīng de shíhòu zài nǎlǐ niànshū.
 S/he asked me where you went to school when you were young. (L&T 1981: 215)

V-le does not mean COMPLETION

Li and Thompson (1981: 215) also say that “it is important to recognize that *-le* cannot be characterized as expressing completion. An action that is bounded is also complete, but *-le* need not necessarily signal completed action.”

- (56) 墙上挂了一幅画。
 Qiáng-shàng guà-le yī-fú huà.
 On the wall hangs a painting. (L&T 1981: 215)

Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 27) also demonstrates with another example that “the presence of *-le*, which contributes to a perfective reading of the activity, does not guarantee a completive reading of the predicate”. Similar evidences can be found in Smith (1997), Xiao (2001) among others.

- (57) 我昨天画了一张画，可是没画完。
 Wǒ zuótiān huà-le yī-zhāng huà, kěshi méi huà-wán.
 I painted a picture yesterday, but I didn’t finish it. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 27)

Example (44) could be used here, as well. Not to repeat myself, I will write other example of the same type.

- (58) 衬衫小了三寸。
 Chènshān xiǎo-le sān-cùn.
 The shirt is too small by three inches (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 30)

V-le does not mean ACTUAL ASPECT or REALIZATION

As an counter-example for the statement that verbal *-le* expresses actual aspect or realization, could be conditional clauses and relative future clauses. Nevertheless, for some linguists that is not a problem, since realization in relative future can still be considered as a future. And supposing the condition was fulfilled, it could still come to realization of the main event.

(59) 我明天下了班去看电影。

Wǒ míngtiān xià-le bān qù kàn diànyǐng.

I will go to see a movie after work tomorrow.

(X&McE 2004: 121)

(60) 那家伙烧成了灰我也能认出来。

Nà jiāhuǒ shāochéng-le huī, wǒ yě néng rènchūlái.

Even if that guy was burnt to ashes, I would recognize him.

(X&McE 2004: 121)

PART I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK(S)

1. ASPECT

Operator *le* is primarily associated with aspect; therefore, this chapter is dedicated to description of the aspectual model, which I follow in my work.

In the process of looking for the most representative definition of the term ‘aspect’, I realized there is no united understanding of this category. One just have to agree with Holisky’s (1981: 128) comment that “there are almost as many definitions for aspect as there are linguists who have used it.” (X&McE 2004: 13) After a thorough comparison, I decided to use the two-component aspect model proposed by Smith (1991, 1997) and modified by Xiao and McEnery. (2004), who also adopted many ideas presented in Dai (1997). Their framework can provide the most detailed explanation of relationships among arguments and explain the influence of specific elements on situation types. Xiao and McEnery argue that insufficiency in the previous approaches arises from treating situation aspect just from sentential level. According to them, situation aspect should be modeled at both the lexical level and the sentential level. They criticize Smith to be only concerned with situation types on the sentential level. But on the other hand, Smith’s approach is not insufficient. After all, the situation types get their final form at clause level.

Xiao and McEnery define aspect as “an important linguistic category, which relates to the study of linguistic devices that enable a speaker to direct the hearer’s attention to the temporality of a situation, either intrinsic or viewed from a certain perspective. Such knowledge is required for interpreting event sequences in discourse, processing temporal modifiers, and describing allowable alternations and their semantic effects.” (X&McE 2004: 1) According to them, situations are defined as “the entities in the real world codified by language”. They can be divided into events and states. The term event is used for “dynamic situation in opposition to a state”, and – as just said – “situation is preferred as a term inclusive of both event and state”. (X&McE 2004: 22) In other words, the term situation is used for linguistically described situations, or idealized situations in Smith’s terms.⁷

The distinction between situation aspect and viewpoint aspect is recognized by many authors, though they use different terms. (X&McE 2004: 18) “The aspectual meaning of a sentence is the synthetic result of ‘situation aspect’ and ‘viewpoint aspect’. The former refers to the intrinsic

⁷ Note that the cover term *situation* contributed to the renaming of Reichenbach’s “Event Time” (ET) into “Situation Time” (SitT). For detailed discussion see Chapter 2, page 41. In this book, I use the latter one.

aspectual properties of idealized situations while the latter refers to the speaker's choice of a perspective from which a situation is presented. The two are independent yet interacting components of aspect." (X&McE 2004: 10) In Chu's terminology, situation aspect corresponds to 'situation type' or 'verb semantics' and viewpoint aspect to 'viewpoint' or 'pragmatic perspective'. (Chu 1998: 35)

Situation aspect is basically a cognitive-semantic concept while viewpoint aspect is a grammatical concept. On the other hand, "situation aspect is modeled as 'verb classes' at the lexical level and as 'situation types' at the sentential level, with the latter being the composite result of the interaction between verb classes and their complements, arguments and non-arguments". (X&McE 2004: 10-11, 30)

Synthesis 1: Approach to Aspect in general (First part in Chap. 1)

Situations:

- Events (dynamic situations)
- States (static situations)

Aspect:

- Situation Aspect = intrinsic aspectual properties of idealized situations
 - = verb semantics
 - = a cognitive-semantic concept
 - = verb classes (lexical level), 'situation types' (sentential level)
- Viewpoint Aspect = speaker's choice of a perspective to present situations
 - = pragmatic perspective
 - = grammatical concept

1.1 Situation Aspect

Xiao and McEnery (2004) developed a two-level model of situation aspect in which situation aspect is modeled as 'verb classes' at the lexical level and as 'situation types' at the sentential level. At the lexical level, they use a five-way classification system, to classify situation aspects into six verb classes. At this level, verbs alone are considered. Everything that might change the aspectual value of a verb is excluded.

On the following pages, I will briefly sum up Xiao and McEnery's classification parameters, rules and the whole system of situation types on both levels, in order to present the issue of operator *le* as clearly as possible also to a reader who is not familiar with their framework.

1.1.1 Classification parameters

In their five-way classification system, Xiao and McEnery use three established parameters [\pm dynamic], [\pm durative] and [\pm telic] and add two new features, [\pm result] and [\pm bounded]. (X&McE 2004: 41) They argue, that “a final spatial endpoint (i.e. [\pm telic]) should be kept distinct from the final temporal boundary (i.e. [\pm bounded])” (X&McE 2004: 20) To make the differences clearer, they also present some tests that show how the value of the chosen parameter should be determined.⁸

“[\pm **Dynamic**] is a feature that distinguishes two basic types of situations in human languages: events and states. A stative situation has no internal phases and involves no change; it may endure or persist over time and it remains steady for an undefined period unless a dynamic situation occurs to change it. States obtain or hold as an undifferentiated and homogeneous moment (e.g. *believe*). In contrast, a dynamic situation necessarily involves change over time. The change can be related either to its heterogeneous internal structure (e.g. *dance*) or to its changing endpoints (e.g. *die*).” (X&McE 2004: 41)

“[\pm **Durative**] as a feature relies on the contrast between a [+durative] situation which ‘lasts for a certain period of time’ (or at least, is conceived of as lasting for a certain period of time) and a [-durative] situation which ‘does not last in time’ (or at least is not conceived as lasting in time). Durativity is a mental concept, hence duration is relative and can be of any specified temporal length.” (X&McE 2004: 43) According to Smith (1997), “Distinction can be made on the basis of the meaning of the progressive with different situations. With [-durative] situations, the progressive produces an iterative reading (e.g. John is breaking bottles) whereas with [+durative] situations, it produces an ongoing reading (e.g. John is humming a tune). This test functions to differentiate semelfactives from activities.” (Smith in X&McE 2004: 43) However, it should be noted that the progressive *zai* can only be used with activity verbs denoting activities (L&T 1981: 218)⁹ and semelfactives, respectively. It normally cannot be used with states, achievements or accomplishments. (X&McE 2004: 210) Considering that, this test is not really useful. Xiao and McEnery’s modification of Mellor (1997) results in the following test: All punctual situations are appropriate with at-adverbials, and with a punctual reference time, durative situations either have an inceptive reading or are unacceptable. (cf. X&McE 2004: 44)

⁸ Note, however, that these tests are not the only way to distinguish values among parameters. In her work, Borik gathered much more material on this issue. For further discussion on parameters and tests, see Borik (2002)

⁹ Activity verbs can also signal states associated with their activity meanings. In the sentence *Ta zai na baozhi* ‘S/he is taking newspapers’ verb *na* ‘to take’ expresses activity, but in the sentence *Ta na-zhe liang-ben shu* ‘S/he is holding two books’ the same word *na* means ‘holding’. (L&T 1981: 220)

- (61) 11月26日下午4点30分，四名干警秘密离开邵阳。
 11-yuè 26-rì xiàwǔ 4-diǎn 30-fēn, sì-míng gānjǐng mìmi líkāi Shàoyáng.¹⁰
 Four policemen left Shaoyang secretly at 4:30 p.m. on November 26 (X&McE 2004: 44)
 → instantaneous reading
- (62) 午夜12点，一辆警车超震庄急速驶去。
 Wǔyè 12-diǎn, yī-liàng jǐngchē chāo Zhènzhuāng jí sù shǐ qù.
 At midnight, a police car rushed towards Zhenzhuang at high speed. (X&McE 2004: 44)
 → ingressive or inceptive reading
- (63) * 某些国人下午三点相信命运。
 * Mǒuxiē guó rén xiàwǔ sān-diǎn xiāng xìn mìng yùn.
 * Some countrymen believe in fate at 3 p.m. (X&McE 2004: 44)
 → unacceptable

In Xiao and McEnery's model, the feature [\pm telic] is associated with the presence or absence of a 'final spatial endpoint'. (X&McE 2004: 46) Garey (1957) asserts that the telicity value of a verb can be tested with the question "if one is *verbing* but interrupted while *verbing*, has one *verbed*?" With an atelic situation, the answer is *yes*, with a telic situation the answer is *no*. From Vendler (1967) onwards, the compatibility test: with *for/in*-adverbials has been in operation as a diagnostic for determining the telicity value of a situation. A [$-$ telic] situation is compatible with a *for*-adverbial, whereas a [$+$ telic] situation is compatible with an *in*-adverbial.

"A verb is assigned the value [$+$ result] if its meaning includes a reference to a changing point at which the final spatial endpoint denoted by the verb starts holding. While an achievement verb and an accomplishment verb both have final spatial endpoint, they differ in that the former indicates the success of achieving that endpoint (*yingqiu* "to score a goal") but the latter does not (*xiexin* "letter-writing"). In other words, both verb classes involve a result, but they do so in different ways. While an achievement encodes a result itself, an accomplishment only implies a result and the implied result has to be made explicit by the NP or PP arguments of the verb." (X&McE 2004: 48) The contradiction test can be used to determine the [\pm result] value. (X&McE 2004: 48)

- (64) 他们取消了那场比赛，（*可是没取消成）。
 Tāmen qǔxiāo-le nà-cháng bǐsài, (* kěshì méi qǔxiāo-chéng).
 They cancelled the game (* but did not succeed). (X&McE 2004: 48)

In Xiao and McEnery's model, the feature [\pm bounded] refers to the presence or absence of a final temporal endpoint while the feature [\pm telic] is related to a final spatial endpoint. (X&McE 2004: 51)

¹⁰ Examples in other papers are often written just in pinyin, or even without diacritic marks, so it is sometimes impossible to reconstruct proper nouns. 邵阳 is one of the possibilities for 'Shaoyang'. This note holds for all similar cases in my paper.

Boundedness is a semantic feature related to situation aspect and not a feature underlying the perfective viewpoint. (X&McE 2004: 28) That explains very well, why the notion of boundedness is not in one-to-one relation with operator *le*.

1.1.2 Rules among these parameters

Feature “[+result] always implies [+telic], [+telic] also implies [+bounded]. In other words, [−result] may either mean [+telic] or [−telic]; and similarly, [−telic] may mean either [+bounded] or [−bounded].” (X&McE 2004: 51) In theory, there are 32 combinations of the 5 binary features, however, there are much fewer verb classes, because combinations of conflicting features must be ruled out.

Synthesis 2: Classification parameters for situation aspect with some tests (Chap. 1.1-1.1.2)

Distinguishing feature states vs. events:

situation[+dyn] → event

situation[−dyn] → state

Compatibility with progressive *zai*:

→ No: ILS, SLS, ACH, ACC

→ Yes: ACT (ongoing reading), SEM (iterative reading)

Compatibility with punctual reference time:

situation[−dur] + *at*-adverbial → instantaneous reading

situation[+dur] + *at*-adverbial → inceptive reading or unacceptable

Telicity of situations:

situation[−tel] if one is *verbing* but interrupted while *verbing*, one HAS *verbed*

situation[+tel] if one is *verbing* but interrupted while *verbing*, one HAS NOT *verbed*

situation[−tel] ⇔ *for*-adverbial (time-span)

situation[+tel] ⇔ *in*-adverbial (time-frame)

Resultativeness of situations:

situation[−res] ⇔ previous clause can be contradicted with *V-le ... keshi mei ...*

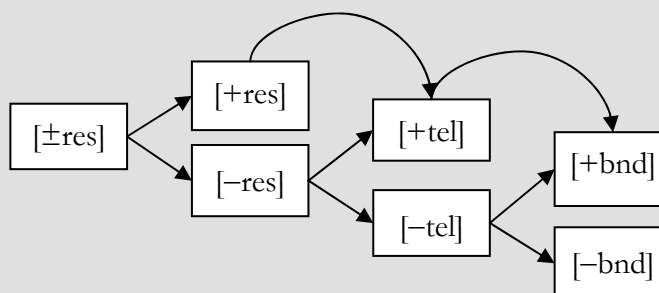
situation[+res] ⇔ previous clause cannot be contradicted with *V-le ... keshi mei ...*

Rules among parameters

[+res] ⇒ [+tel] ⇒ [+bnd]

[+res] ⇒ [−dur]

[−dur] ⇒ [+dyn]



1.1.3 The lexical level – Verb classes

Xiao and McEnery first classify verbs alone in the so-called ‘neutral contexts’. “The context is deemed neutral when everything has been excluded that might change the aspectual value of a verb.” (X&McE 2004: 52) In Chinese, the neutral context is a simple clause in which (i) the perfective viewpoint aspect is preferable; (ii) the object is syntactically and semantically a singular countable noun and should only be present if it is obligatory, i.e. with a necessarily transitive verb; (iii) viewpoint aspect must be simple. (cf. X&McE 2004: 52)

Xiao and McEnery attested six verb classes. Table 2 is showing the semantic features of these verb classes according to five parameters:

V-class	[±dyn]	[±dur]	[±bnd]	[±tel]	[±res]
ILS	–	+	–	–	–
SLS	±	+	–	–	–
ACT	+	+	–	–	–
SEM	+	–	±	–	–
ACH	+	–	+	+	+
ACC	+	+	+	+	–

Table 2: Lexical level of situation aspect - verb classes (X&McE 2004)

This is not the only categorization or description of *situation types* in Chinese. Recall that these categories (*state, activity, semelfactive, achievement* and *accomplishment*) are not positioned at the same level as the same expressions from other authors. (Vendler 1967; Shen 1995; Smith 1997; Chu 1998; Ljungqvist Arin 2003; Lin 2004a 2004b; among others) Xiao and McEnery consider the above mentioned categories as “basic categories”, and are placed below the sentence level. As such, they can differ from the so-called “derived categories” (*derived state, derived activity* etc.), which function at the sentence level.

In general, only sentence level is relevant for the operator *le*. On the other hand, a minor level like verb classes and rules among them can better explain the differences between similar sentences.

Activity verbs vs. semelfactive verbs

The [–bnd] feature determines that occurrence of activity verbs with durative adverbials or the progressive can only produce an ongoing single-event reading. (X&McE 2004: 54)

(65) 我在部队干了好几年。

Wǒ zài bùduì gàn-le hǎojī-nián.

I worked in the army for many years. (durative adverbial)

(X&McE 2004: 54)

- (66) 他一直在哭。
Tā yīzhí zài kū.
He was crying all the time. (progressive) (X&McE 2004: 54)

“Since semelfactives are prone to shift between single-event and multiple-event reading, their final temporal endpoints can be overridden and thus they have the feature [\pm bnd]. In contrast with activity verbs, semelfactive verbs intrinsically involve a final temporal endpoint. Therefore, semelfactives easily suggest iterative multiple-event readings.” (X&McE 2004: 54)

- (67) 白冰冰[...]连大声咳嗽一下都不敢，
Bái Bīngbīng lián dàshēng késòu yīxià dōu bù gǎn,
Bai Bingbing didn't even dare to (make a single) cough. (SkE)
- (68) 另一名五岁的小女孩，有一天晚餐时突然剧烈咳嗽达半小时之久，
Lìng yī-míng wǔ-suì de xiǎo nǚhái, yǒu yī-tiān wǎncān shí túrán jùliè késòu dá bàn xiǎoshí zhī jiǔ,
One day at dinner, another 5 years old girl suddenly started to cough severely, and she was coughing for almost half an hour (SkE)

When a semelfactive verb takes an adverbial denoting temporal length, a verbal classifier phrase¹¹, the progressive, or durative marker, they always produce an iterative reading. (X&McE 2004: 55)

- (69) 他们打了你几天？
Tāmen dǎ-le nǐ jǐ-tiān?
For how many days did they beat you? (time span) (X&McE 2004: 55)
- (70) 刘也朝她头上砍了数刀。
Liú yě cháo tā tóushàng kǎn-le shù-dāo
Liu also chopped at her head several times with his knife.
(verbal classifier phrase) (X&McE 2004: 55)
- (71) 他们在鼓掌。
Tāmen zài gǔzhǎng.
They were clapping their hands. (progressive) (X&McE 2004: 55)
- (72) 她摇着头叹息。
Tā yáo-zhe tóu tàn xī.
She sighed while shaking her head. (durative marker) (X&McE 2004: 55)

¹¹ A verbal classifier phrase is similar to a nominal classifier phrase like *ben* in *yi-ben shu* ‘a book’. The two differ in that a verbal classifier phrase refers to the count of actions while a nominal classifier refers to the number of an object. (X&McE 2004: 86)

Accomplishment verbs vs. achievement verbs

“While accomplishments and achievements are both telic verbs, they have different emphases and involve a result in different ways. By the [\pm result] criterion, accomplishment verbs place emphasis on the process leading up to a result but verbs themselves do not provide any information concerning the success in achieving the result. They imply but do not encode a result. The result is specified by their arguments or non-arguments.” As the preparatory process normally takes time, accomplishments are [+durative] in nature. (X&McE 2004: 56)

Achievement verbs encode a result themselves. “As these verbs place emphasis on the successful achievement of the result, the preparatory process leading up to a result is not important. The process can either be ignored or only functions adverbially.” The achievement of the result is normally conceived to be punctual, thus achievement verbs are intrinsically [-durative]. (X&McE 2004: 56) Some of the achievements are: 赢 yíng ‘win’, 到达 dàodá ‘arrive’, 找到 zhǎodào ‘find’, 打破 dǎpò ‘break’, 杀死 shāsǐ ‘kill’

In the group of achievements, there are several RVCs. In fact, RVCs encode both a process and a result, but the focus of RVCs is normally on the result. (X&McE 2004: 56)

Another useful test for separating achievements from accomplishments is the acceptability of the verb as the complement of *stop*: Achievements sound odd as the complement of *stop*, expect perhaps in a habitual interpretation. (Lin 2004b: 80) This is quite reasonable, since the notion of *stopping* a situation requires that a situation has feature [+durative].

(73) * 他们停止到达山顶。

* Tāmen tíngzhǐdàodá shāndǐng.

* They stopped reaching the top of the mountain.

(cf. Lin 2004b: 80)

(74) 她停止吃药，但是已经太迟了。

Tā tíngzhǐ chī yào, dànshì yǐjīng tài chí le.

She stopped eating pills, but it was already too late.

(web)

Individual-level state verbs vs. stage-level state verbs

The distinction between individual-level and stage-level predicates was first introduced by Carlson (1977: 448) and further advocated by many others (Pustejovsky (1995), Kratzer (1989), Chang (2003) etc.). Stage-level predicates “express transient or episodic stages of an individual (such as *hungry*, *sleeping*, *awake*, *drunk* and *available*). Thus they vary over time and/or place; in contrast, individual-level predicates are predicating inherent and permanent dispositions of an individual (such as *tall*, *fat*, *clever* and *obnoxious*), thus they remain unchanged irrespective of time and/or place.” (X&McE 2004: 57)

ILS verbs are “stative durative verbs that do not have a final temporal or spatial endpoint and do not encode a result in the sense that they are normally predicated of permanent dispositions of an individual (e.g. *xiang* ‘resemble’, *chengshi* ‘honest’)” (X&McE 2004: 58) SLS verbs are “durative and generally stative verbs that do not have a final temporal or spatial endpoint and do not encode a result in the sense that they are normally predicated of less permanent stages of an individual (e.g. *bing* ‘be ill’, *mang* ‘be busy’)”. (X&McE 2004: 58)¹²

SLSs are also known as *temporary* or *transient states*, because they are usually identified with non-permanent states of individuals, whereas ILSs are known as *permanent states*, because they might be thought of as properties that an individual retains, more or less, throughout its lifetime, and can be identified with the individual directly. (Chang 2003: 97) In Tsai et al.’s (1999) and Huang et al.’s (2000) work, stage-level states are called *inchoative states*. On the other hand, individual-level states are labeled as *homogeneous states*.

For the discussion of operator *le*, it is even more important that these two kinds of states have different syntactic behavior. For example, only the stage-level states can appear as resultative predicates, whereas the individual-level states typically cannot. (Pustejovsky (1995), Chang 2003: 97) I will try to show that only stage-level states are compatible with operator *le*, or reversely, operator *le* can only be found with those states, which allow changes and dynamics (cf. principle of compatibility). If speaking about adjectival predicates, this means gradable adjectives are compatible with *le*, whereas absolute adjectives are not. See also Chapter 3 (cf. 129 ff.).

Another syntactical feature is regarding degree adverbs. SLS and ILS differ from other types of situations such as activities, achievements, and accomplishments in that they can take degree adverbs such as *hen* or *feichang* ‘very’, while other eventualities cannot, as illustrated below: (Chang 2003: 98)

- (75) 他很累。
Tā hěn lèi.
He is very tired. (SLS) (Chang 2003: 98)
- (76) 他很好客。
Tā hěn hàokè.
He is very hospitable. (ILS) (Chang 2003: 98)
- (77) *他很跑步。
* Tā hěn pǎobù.
* He is very running. (ACT)¹³

¹² In literature, there is still no united treatment of words like *bing* ‘be ill’, *mang* ‘be busy’, *hao* ‘be good’ etc. Some sources call these expressions *verbs*, sometimes they are defined as *state verbs*, sometimes as *adjectives which can function as predicates* etc. Detailed discussion on this issue could result in another research.

¹³ The following examples are mine. I also added semelfactives, since in Chang’s work (2003) there are only 4 situation types.

- (78) * 他很打破杯子。
 * Tā hěn dǎpò bēizi.
 * He is very breaking glasses. (ACH)
- (79) * 他很写一封信。
 * Tā hěn xiě yī-fēng xìn.
 * He is very writing a letter. (ACC)
- (80) * 他很敲门。
 * Tā hěn qiāomén.
 * He is very knocking on the door. (SEM)

Synthesis 3: Similarities and differences among verb classes (Chap. 1.1.3)

Activities vs. Semelfactives:

ACT[-bnd] + durative adverbial (time span)	⇒ ongoing single-event reading
ACT[-bnd] + progressive <i>zai</i>	⇒ ongoing single-event reading
SEM + durative adverbial (i.e. time span)	⇒ iterative reading
SEM + verbal classifier phrase	⇒ iterative reading
SEM + progressive <i>zai</i>	⇒ iterative reading
SEM + durative marker <i>zhe</i>	⇒ iterative reading

Accomplishments vs. Achievements:

<u>ACC</u>	<u>ACH</u>
= emphasis on the process	= emphasis on the result
= [+dur]	= [-dur]
= acceptable as the complement of stop	= odd as the complement of stop

Individual-level state vs. Stage-level state:

<u>SLS</u>	<u>ILS</u>
= transient states, inchoative states	= permanent states, homogeneous states
= transient or episodic stages	= inherent, permanent dispositions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vary over time and/or place	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unchanged over time/place
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>hen, feichang</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>hen, feichang</i>

1.1.4 Sentential level – Situation types

“Sentential-level situation aspect is the composite result of the interaction between verb classes and complements, arguments and non-arguments and viewpoint aspect.” Further on, “the interaction between verbs and other sentential constituents is governed by a set of rules that map verb classes at the lexical level onto situation types at the sentential level.” (X&McE 2004: 33) Xiao proposes

twelve rules for the composition of situation aspect at the sentential level. Two rules are holding at nucleus¹⁴ level, three at core level and six at clause level.¹⁵ (X&McE 2004: 60-77)

Rule 1: verb_[-tel/±bnd] + RVC ⇒ Derived predicate_[+res/+tel]

“RVCs refer to verb complements that indicate the resultant state or phase of the situation denoted by their preceding verbs in resultative compounds. There are three types of RVCs, namely, completive (e.g. *xie-wan* ‘write-finish’, *zhunbei-hao* ‘prepare-complete’), result-state (e.g. *sha-si* ‘kill-dead’) and directional (e.g. *yun-guoqu* ‘faint away’).” (X&McE 2004: 60-61)¹⁶ Situation type can vary according to other elements in the sentence. As we see, RVCs have final spatial endpoint, so they are [+tel]. They also function to change activity or semelfactive verbs into achievement verbs. Beside of that, internal arguments such as direct objects and directional complements typically affect situation type. (X&McE 2004: 62, 63)

- (81) 他喝了酒。
Tā hē-le jiǔ.
He drank. [-tel] (X&McE 2004: 61)
- (82) 他喝了酒，可是没喝醉。
Tā hē-le jiǔ, kěshì méi hēzùi.
He drank, but was not drunk. [-tel] (X&McE 2004: 61)
- (83) 他喝醉了酒。
Tā hēzùi-le jiǔ
He got drunk. [+tel, +res] (X&McE 2004: 61)

Rule 2: verb_[-tel/±bnd] + reduplicant ⇒ Derived predicate_[+bnd]

“Because of intrinsic semantic constraints, only verbs with the features [+dynamic] and [-result] can be reduplicated to denote a delimitative meaning. As such, *wang-wang* ‘look-look, take a brief look’ and *mo-mo* ‘touch-touch, touch a bit’ are naturals whereas **pang-pang* ‘fat-fat’ and *ying-ying* ‘win-win’ are unacceptable. Verb reduplication not only provides a perspective from which to view a situation perfectly, it also provides a temporal boundary to the situation denoted by a reduplicated verb and changes its boundedness value from minus to plus.” (X&McE 2004: 62)

¹⁴ Notions of ‘nucleus’, ‘core’ and ‘clause’ (periphery) are part of the Role and Reference grammar from Van Valin (1993).

¹⁵ One rule (i.e. rule no. 6) is not relevant for Chinese, so it will not be discussed here. For detailed argumentation, read Xiao and McEnery (2004), p. 69-72.

¹⁶ More about RVC’s is written in Chapter 4.1.2, p. 50 ff.

- (84) * 我回头望了这个破破烂烂的家。
 * Wǒ huítóu wàng-le zhè-gè pòpò-lànlàn de jiā.
Intended: I turned around and took a brief look
 at this run-down home. (X&McE 2004: 62)
 → *wang* ‘look’: activity [-tel][-bnd] → cannot occur with *-le*
- (85) 我回头望了望这个破破烂烂的家。
 Wǒ huítóu wàng-le wàng zhè-gè pòpò-lànlàn de jiā.
 I turned around and took a brief look at this run-down home. (X&McE 2004: 62)
 → *wang-wang* ‘look a bit’: delimited activity [-tel][+bnd] → can occur with *-le*
- (86) * 汉子煞有介事摸了摸口袋又说：
 * Hànzǐ shāyǒujièshì mō-le kǒudài yòu shuō:
Intended: The man pretended to be serious about feeling in his pocket,
 and then said ... (X&McE 2004: 63)
 → *mo* ‘feel’: activity [-tel][-bnd] → cannot occur with *-le*
- (87) 汉子煞有介事摸摸口袋又说：
 Hànzǐ shāyǒujièshì mō-mō kǒudài yòu shuō:
 The man pretended to be serious about feeling in his pocket,
 and then said ... (X&McE 2004: 62)
 → *mo-mo* ‘tap a bit’: delimited activity [-tel][+bnd] → could occur with *-le*
- (88) * 老人笑着抖了手。
 * Lǎorén xiào-zhe dǒu-le shǒu
Intended: Smiling, the old man shook his hand. (X&McE 2004: 63)
 → *dou* ‘shake’: semelfactive [-tel][-bnd] → cannot occur with *-le*
- (89) 老人笑着抖了抖手。
 Lǎorén xiào-zhe dǒu-le dǒu shǒu.
 Smiling, the old man shook his hand. (X&McE 2004: 63)
 → *dou-dou* ‘shake for a while’: semelfactive [-tel][+bnd] → can occur with *-le*

Rules 3-5 reflect the contribution of NP-arguments to the composition of situation aspect. The unspecified NPs can hold the values of either [+count] or [-count]. “In Chinese, the effect of NP arguments is subtle, because a bare noun can be understood either as specific or and non-specific, and because the structure *verb+bare noun* (*changge* “sing songs”) has two possibilities: the object may denote a specific individual, or alternatively it can be considered as part of the verb phrase, i.e. incorporated into the verb.” (X&McE 2004: 69) The (non-)specificity of a bare noun depends on the additional information provided by its context.

Something more has to be said about nouns, specially in position of direct object. For discussion on nouns, see Chapter 1.6, p. 114.

Rule 3: NP + Verb_[+/-telic] ⇒ Core_[+/-telic]

- (90) 他来回走了一个小时。
Tā lái huí zǒu-le yī-gè xiǎoshí.
He walked back and forth (for an hour). (Rule 3) (X&McE 2004: 69)

Rule 4: NP + Verb_[-telic] + NP ⇒ Core_[-telic]

- (91) 那年国庆，我在广场上跳集体舞。
Nà nián guóqìng, wǒ zài guǎngchǎng-shàng tiào jí tǐ wǔ
That year on the national day, I was dancing group-dance on the public square. (SKE)

Rule 5: NP + Verb_[+telic] + NP_[+/-count] ⇒ Core_[+/-telic]

- (92) 作案分子在十分中内消除了脚印。
Zuò àn-fēn zǐ zài shí-fēn zhōng nèi xiāo chú-le jiǎo yìn.
The criminal removed his footprints (in 10 minutes). (Rule 5) (X&McE 2004: 70)
- (93) 这项科研成果多年来填补了国家空白。
Zhè-xiàng kē yán chéng guǒ duō-nián lái tián bǔ-le guó jiā kòng bái.
The result of his research filled the gaps in this country for many years.
(Rule 5) (X&McE 2004: 70)

Another four rules concern peripheral adjunct at the clause level. They can change the telicity and boundedness values of core-level situations. (X&McE 2004: 72)

Rule 7: Core_[-bnd] + durational phrase (for-PP)/from-to ⇒ Clause_[+bnd]¹⁷

- (94) 1981 年到 1985 年，他当了主席。
1981 nián dào 1985 nián, tā dāng-le zhǔ xǐ
He was chairman from 1981 to 1985. (ILS) (Rule 7)¹⁸
- (95) 他们沉默了一回儿。
Tā men chén mò-le yī huǐ er.
They were silent for a moment. (SLS) (Rule 7)

¹⁷ The notion of “change-of-state” related to intransitivity and durational time phrases was presented in Chappell (1988) as well.

¹⁸ Examples (94) and (95) are taken from Xiao and McEnery (2004: 73) and adopted by me. Originally, these sentences are just in English, therefore the Chinese counterparts are mine, checked by native speakers.

(96) 练了整整一年杨兵明快出事了。
 Liàn-le zhěngzhěng yī-nián, Yáng Bīngmíng kuài chūshì le.
 Having practised for a whole year, Yang was soon to finish his apprenticeship. (ACT) (Rule 7)
 (X&McE 2004: 73)

(97) 打了你几天?
 Dǎ-le nǐ jǐ-tiān?
 For how many days did they beat you? (SEM) (Rule 7) (X&McE 2004: 73)

Rule 8: Core_[+tel] + durational phrase(for-PP)/from-to ⇒ Clause_[-telic]

(98) 他们从早上 8 点半到 12 点写了信然后又从下午 4 点到 6 点继续写。
 Tāmen cóng zǎoshàng 8 diǎn bàn dào 12 diǎn xiě-le xìn, ránhòu yòu cóng xiàwǔ 4 diǎn dào 6 diǎn jìxù xiě.
 They wrote from eight-thirty in the morning till twelve, and again from four till six.
 (ACC→ACT) (X&McE 2004: 73)

Rule 9: Core_[±bnd] + verbal classifier phrase¹⁹ ⇒ Clause_[+bnd]

(99) 那汉子左右巡视了一番，低声说……
 Nà hànzi zuǒyòu xúnshì-le yīfān, dīshēng shuō ...
 That man looked around, and said in a low voice ... (X&McE 2004: 75)

Rule 10: Core_[+tel] + progressive ⇒ Clause_[-tel]

(100) 美国政府正在整理一分对日贸易制裁清单。
 Měiguó zhèngfǔ zhèngzài zhěnglǐ yī-fēn duì Rì mào yì zhìcái qīngdān.
 The US Administration is preparing a list for trade sanctions against Japan.
 (Rule 10) (X&McE 2004: 76)

Rule 11: Core_[-res] + de-construction [+dyn]_[-res] ⇒ Clause_[+res]

Chinese is rich in delimiting devices. The *de* resultative structure and the constructions of *ba* or *bei* also function to delimit situations (Yang 1995:78). But all de-constructions are not by default resultative in nature. “The structure *verb+de+complement* can denote either resultativeness (e.g. *da de toupoxueliu* ‘bleed till one bleeds’) or manner (e.g. *chang de buhao* ‘not sing well’). Only resultative de-constructions are relevant here. All of the verb classes involved in resultative de-constructions have features [+dynamic] and [-result].” (X&McE 2004: 77)

¹⁹ Differences among these time expressions:

1. “durational phrase” or “for-adverbial” or “time-span” express, for how long a situation lasts;
2. “from-to phrase” is also expression for “time-span”, where initial and final endpoint are specific;
3. “verbal classifier phrase” denotes how many times a situation repeated. (*yi-ci*, *liang-fan*, *san-tang*).

(101) 五分钟内逗得小毛终于开怀大笑。

Wǔ-fēnzhōng nèi dòu de Xiǎo Máo zhōngyú kāihuáidàxiào.

She amused Xiao Mao so much that he burst into laughter
at last (within 5 minutes).

(X&McE 2004: 77)

Rule 12: Core[-res] + ba/bei-construction ⇒ Clause[+res]

There is another interesting feature that is worth to remember. When the structures of *ba* and *bei* are used, the situations encode a result. (X&McE 2004: 79)

(102) 今年春节老翁还把他把他打了一顿。

Jīnnián chūnjié lǎowēng hái bǎ tā dǎ-le dùn.

At spring festival this year, that old man even slapped him once.

(SkE)

(103) 肩头突然被人轻轻点了一下。

Jiāntóu túrán bèi rén qīngqīng diǎn-le yī-xià.

Suddenly, his shoulder was touched gently

(X&McE 2004: 79)

As shown in the examples above, the specific situation type of a clause comes as a result of the interaction between verb classes and complements, arguments and non-arguments. Xiao and McEney claim that except for accomplishments, all of the others have various derived situation types which vary from their basic types with respect to their durativity of boundedness value²⁰. (X&McE 2004: 80)

“Derived activities have the value of [\pm bounded] as they represent a complicated category. When basic activities are delimited by a specific time frame, they are [+bounded]; when accomplishment verbs take [-count] NPs or the progressive, the derived activities are [-bounded].” (X&McE 2004: 88)

Basic and derived situation types are presented in the following table:

²⁰ These are just the two and only two distinguishing features Ljungqvist Arin (2003) takes in account in her framework.

		V-class		[±dyn]	[±dur]	[±bnd]	[±tel]	[±res]
Situations ²¹	States	Individual level state	basic	-	+	-	-	-
			derived	-	+	+	-	-
		Stage level state	basic	±	+	-	-	-
			derived	±	+	+	-	-
	Events	Activity	basic	+	+	-	-	-
			derived	+	+	±	-	-
		Accomplishment		+	+	+	+	-
		Achievement	basic	+	-	+	+	+
			derived	+	+	+	+	+
		Semelfactive	basic	+	-	±	-	-
			derived	+	+	±	-	-

Table 3: Basic and derived situation types

Examples to each group:

(104) 他爱玛丽。²²

Tā ài Mǎlì.

He loved Mary. (Basic ILS)

(X&McE 2004: 81)

(105) 他爱玛丽，爱了三年。

Tā ài Mǎlì, ài-le sān-nián.

He loved Mary for three years. (Derived ILS)

(X&McE 2004: 82)

(106) 约翰很生气。

Yuēhàn hěn shēngqì.

John was angry. (basic SLS)

(X&McE 2004: 82)

(107) 约翰生了一个小时的气。

Yuēhàn shēng-le yī-gè xiǎoshí de qì.

John was angry for an hour. (Derived SLS)

(X&McE 2004: 82)

(108) 他推了一辆车。

Tā tuī-le yī-liàng chē.

He pushed a cart. (Basic ACT)

(X&McE 2004: 82)

²¹ See also Chapter Eventualities (particular), page 66.

²² This sentence would not be acceptable with *le* on post-verbal position. According to Xiao and McEnery, this is the proof that *-le* only presents a situation as a whole but does not provide any final endpoint. Simply adding *-le* to a [-bounded] situation normally does not produce a grammatical sentence. (X&McE 2004: 80) I agree with this fact, although I propose different explanation. Consider similar example (415), p. 168.

- (109) 他推车推了一个小时。
Tā tuīchē tuī-le yī-gè xiǎoshí.
He pushed the cart for an hour. (Derived ACT from basic ACT) (X&McE 2004: 82)
- (110) 他写论文写了一个小时。
Tā xiě lùnwén xiě-le yī-gè xiǎoshí.
He wrote his thesis for an hour. (Derived ACT from basic ACC) (X&McE 2004: 82)
- (111) 灯塔闪了一下。
Dēngtǎ shǎn-le yī-xià.
The beacon flashed once. (Basic SEM) (X&McE 2004: 82)
- (112) 他咳嗽了5分钟。
Tā késòu-le 5 fēnzhōng.
He coughed for 5 minutes. (Derived SEM) (X&McE 2004: 82)
- (113) 他把茶杯打破了。
Tā bǎ chábēi dǎpò le.
He broke the cup. (Basic ACH) (X&McE 2004: 82)
- (114) 他注意到了文章中的三处错误。
Tā zhùyì-dào-le wénzhāng-zhōng de sān-chǔ cuòwù.
He noticed three errors in the paper. (Derived ACH) (X&McE 2004: 82)
- (115) 他写了一封信。
Tā xiě-le yī-fēng xìn.
He wrote a letter. (ACC) (X&McE 2004: 82)

I do not completely agree with the statement, that accomplishments form homogeneous group, and will show later that also accomplishments can vary according to the boundedness value. For detailed discussion see Chapter 1.6, p. 114.

Synthesis 4: Rules leading to Sentential level (Chap. 1.1.4)

Xiao and McEnery's 12 rules:

- Rule 1: verb_[-tel/±bnd] + RVCs ⇒ Derived predicate_[+res/+tel]
- Rule 2: verb_[-tel/±bnd] + reduplicant ⇒ Derived predicate_[+bnd]
- Rule 3: NP + Verb_[+/-telic] ⇒ Core_[+/-telic]
- Rule 4: NP + Verb_[-telic] + NP ⇒ Core_[-telic]
- Rule 5: NP + Verb_[+telic] + NP_[+/-count] ⇒ Core_[+/-telic]
- Rule 7: Core_[-bnd] + durational phrase (for-PP)/from-to ⇒ Clause_[+bnd]
- Rule 8: Core_[+tel] + durational phrase(for-PP)/from-to ⇒ Clause_[-telic]
- Rule 9: Core_[±bnd] + verbal classifier phrase ⇒ Clause_[+bnd]

Rule 10: Core[+tel] + progressive \Rightarrow Clause[-tel]

Rule 11: Core[-res] + de-construction [+dyn][-res] \Rightarrow Clause[+res]

Rule 12: Core[-res] + ba/bei-construction \Rightarrow Clause[+res]

Some consequential characteristics in Chinese:

1. only V[+dyn][-res] can be reduplicated to denote a delimitative meaning
→ ACT, SEM, ACC but not ILS, SLS and ACH
2. resultative *de*-constructions → situation[+dyn][-res]
→ ILS cannot occur in *de*-construction
3. *ba* and *bei* sentences → situation[+res]

1.2 Viewpoint aspect

Viewpoint aspect refers to “different perspectives from which a situation is presented”. (X&McE 2004: 23) It makes visible for semantic interpretation *all* or *part* of a situation. The viewpoints are usually expressed morphologically. (Smith 2006) Scholars agree, that – like many languages in the world – Chinese draws a central distinction between the perfective and imperfective aspect. However, precisely how many (viewpoint) aspects Chinese distinguishes is still an issue of intense debate. Li and Thompson (1981:185) speak about four aspects:

- Perfective aspect (*-le* and perfectivizing expressions)
- Imperfective or durative aspect (*zai*, *-zhe*)
- Experiential (*-guo*)
- Delimitative (reduplication of verb)

Xiao and McEnery (2004: 10) have a binary distinction, which includes further subclasses and combination of them. In their framework, experiential and delimitative aspect are included in perfective aspect.

- Perfectives
 - Actual aspect (*-le*)
 - Experiential aspect (*-guo*)
 - Delimitative aspect (reduplicant)
 - Completive aspect (RVCs)
- Imperfectives
 - Durative aspect (*-zhe*)
 - Progressive aspect (*zai*)
 - Inceptive aspect (*-qilai*)
 - Continuative aspect (*-xiaqu*)

In addition, Smith and Erbaugh (2005) propose the third type of viewpoint aspect – the neutral aspect, as outlined below.

- Perfectives make events visible as including endpoints, bounded.
- Imperfectives make situations visible without information as to endpoints, unbounded.
- Neutral viewpoints are flexible, giving enough information to allow a bounded or an unbounded interpretation.

Neutral viewpoints appear in zero-marked clauses, which have no overt viewpoint morpheme. (Smith 2006) They allow both interpretations, but zero-marked clauses also follow a special Temporal Schema Principle, saying that “zero-marked sentences are interpreted according to the temporal features of the situation they express”.

In my paper, I will consider just the first group of perfective viewpoint aspect, where situations are marked with operator *le*. In Chapter 0 (p. 153) I will return to zero-marked sentences and that special case of Temporal Schema Principle.

Synthesis 5: Viewpoint Aspect (Chap. 1.2)

Viewpoint aspect:

Perfectives:	= events semantically visible as whole = bounded = <i>-le, -guo</i> , reduplications, RVCs
Imperfectives:	= part of a situation visible, = unbounded = <i>-zhe, zai, -qilai, -xiaqu</i>
Neutral:	= partial information = bounded or unbounded

1.3 Notes on Noun Phrases and Adjectives

In the previous chapter it was shown that lexical properties of verb and nature of its arguments can influence the values of parameters, specially the feature [\pm bounded] and [\pm telic]. Boundedness in verbs is related to a fundamental property of verbs, i.e. the type of situation expressed by the verb as states or events. Boundedness in nouns is associated with countability, which is a fundamental feature of nouns as entities or mass (count/non-count).²³ Many characteristics regarding verbs were

²³ Boundedness in the context of nouns and verbs has been frequently discussed in the literature. For details see Declerck 1979, Dahl 1981, Langacker 1987, Talmy 1988, Jackendoff 1991, Frawley 1992, Verkuyl 1993, Depraetere 1995, Brinton 1998 etc.

presented in the previous chapter, but there are still some specific things to be mentioned in relation to noun phrases. This is the content of section 1.3.1.

Paradis (2001) proposed that boundedness in adjectives is associated with gradability, which is a basic characteristic of adjectives. Namely, all adjectives do not behave equally in relation to *le*. Only gradable adjectives can appear in patterns with *le*. In the section 1.3.2, I will present these five patterns with adjectives.

1.3.1 Noun Phrases

As said at the beginning of this chapter, boundedness in nouns is associated with countability. Verb phrases with countable NPs are regarded as bounded, and verb phrases with mass nouns are regarded as unbounded. Soh and Kuo (2005), following Jackendoff (1991), consider the features *boundedness* and *countability* as two components of NPs. They assume that “nominal arguments may bear the features \pm bounded [\pm b] and \pm internal structure [\pm i]. The boundedness feature indicates whether the boundaries of an entity are in view or are of concern. The internal structure feature indicates whether the entity has inherent division into discrete members.”

Compare the following table:

NP	features	category	examples
bare mass nouns	[-b, -i]	substances	custard, water
bare plurals	[-b, +i]	aggregates	sandwiches, buses
singular count nouns	[+b, -i]	individuals	the sandwich, a bus
numeral plurals	[+b, +i]	aggregates	3 sandwiches, 4 buses

Table 4: Two component system of NPs in general

It is generally accepted, that that Chinese bare nouns are mass (Soh and Kuo 2005, Chierchia 1998, Cheng and Sybesma 1998) and have features [-b, -i]. Classifiers enable the nominal reference to be divided into discrete members, i.e. become countable. (Li 1997, Cheng and Sybesma 1999). “The countability of a non-bounded constituent is encoded by the internal structure feature. A singular count noun is [-i], while a plural count noun is [+i]. Because there is no singular and plural marking on the Classifier Phrase (CIP), the CIP is specified as [\pm i].” (S&K 2005) Consequently, Soh and Kuo assume that “a classifier changes the internal structure feature from [-i] to [\pm i].”²⁴ (S&K 2005)

The difference between a numeral object and the demonstrative object is that the former is [+b], while the latter is [\pm b]. A head noun of a numeral expression is specified as [-b, -i]. The numeral

²⁴ Classifier Phrase is specified as [\pm i], because it can be understood as countable or not countable, e.g. *zhe zhang zazhi* ‘this magazine’ can be understood as ‘one copy of some specific magazine’ or ‘a magazine as collection of several volumes’.

changes the [-b] feature of its selected constituent to [+b]. On the other hand, a demonstrative changes the [-b] feature to [±b]. (S&K 2005)

Here is the complementary table for Chinese NPs:

NP	features	examples
bare nouns	[-b, -i]	<i>zhuozi</i> ‘table’
Num + CL + N	[+b, ±i]	<i>san-zhang zhuozi</i> ‘three tables’
Dem + CL + N	[±b, ±i]	<i>na-zhang zhuozi</i> ‘that table’

Table 5: Two component system of Chinese NPs

Notion of boundedness in NPs will become obvious in the Part II, where I will try to explain the vast variety of meanings, associated with operator *le*.

1.3.2 Adjectives (stative verbs)

Title of this chapter should perhaps undergo some changes, since there is a problem in terminology. As I mentioned before in chapter about SLS’s and ILS’s (see page 26), there is no clear distinction between verbs and adjectives among scholars. What I will discuss here, are adjectives, which can be used predicatively, mostly denote states, and are frequently called state verbs or stative verbs. For the purpose of this research, the issue of reconsidering terminology is not relevant.

When reading this chapter, recall debate about states. As Yip and Rimmington (2004) mentioned, adjectives are situation rather than action indicators, and are regularly core elements in *le*-expository sentences indicating reversals. They may be used either independently as predicates or as complements to verbs. (Y&R 2004: 317)

- (116) 东西贵了。
Dōngxī guì-le.
Things have become expensive/gone up. (adjective as predicate) (Y&R 2004: 317)
- (117) 他有点醉了。
Tā yǒudiǎn zuì-le.
He’s a bit drunk. (adjective as predicate) (Y&R 2004: 317)
- (118) 你的茶快凉了。
Nǐde chá kuài liáng-le.
Your tea will soon be cold. (adjective as predicate) (Y&R 2004: 317)

- (119) 孩子的玩具摔坏了。
 Háizi de wánjù shuāihuài-le.
 The children's toy has been/is broken.
 (adjective as complement to verb) (Y&R 2004: 317)
- (120) 我吃饱了。
 Wǒ chībǎo-le.
 I've eaten my fill./I am full. (adjective as complement to verb) (Y&R 2004: 317)
- (121) 这个字你写错了。
 Zhè-gè zì nǐ xiěcuò le.
 You have written this character wrongly.
 (adjective as complement to verb) (Y&R 2004: 317)

Zhu (1982) points out that a Chinese adjective can serve as predicate only in the following five types of sentence patterns: (Liu 2005: 206)

- (122) 这朵红花，那朵黄。²⁵
 Zhè-duǒ huā hóng, nà-duǒ huáng.
 This flower is red, but that one is yellow. (Sentence pattern 1) (Liu 2005: 206)
- (123) 这朵花很 (or 非常) 红。
 Zhè-duǒ huā hěn/fēicháng hóng.
 This flower is very red. (Sentence pattern 2) (Liu 2005: 206)
- (124) 这朵花儿红红的。
 Zhè-duǒ huā hónghóng de.
 This flower is really red. (Sentence pattern 3) (Liu 2005: 206)
- (125) 这朵花儿红了一点儿。
 Zhè-duǒ huā hóng-le yīdiǎnr.
 This flower is a little redder than before/the standard value of redness assumed by people for the flower. (Sentence pattern 4) (Liu 2005: 206)

²⁵ Mandarin stative verbs are comparative in their unmarked form: (Lin 2004a)

他高/胖/老。
 Ta gāo/pàng/lǎo.
 He is taller/fatter/older. (compared to a person determined by context)

It is important to note that the sentence above does not mean “he is tall”. For a non-comparative reading, the positive degree marker *hen* ‘very’ is required. In these contexts, *hen* is typically unstressed and does not serve as an intensifier (cf. Sybesma, 1997): (Lin 2004a)

(126) 这朵花红了。

Zhè-duǒ huā hóng-le.

This flower has gotten red. (The speaker announces a new ‘discovery’ of the redness of the flower.) (Sentence pattern 5)

(Liu 2005: 206)

For the discussion on *le*, only patterns 4 and 5 are interesting. Liu (2005) claims there is an essential difference between these two patterns, because the X A-*le* D construction “requires the comparing event implied to be completed while the latter does not”. Liu (2005: 217-218) These two patterns will be further discussed in Chapter 3, p. 129.

Synthesis 6: Boundedness in adjectives and NPs (Chap. 1.3)

Boundedness in:

verbs: ⇔ situation type

adjectives: ⇔ gradability

nouns: ⇔ countability

5 sentence patterns for adjectives:

Type 1 (comparison): S₁ + A₁, S₂ + A₂.

Type 2 (degree modifier): S + degree modifier + A

Type 3 (delimiting through reduplication): S + AA + de.

Type 4 (quantified degree): S + V + le + D

Type 5 (operator *le*): S + V + le.

Boundedness in NPs:

Bare nouns [-b]

Demonstrative NP [±b]

Numeral NP [+b]

2. TENSE

The next notion, closely related to operator *le*, is ‘tense’. Chapter 2 presents a brief description of this term and Reichenbach’s (1974) ‘three times’ (3T), which is a very useful concept for tenseless languages like Chinese.

According to Smith (2006), tense is defined as the “obligatory grammaticized location in time. As an inflectional morpheme – the traditional notion of tense – tense is part of the grammatical spine of the sentence. All independent sentences of a language have tense, so that direct temporal information always appears.” (Smith 2006) In short, traditionally the term ‘tense’ refers to “a

morpheme, either an inflection or auxiliary, that appears in the main verb phrase of a sentence and has a temporal meaning”. (Smith and Erbaugh 2005: 721) For example, if operator *le* was considered a tense morpheme, it should be present in all sentences of the same tense. However, many examples proof the opposite. Recall examples (47) to (55) in the Chapter 2.2.

Smith and Erbaugh (2005) do not think that there is evidence for syntactic tense in Chinese. In other words, Mandarin is considered a tenseless language, i.e. it has no tense morphemes. To describe temporal location, it is better to operate with notions ‘Speech Time’, ‘Reference Time’ and ‘Situation Time’.²⁶ “Tense codes two relations between these times: the relation between Speech Time (SpT) and Reference Time (RT), and the relation between RT and Situation Time (SitT)”²⁷. (Smith 2006)

Temporal relations between reference time and speech time are expressing absolute tenses, and relations between situation time and reference time are expressing relative tenses. The position of reference time relative to speech time is indicated by the words ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’. The position of situation time relative to reference time is indicated by the words ‘anterior’, ‘simple’ and ‘posterior’, the word ‘simple’ being used for the coincidence of relevance time and situation time’ (Reichenbach 1947: 297, Borik 2002: 97)²⁸

The absolute tenses:

RT < SpT	He walked to town.
RT = SpT	He walks to town.
SpT < RT	He will walk to town.

The relative tenses:

SitT < RT	Having walked to town
SitT = RT	Walking to town
RT < SitT	Being about to walk to town.

The absolute-relative tenses:

SitT < RT < SpT	By five o’clock he had walked to town.
SitT < RT = SpT	He has walked to town now.
SpT < SitT < RT	Tomorrow he will have walked to town.
SitT = RT < SpT	Yesterday afternoon he walked/was walking to town
SitT = RT = SpT	He walks/is walking to town now.
SpT < SitT = RT	Tomorrow he will walk/be walking to town

²⁶ These three terms were introduced by Reichenbach (1947) and modified by many others.

²⁷ Smith’s (2006) *Situation Time* is equivalent to Ljungqvist Arin’s (2003) *Event Time*, or primarily to Reichenbach’s (1947) *Point of Event*. Since in my work I use word *situation* as a term inclusive of both *events* and *states*, I will refer to this notion *Situation Time*.

²⁸ Notions like *tense*, *speech time*, *reference time*, *situation time*, *event time*, *topic time* etc. have been discussed and modified for several times. For more information, the reader should refer to other works, e.g. Comrie 1985, Klein 1994, Givón 2001, Borik 2002, etc.

RT < SitT < SpT Yesterday he was about to go to town.
SpT = RT < SitT Now he is about to go to town.
SpT < RT < SitT Tomorrow he will be about to go to town.

According to Reichenbach (1947) sentences are oriented to speech time, and may indicate a reference time that is simultaneous with or sequential to speech time. When the reference time is not specified, it normally refers to the speech time “now”, and in this case Reference time coincides with Speech Time. (Borik 2002: 97)

Many scholars agree that Reference time coincides with Speech time, when Reference time is not specified by other lexical means. This *default value* of unspecified Reference Time was observed, for example, in Xiao and McEnery (2004: 116), Chang (1986) and Smith and Erbaugh (2005), just expressed in different way:

“In the absence of explicit temporal markers, the speech time is taken as the reference time”. (Chang 1986: 35)

“The expression of temporal location in language requires an orientation point. In the default case it is Speech Time, the moment of speech.” (S&E 2005: 721)

Relation RT – SpT

Reference Time may be given linguistically or contextually. “Reference Time alone does not specify temporal location because it is not anchored to Speech Time or another orientation time. In Mandarin the relation of Reference Time to Speech Time, i.e. temporal location, is specified with explicit temporal information or determined pragmatically” (S&E 2005: 725), but is not coded grammatically. “When no direct temporal information appears in a sentence, aspectual information allows the inference of temporal location according to the general pragmatic principles²⁹. (Smith 2006: 5)

Aspectual morphemes may “code the relation between Reference Time and Situation Time. They do not code a relation between Reference Time and Speech Time.” (S&E 2005: 722)

Importance of 3T for Discourse

There is general agreement about the importance of Reference time in the temporal analysis of narrative discourse. Reference time appears to be a very useful tool in analyzing temporal dependencies that are established between sentences in discourse. (Borik 2002: 100, Smith and Erbaugh 2005)

²⁹ About general pragmatic principles see chapter 4.2

The structurally determined RT for the second situation (e.g. ‘going’ in the example below) is the time of the first situation (e.g. ‘eating’). These two events occur in sequence, but they might overlap. Overlapping situations share Reference Time; those in sequence do not. (Mangione & Li 1993: 67)

(127) 他吃了饭才走的。

Tā chī-le fàn cái zǒu de.

Only after eating did she go.

(Mangione & Li 1993: 67)

The 3T and Actuality

Chinese as a tenseless language pays more attention to reference time. Therefore, actuality refers to “the property of a situation being actualized in relation only to the specified reference time”, which can be expressed as $SitT \leq RT$. (X&McE 2004: 117) Actuality in relation to *le* will be discussed on page 123. However, this notion is worth mentioning here, since it can be expressed with the ‘three times’.

(128) 三年前他就去过美国。

Sān-nián-qián tā jiù qù-guò Měiguó.

He had been to America 3 years ago. ($SitT < RT < SpT$)

He (just then) went to America 3 years ago.³⁰ ($SitT = RT < SpT$)

(129) 三年前他已经去过美国。

Sān-nián-qián tā yǐjīng qù-guò Měiguó.

He had already gone to America 3 years ago. ($SitT < RT < SpT$)

The 3T and Perfectivity

Ljungqvist Arin (2003) defines in her work the notion of aspect in the following way: “Aspect is expressing temporal relations between the Event Time and Reference Time. For the perfective aspect E must be included in R. For the imperfective aspect, it is R that is included in E.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 17) It is obvious that this definition of aspect is equal to *viewpoint aspect* in our framework. Smith (2006) describes perfective viewpoints as those which make visible bounded situations, usually bounded events. For bounded events it is said, that they are included in the SitT interval. (Smith 2006) This is the point where two approaches differ to some extent. According to Ljungqvist Arin (2003) situation is included in the reference time, and according to Smith (2006) situation is included in the situation time. Situation Time may be a moment or interval, depending on contextual information. (Smith and Erbaugh 2005)

³⁰ For some speakers the sentence has two readings.

The 3T and temporal adverbs

Certain adverbs code the relation between RT and SitT. Among them is well known *yijing* ‘already’, which conveys that an event or state precedes Reference Time. (S&E 2005: 723, Smith 2006)

(130) 他已经走了。

Tā yǐjīng zǒu-le.

He has already left.

(S&E 2005: 723)

The temporal meaning of *yijing* ‘already’ is to locate a situation at a SitT before RT. (S&E 2005: 723) Ljungqvist Arin came to similar conclusions. If *yijing* ‘already’ is present, SitT must be anterior to RT. According to her, this reading (SitT < RT) is *perfect reading*.³¹ She noted that *yijing* is also common in sentences with verbal *-le* (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 33, 49, 87)

(131) 她在大学里已经读了两年书，交游广阔，暂时虽没有一个人是他一心一意喜欢的，有可能性的却不少。

Tā zài dàxué-lǐ yǐjīng dú-le liǎng-nián shū, jiāoyóu guǎngkuò, zànshí suī méi yǒu yī-gè rén shì tā yīxīn-yīyì xǐhuān de, yǒu kěnéngxìng de què bù shǎo.

She had already been studying at the university for two years and made a lot of friends from far and near. Although for the time being there had not been one who enjoyed her undivided attention, quite a few had the potential

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 87)

In relation to its shorter counterpart, Ljungqvist Arin is saying that the same sentence without *yijing* would produce perfective interpretation, provided there are no other clues in the context that will lead to a perfect interpretation. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 88)

(132) 我在北京读了两年的书。

Wǒ zài Běijīng dú-le liǎng-nián de shū.

I studied in Beijing for two years

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 88)

The 3T and Deictic temporal adverbs

Deictic adverbials such as *xianzai* ‘now’, *san-tian-zhi-nei* ‘in 3 days’, which normally anchor to the moment of speech, can anchor to a past (or future) time, as in *Leigh sat down at the desk. Now he was ready to start work.* In such contexts the shifted *now* suggests Leigh’s perspective. Reference Time is the anchor for this perspective.” (S&E 2005: 721)

³¹ Recall what the relation SitT<RT might represent: first, anteriority in relative tenses (p. 46); second, actuality (p. 122); third, bounded prior situation, expressed by *-guo* (Smith 2006); and fourth, perfect reading.

The 3T and Relative Anteriority

A few sentences should be said about the notions of relative anteriority and perfective viewpoint aspect. Ljungqvist Arin noted in her work, that a situation that is presented as relatively anterior (Ljungqvist Arin, Smith: $SitT < RT$) cannot at the same time be presented as perfective (Ljungqvist Arin: $SitT \text{ incl. in } RT$). (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 57) This problem doesn't arise in Smith's work, since perfective viewpoint is defined as $Sit \text{ incl. in } SitT$. Reference time doesn't play any role at viewpoint aspect. Actually, seeing situation as a whole or focusing to one part of it, is strictly matter of situation itself, and does not depend on Reference Time.

A shortage of the definition that *le* is 'marker of relative anteriority' is said to be the inability to explain the modal uses of *le*. I will try to show that this statement should not have any weight, since modal meanings are matter of another level.

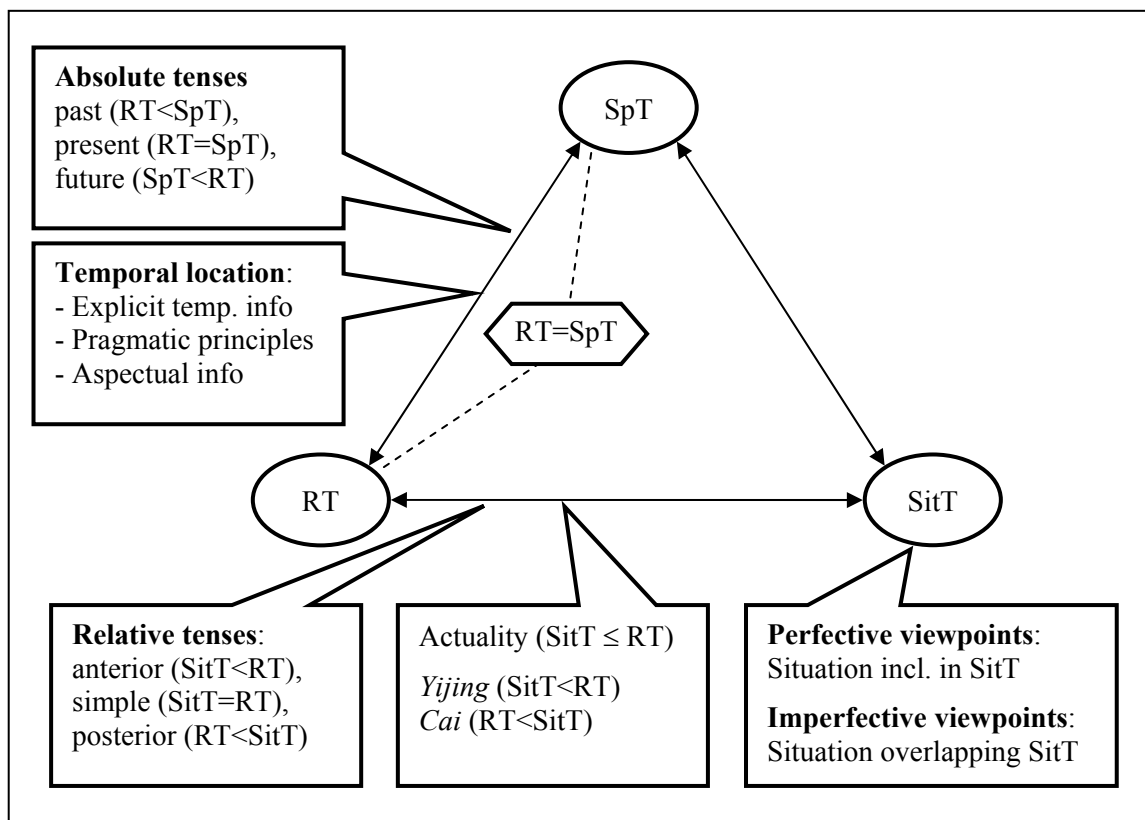


Figure 1: Application of the notion "Three times"

Synthesis 7: Tense in terms of Reichenbach's Three Times (Chap. 2)

Interpretation of relations:

$RT \Leftrightarrow SpT$ absolute tenses past ($RT < SpT$), present ($RT = SpT$), future ($SpT < RT$)

$RT \Leftrightarrow SitT$ relative tenses anterior ($SitT < RT$), simple ($RT = SitT$), posterior ($RT < SitT$)

Absolute tenses:

Present: RT = SpT; RT=SitT

Past: RT < SpT; RT=SitT

Future: RT > SpT; RT=SitT

Default values:

if RT not specified → RT=SpT

if RT not specified → regard aspectual information and pragmatic principles

Temporal relations in Chinese:Relation RT \Leftrightarrow SitT: expressed lexically,Relation RT \Leftrightarrow SpT: not coded linguistically, but conveyed by context; pragmatic principlesactuality: SitT \leq RT

-le cannot occur in: SitT > RT

Perfective viewpoints:

-le: bounded event: RT = SitT. & E incl. in SitT

-guo: bounded prior situation; SitT < RT. & E at least one time incl. in SitT

RVC (-wan, -dao, etc); RT = SitT & E incl. in SitT

Imperfective viewpoints:*zai* makes visible an unbounded event in progress; SitT = RT;

-zhe makes visible an unbounded situation; surrounding SitT; SitT=RT.

Temporal meaning of *yijing* and *cai**yijing* ('already'), *cai* ('have just') → SitT < RT**Deictic temporal adverbs**= e.g. *xianzai* 'now', *san-tian-zhi-nei* 'in 3 days'

= might be anchored to SpT or RT

3. MODALITY

I will not go into detailed debate on the issue of modality. This topic is – as many others – one of the fields where a lot of work remains to be done. Studies explore the category of modality from wide variety of perspectives. Scholars differ in opinion about the general nature of modality, argue for the most appropriate approach to discuss Chinese modal expressions, they do not even agree which meanings and forms are associated with this category. Since the operator *le* is often associated with modality, some words need to be said about the nature of this category.

Hsieh (2005) presented variety of approaches to modality, some of which are informatively sketched in Table 6.

Author	Subcategories
Lyons (1977)	<i>Epistemic</i> (possibility/necessity) <i>Deontic</i> (obligation/permission)
Palmer (2001)	<i>Epistemic</i> <i>Deontic+evaluatives</i>
Bybee and Fleischman (1995)	<i>jussive, desiderative, intentive, hypothetical, potential, obligative, dubitative, hortatory</i> <i>exclamative+evaluative</i> <i>Deontic = agent-oriented, speaker-oriented</i>
Perkins (1983)	<i>epistemic</i> <i>deontic</i> <i>dynamic</i>
Tsang (1981)	<i>epistemic</i> (non-subject-oriented) <i>deontic</i> (non-subject-oriented) <i>dynamic</i> (subject-oriented)

Table 6: Some approaches to modality

It has been agreed upon in the (earlier) literature that Chinese modal expressions are characterized by the semantic properties set forth by Lyons (1977:452), so this is also the general understanding of modality in relation to operator *le*. Modality in the sense of Lyons is defined as consisting of two categories: epistemic and deontic. Epistemic modality is what determines the truth of the proposition, which we have more or less regarded as semantic in nature. Deontic modality is what expresses obligation and permission. In addition, opinion and attitude can also be assigned to this category.

Chu (1998: 89-90) made a list of adverbs in Chinese that express modality. He classified them into three groups, i.e. adverbs of assertion, adverbs of evaluation and adverbs of judgment. Adverbs of assertion are expressing epistemic modality, whereas adverbs of evaluation and judgment express deontic modality. In addition, adverbs of evaluation most prominently perform the discourse function of linking clauses and even sentences. (Chu 1998:91)

Adverbs of Assertion assert the truth of the propositions: *shi* (emphatic assertion), *zhenshi* ‘really’, *keshi* (contrast on the nominal preceding)

Adverbs of Evaluation assert speaker’s opinion or attitude: *ke(shi)* ‘but; however’, *jiu(shi)* (contrast on the predicate following it), *ye* ‘necessarily’, *dou* ‘even’, *you* ‘again’, *juran* ‘unexpectedly’, *benlai* ‘in the first place; to begin with’, *jianzhi* ‘downright; just’, *guoran* ‘just as expected’, *qishi* ‘as a matter of fact’.

Adverbs of Judgment signify necessity/obligation or possibility: *yiding* ‘definitely; surely’ *juedui* ‘absolutely’, *yexu* ‘perhaps, maybe’, *dagai* ‘probably’, *keneng* ‘possibly’, disjunctive *huozhe* ‘or’, *haishi* ‘either ... or’. (Chu 1998:90)

How operator *le* is associated with modality, will be discussed in Part II.

Synthesis 8: Modality in general (Chap. 3)

Modality:

epistemic (possibility/necessity; the truth of the proposition)

deontic (obligation/permission; opinion and attitude)

Modal adverbs in Chinese:

Adv. of **Assertion**: *shi* (emphatic assertion), *zhenshi* ‘really’, *keshi* (contrast on the nominal preceding)

Adv. of **Evaluation**: *ke(shi)* ‘but; however’, *jiu(shi)* (contrast on the predicate following it), *ye* ‘necessarily’, *dou* ‘even’, *you* ‘again’, *juran* ‘unexpectedly’, *benlai* ‘in the first place; to begin with’, *jianzhi* ‘downright; just’, *guoran* ‘just as expected’, *qishi* ‘as a matter of fact’.

Adv. of **Judgment**: *yiding* ‘definitely; surely’ *juedui* ‘absolutely’, *yexu* ‘perhaps, maybe’, *dagai* ‘probably’, *keneng* ‘possibly’, disjunctive *huozhe* ‘or’, *haishi* ‘either ... or’.

4. TEMPORAL INFORMATION IN CHINESE

We have to be aware that “while aspect and tense both provide temporal information, they are two different concepts. On the one hand, tense is deictic in that it indicates the *temporal location* of a situation, i.e. its occurrence in relation to a specific reference time. On the other hand, aspect is non-deictic in that it is related to the *temporal shape* of a situation, i.e. its internal temporal structure and ways of presentation, independent of its temporal location.” (X&McE 2004: 2) According to Smith, this is only one part of the story. Let us look at her model of temporal interpretation in Chinese. Smith and Erbaugh (2005) present an account of temporal understanding in Chinese.

“In all languages, sentences convey information that allows people to locate situations in time. The semantic meaning is conveyed by aspectual, lexical, and adverbial forms; and together with pragmatic principles they all contribute to the interpretation of temporal location.” (S&E 2005: 713) Every group will be presented in subchapters.

4.1 The linguistic forms

Temporal information may be conveyed by adverbs and temporal connectives, as well as future-oriented lexical verbs and modals (*zhunbei* ‘plan’, *yao* ‘want’, etc.)” (Smith 2006) “The linguistic forms that play a role in temporal location for Mandarin are adverbial, lexical, and aspectual. Temporal adverbs give direct information about location in time. Lexical forms such as modals and future-oriented verbs suggest temporal location. Aspect introduces information about situation type – events (run a mile, build a house) and states (believe, be happy) – and viewpoint (perfective, imperfective, neutral). Situation type and viewpoint express situations as discrete and bounded, ongoing and unbounded, or indeterminate.” (S&E 2005: 714)

4.1.1 Aspectual information

Aspectual meaning provides indirect information about temporal location. As discussed in Chapter 1 (from page 19 on), aspect is a two-component system, divided into situation aspect and viewpoint aspect. Situation type indirectly classifies the situation expressed in a clause as state or event. They are conveyed by the verb constellation (the verb and its arguments) and other information. (Smith 2006) Aspectual information is of great value, when no direct temporal information appears in the sentence. In that case, “information, such as whether a situation is ongoing or closed, gives pragmatic cues to the temporal location of the situation expressed.” (S&E 2005: 714)

Ljungqvist Arin also noted that “it is not hard to find a sentence that lacks an explicit temporal adverb but still describes a situation as included in a specific reference time. The reference time can be provided by the context.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 34)

(133) 到了牛老师家以后，他问我是怎么来的。

我说是坐公共汽车来的，
并且向他讲了问路的情况。

Dào-le Niú lǎoshī jiā yǐhòu, tā wèn wǒ shì zěnmē lái de.

ǒ shuō shì zuò gōnggòngqìchē lái de,

bìngqiě xiàng tā jiǎng-le wèn lù de qíngkuàng.

When we had arrived at teacher Niu’s home (RT), he asked how I had got there.

I said that I had come by bus and told him about what had happened

when I asked for directions.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 34)

4.1.2 Lexical information

In this section, I will briefly present Resultative Verb Complements, past- and future-oriented verbs and modal verbs, which convey lexical information relevant to temporal location. Here are some of the main factors that have an effect on interpretation. (S&E 2005: 731)

Resultative Verb Compounds

Importance of RVC's was already indicated in Chapter 1.1.4, precisely in Rule 1. As we saw, presence of RVC's contributes to telicity of situations. Since they behave different in relation to operator *le*, I will describe them a bit more detailed.

Considering the terminology issue, RVC's are no exception. In relation to resultative verb compound, we come across different terms, e.g. *completive RVC*, *directional RVC*, *literal RVC*, *phase RVC*, *result-state RVC*, *resultative RVC*, *simple RVC* etc. At the same time, one should not neglect notions like *spurious verbal compound* and *parallel verb compound*. These notions overlap to some extent, so I will group them in four sections. Here are some additional information for each category.³²

Simple RVC / Literal RVC / Resultative RVC

Simple RVCs are comprised of a two verb sequence where V1 denotes an activity and V2 denotes a state. The second verb describes the end state that is brought about by the V1 event, and the entire verbal compound is necessarily telic. A few examples are shown below: (Lin 2004b, S&E 2005) As presented in chapter 1.1.1, page **Napaka! Zaznamek ni definiran.**, these sentences even have value [+result].

- (134) 武松打死了老虎。
Wǔ Sōng dǎsǐ-le lǎohǔ.
Wu Song beat the tiger to death. (Lin 2004b: 91)
- (135) 张三踢翻了桶子。
Zhāngsān tīfān-le tǒngzi.
Zhangsan kicked the bucket over. (Lin 2004b: 91)
- (136) 李四哭湿了手帕。
Lǐsì kūshī-le shǒupà.
Lisi cried the handkerchief wet. (Lin 2004b: 91)

Lin (2004b: 91) refers to these constructions as “*literal resultative verb compounds*, because the second verb as the literal result, it is in a direct predication relationship with either the direct object or the subject of the entire verbal compound. This means that the second verb can be used felicitously in a simple sentence.”

³² If interested in exact understanding and categorization, the reader should compare Li and Thompson (1981), Huang (1988), Li (1990), Cheng and Huang's (1994), Li (1995), Lin (2004b), Xiao and McEnergy (2004), Smith and Erbaugh (2005), Yip and Rimmington (2004) etc.

- (137) 武松打死了老虎。→ 老虎死了。
 Wǔ Sōng dǎsǐ-le lǎohǔ. → Lǎohǔ sǐ-le.
 Wu Song beat the tiger to death. → The tiger died. (Lin 2004b: 91)

Phase RVC / Completive RVC

Phase RVCs express the completion of an event without supplying a literal result state. The second verb of these compounds are known in the literature as ‘phase complements’. According to Chao (1968:446), phase complements express the phase of an action in the first verb rather than some result in the action or goal. (Lin 2004b: 91-92) Li and Thompson (1981:65) remark that these morphemes express the degree to which an action is carried out, rather than the result.

- (138) 张三终于卖掉了车子。
 Zhāngsān zhōngyú màidiào-le chēzi.
 Zhangsan finally sold the car. (Lin 2004b: 92)
- (139) 李四昨天已经做好了功课。
 Lǐsì zuótiān yǐjīng zuòhǎo-le gōngkè.
 Lisi already finished the homework yesterday. (Lin 2004b: 92)
- (140) 他看完那本书了。
 Tā kànwán nà-běn shū le.
 He finished reading the book. (Lin 2004b: 92)

Lin says that in (138) “the second verb *diao* ‘drop’ cannot be used to describe the state of the car as a result of the selling event. The situation is exactly the same for the other phase resultative verb compounds. Critically, the V2 of a phase RVC is not a literal result, and cannot be used felicitously as the main verb in simple sentences to describe the end state.” (Lin 2004b: 92)

- (141) * 车子掉了。
 * Chēzi diào-le.
intended: The car has been gotten rid of. (Lin 2004b: 92)
- (142) * 功课好了。
 * Gōngkè hǎo-le.
intended: The homework has been finished. (Lin 2004b: 92)
- (143) * 那本书完了。
 * Nà-běn shū wán le.
intended: That book has been finished. (Lin 2004b: 92)

In Lin's (2004b: 92) terms, phase RVCs are telic, that is, the natural end of the event is reached. According to Xiao and McEnery's (2004) framework, phase RVCs have also value [+result].

The most important thing, common to RVCs, is the following feature. Both groups, i.e. RVCs of completion and RVCs of result give explicit information of boundedness. Yang (2002) and Christensen (1994) find that most main clause narrative events occur with Resultative Verb Complements.

Directional RVCs

Directional RVCs are specifying the direction of action. (S&E 2005: 735) They are "comprised of an activity verb followed by subsequent verbal elements that express spatial properties of the activity. These compounds productively, and quite naturally, can allow up to three-verbal elements." (Lin 2004b: 94)

(144) 我跑过桥了。

Wǒ pǎoguò qiáo le.

I ran over the bridge.

(Lin 2004b: 94)

(145) 他拿走了书包。

Tā nǎzǒu-le shūbāo.

He took away the book bag.

(Lin 2004b: 94)

(146) 他们跳出来了。

Tāmen tiàochūlái le.

They jumped out.

(Lin 2004b: 94)

Lin (2004b: 89-90) remarks that the formation of resultative verb compounds is a productive process in Chinese. However, it is important to note, that some Chinese verbal compounds are not resultative in nature; Lin calls these "spurious compounds".

Spurious Verbal Compounds / Metaphorical RVC

There are some state-state, activity-activity, and activity-state verbal combinations that are not resultative in nature. Lin calls these spurious verbal compounds, distinguishing them from true resultative verb compounds. A common type of non-resultative verb compound in Mandarin consists of two stative verbs. (Lin 2004b: 96) But still, this type of verbal compounds are not parallel verbal compounds.

The meanings of these verbal compounds are generally idiomatic. For example, Zhangsan does not literally have to fall in the example below. (Lin 2004b: 96) In Li and Thompson's terms (1981) these are metaphorical RVCs.

(147) 张三醉倒了。
Zhāngsān zuìdào le.
Zhangsan got so drunk that he fell down. (Lin 2004b: 96)

(148) 老虎死掉了。
Lǎohǔ sǐdiào le.
The tiger died. (Lin 2004b: 96)

Paralleling double-state verbal compounds, there exist **double-activity** compounds in Mandarin. The crying in the following example is not a result of the singing: there is no explicit causal relationship between the two activities. (Lin 2004b: 96)

(149) 他唱哭了。
Tā chàngkū le.
He cried from singing. (e.g., because the song evoked sad memories) (Li 1999:447).

Finally, there are Mandarin verbal compounds consisting of an activity and a state that are not resultative in nature. For example, winning of the chess game in example (150) does not result from the playing. In other words, *I played the chess game and won it* as a result is not a good paraphrase of the sentence. (Lin 2004b: 97)

(150) 我下赢了那盘棋。
Wǒ xià yíng-le nà-pán qí.
I won that chess game. (Li 1999:479)

(151) 他唱会了那首歌。
Tā chàng huì-le nà-shǒu gē.
He learned the song through singing it. (Li 1999:479)

(152) 学生们听懂了课。
Xuéshēngmen tīngdǒng-le kè.
The students understood the class material. (Li 1999:479)

Interestingly, in these verbal compounds (examples (150)-(152)), the subject and the object appear to be semantic arguments of both verbs. (Lin 2004b: 97)

(153) 我下了那盘棋。——我赢了那盘棋。
Wǒ xià-le nà-pán qí. & Wǒ yíng-le nà-pán qí.
I played that chess game. & I won that chess game. (Lin 2004b: 97)

Future-oriented verbs

Smith and Erbaugh (2005) are saying that “temporal information is also conveyed by future-oriented verbs such as *jihua* ‘plan to’, *zhunbei* ‘prepare for’ ‘plan to’. These verbs are modal in nature. Their complements express attitudes and plans, projected and unrealized situations; the meanings are only indirectly temporal. However, the temporal strand affects the interpretation of complement clauses. The default interpretation of a future-oriented verb complement is unrealized or future. It overrides the pragmatic principles.” (S&E 2005: 731)

(154) 我准备天黑以后我和张三一起来。

Wǒ zhǔnbèi tiānhēi yǐhòu wǒ hé Zhāngsān yīqǐ lái.

I plan to come with Zhangsan after it gets dark.

(S&E 2005: 732)

The verb *zhunbei* ‘to prepare’ is future-oriented, i.e. “it locates a clausal complement at a future time as unrealized. Pragmatic inference suggests that the event was realized, since there is no information to the contrary.” (S&E 2005: 732) Future-oriented verbs appear in various contexts. In the scope of a past adverb they convey a future time from a past RT, a future-in-past. (S&E 2005: 732)

(155) 那天傍晚，我准备天黑以后我和张三一起来。

Nà-tiān bàngwǎn, Wǒ zhǔnbèi tiānhēi yǐhòu wǒ hé Zhāngsān yīqǐ lái.

That day towards evening, I planned to come with Zhangsan after getting dark.

(SkE)

Smith and Erbaugh (2005) listed some classes of verbs with a temporal component:

- verbs of Future Having, e.g. *yuzhi* ‘advance’, *baozheng* ‘guarantee’;
- verbs of Future Situation e.g. *tiyi* ‘propose’, *jihua* ‘plan to’, *zhunbei* ‘prepare to’;
- verbs of Wish and Desire e.g. *yao* ‘want’, *wangxiang* ‘covet’, *xuyao* ‘need’, *xiangwang* ‘yearn to’;
- verbs of Future Events, e.g. *yugao* ‘predict’, *xiang* ‘expect’, *yuyan* ‘foretell’;
- verbs of Future Prevention, e.g. *paichu* ‘preclude’, *zuzhi* ‘prevent’;

Modals

Modality was discussed in chapter 3 (p.47-49), but modal expressions should be mentioned under the scope of lexical means for temporal information, as well. The reasons for this lay in their temporal value. Smith and Erbaugh show how modal verbs indicate futurity and affect temporal interpretation. The modals have a clear temporal effect, locating the complement clause in the future. The futurity of these modals overrides the Temporal Schema Principle, which would apply since the clauses are zero-marked for aspectual viewpoint. (S&E 2005)

Smith and Erbaugh provide some examples, saying that the modals *hui* ‘can’, *yao* ‘want’, ‘should’, ‘need’, ‘will’, and *jiang* ‘will’ have a clear temporal component, i.e. they convey a future time for the complement, as default. However, there are minor differences among them: “*yao* is primarily subjective, volitional; *hui* is predictive; *jiang* is used for scheduled, planned situations.” (S&E 2005: 732) There are also other epistemic and deontic modals, which tend to have a component of futurity, including *ying(gai)* ‘should’, ‘must’, *keneng* ‘possibly’, ‘may’ and *keyi* ‘may’.³³ (S&E 2005)

Explicit conditionals are joining this list, e.g. *ruguo* ‘if’, *jiaru* ‘if’, *jishi* ‘even if’, because they also indicate a future, unrealized interpretation. (S&E 2005)

4.1.3 Temporal adverbials

In the chapter 1 on aspect, some phrases were mentioned, which are related to time. They might express a duration of situation, time-span in which situation occurs, or indicate how many times a certain situation is repeated. Recall Rule 7 and Rule 8 (p. 31)

Time expressions:

1. “durational phrase” or “for-adverbial” or “time-span” express, for how long a situation lasts;
2. “from-to phrase” is also expression for “time-span”, where initial and final endpoint are specific;
3. “verbal classifier phrase” denotes how many times a situation is repeated. (*yi-ci*, *liang-fan*, *santang*).

However, time expressions mentioned above and temporal adverbials mentioned here are matters of different levels. While the time expressions above take scope over verb phrases, temporal adverbials take in account the whole sentence, or sometimes even larger passages.

Temporal adverbials:

1. frame adverbs (*xingqisan* ‘on Tuesday’, *xianzai* ‘now’, *mingtian* ‘tomorrow’, *jinnian* ‘this year’)
2. frequency adverbs (= generalizing stative)
3. temporal adjectives
4. connectives (*yihou* ‘after that’, *jiu* ‘then’, *cai* ‘first then’, *gang* ‘just’, *yijing* ‘already’)

Mandarin has several types of temporal adverbials. The first group, i.e. ‘locating’ or ‘frame adverbs’ (*xingqi'er* ‘Tuesday’, *xianzai* ‘now’, *mingtian* ‘tomorrow’, *jinnian* ‘in recent years’) forms a large class of adverbs that temporally locate situations. These adverbs specify a time or a temporal interval more or less precisely, and may locate situations at times other than the default. Their scope often extends beyond the clause in which they appear. (S&E 2005)

³³ Note that these verbs are both modal in nature and carry a future-oriented component. See also Chapter 3 on modality.

Frequency adverbs such as *changchang* ‘frequently’, *jingchang* ‘frequently’, *zongshi* ‘always’, *lao* ‘always’ are relevant to aspectual situation type and thus affect temporal location. When they appear in a clause, the clause is a generalizing stative rather than an actual event and taken as located in the present unless there is information to the contrary. (S&E 2005)

Temporal adjectives such as *xianshi* ‘current’, *congqian* ‘previous’ are also relevant to temporal interpretation.

There are also adverbs that appear as connectives between clauses, including *yihou* ‘after’, ‘then’, *jiu* ‘then’, ‘at once’, *cai* (1) ‘just now’, 2) ‘only then’. Adverbs such as *gang* ‘just now’, *yijing* ‘already’ also contribute temporal information, locating a situation before Reference Time. (S&E 2005)

Temporal adverbs are optional components of sentences. They may relate a situation to SpT (yesterday, tomorrow); or to RT (then, 3 days earlier, the very next moment); or to another situation (when, before). When they appear without tense, they provide direct temporal information. (Smith 2006)

4.1.4 Localizing expressions

Li and Thompson mentioned some other means, which contribute to perfectivization. A closer look reveals that all those means contribute to the value [+telic], giving situations a spatial endpoint. On the other hand, focus in these sentences is just on perfectivizing expressions. I will return to this point later, arguing that it is due to the focus, that sentences with such expressions do not favor the inclusion of *le*.

The four mentioned perfectivizing expressions are directional phrase, locative phrase, indirect object phrase, which put boundaries on the events by specifying their spatial limits; and complex stative phrase *de*, which bounds the event by naming the extent to which it happened. (L&T 1981: 206-207)

(156) 他从房子里走到张三那儿。

Tā cóng fángzi-lǐ zǒu dào Zhāngsān nàr.

He walked from his house over to Zhangsan’s place.

(= directional phrase)

(L&T 1981: 206)

(157) 我把手表放在抽屉里。

Wǒ bǎ shǒubiǎo fàng zài chōuti-lǐ.

I put the watch in the drawer. (= locative phrase)

(L&T 1981: 206)

(158) 我寄给她一封信。

Wǒ jì gěi tā yī-fēng xìn.

I sent to her a letter. (= indirect object phrase)

(L&T 1981: 206)

(159) 我笑得站不起来。

Wǒ xiào de zhàn bù qǐlái.

I laughed so hard I couldn't stand up.

(L&T 1981: 206)

Synthesis 9: Temporal information in Chinese (Chap. 4-4.1.4)

Interpretation of temporal location:

& semantic meaning by linguistic forms (aspect + lexical means + adverbial info)

& pragmatic principles

Linguistic forms:

Temporal adverbs → direct information about temporal location

Lexical forms (modals, verbs) → suggest temporal location

Aspect (situation type, viewpoint) → indirect information about temporal location [\pm bnd]

Situation aspect:

gives information in the absence of explicit temporal forms.

Lexical information:

Resultative Verb Complements

future-oriented verbs

modal verbs

Future-oriented verbs:

verbs of Future Having, e.g. *yuzhi* 'advance', *baozheng* 'guarantee';

verbs of Future Situation e.g. *tiyi* 'propose', *jihua* 'plan to', *zhunbei* 'prepare to';

verbs of Wish and Desire e.g. *yao* 'want', *wangxiang* 'covet', *xuyao* 'need', *xiangwang* 'yearn to';

verbs of Future Events, e.g. *yugao* 'predict', *xiang* 'expect', *yuyan* 'foretell';

verbs of Future Prevention, e.g. *paichu* 'preclude', *zuzhi* 'prevent';

Modals

default future time: *hui* ('can'), *yao* ('want', 'should', 'need', 'will'), and *jiang* ('will')

yao = primarily subjective, volitional; *hui* = predictive;

jiang = for scheduled, planned situations.

component of futurity: *ying(gai)* ('should', 'must'), *keneng* ('possibly', 'may'), *keyi* ('may')

Explicit conditionals

indicate a future: *ruguo* ('if'), *jiaru* ('if'), *jishi* ('even if')

Temporal adverbs

1) Frame adverbs (*xingxiwu* 'Friday', *xianzai* 'now', *mingtian* 'tomorrow', *jinnian* 'in recent years')

- 2) Connectives (*yihou* ‘after’, ‘then’, *jiu* ‘then’, ‘at once’, *cai* ‘just now’, ‘only then’)
- 3) SitT < RT adverbs (*gang* ‘just now’, *yijing* ‘already’)
- 4) Frequency adverbs (*changchang* ‘frequently’ → generalizing statives)
- 5) Others (*xianshi* ‘current’, *congqian* ‘previous’)

Temporal adverbs relate situation to

- SpT (yesterday)
- RT (then, 3 days ago, earlier)
- another situation (when, before)

Perfectivizing expressions:

- directional phrase (*dao X nar*), locative phrase (*zai X nar*)
- indirect object phrase (*gei O*) stative de-phrase (*V de X*)

4.2 Pragmatic principles

Pragmatic principles often serve as a way for explaining certain situations. However, there is no united agreement among scholars as to what this term refers to. (Grice (1975), Spanos (1979), Andreasen (1981), Chang (1986), Chu (1998), Ljungqvist Arin (2003), Smith and Erbaugh (2005), Ma (2006)) Let me mention just some of the notions: ‘Bounded Event Constraint’, ‘Simplicity Principle of Interpretation’, ‘Temporal Schema Principle’, ‘Principle of Non-Redundancy’, ‘Principle of Caution’, ‘Principle of Consistency’, ‘Degree of Foregrounding and Backgrounding’, ‘Rhetorical Purposes’, ‘Selection of Relevant Information’. All these are non-linguistic information which help to achieve proper interpretation.

Chu (1998) and Andreasen (1981) understand pragmatics in the scope of fore- and backgrounding. One of Chu’s purposes is to show that functional and pragmatic factors, such as information structure and the relative degree of foregrounding and backgrounding, are not only relevant but also crucial to the determination of the structure of a clause in Chinese.

Smith and Erbaugh (2005) propose three pragmatic principles that explain the deictic pattern of temporal interpretation: 1) the Bounded Event Constraint, 2) the Simplicity Principle of Interpretation, and 3) the Temporal Schema Principle. These last three principles are an important link between aspectual level and appropriate temporal interpretation, so I will present them first. These principles can show how lexical and adverbial information can lead to non-default interpretations. The other principles will be mentioned at the end of this book, in relation to *le* (p. 213).

Principle 1: Bounded Event Constraint

The Bounded Event Constraint is actually a very simple principle, saying, that bounded events can never be located in the Present. This principle is an essential factor in the deictic pattern and will be discussed in the next chapter. Languages realize the Bounded Event Constraint in different ways. (S&E 2005)

Principle 2: Simplicity Principle of Interpretation

This principle is related to the question, which interpretation to choose if there are many readings available. According to Smith and Erbaugh, “when faced with information that does not fully determine an interpretation, people choose the simplest interpretation to resolve it.” (S&E 2005: 717) Similar notions can be found in Ljungqvist Arin (2003) as well, expressed in the following way, i.e. “In its search for relevance, the audience chooses the interpretation that demands the least effort and produces the largest cognitive effects, i. e. the most relevant interpretation.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 66)

She also says that “according to Relevance Theory, meaning is determined by the context. A relevance-theoretic framework promotes a pragmatic interpretation of all utterances. That means that non-linguistic information such as conceptual information about for example causal relations between verbs, information in temporal markers and contextual features cooperates with linguistic information in the utterance to produce a correct temporal interpretation of it.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 66)

“The degree of relevance of a certain assumption is determined by, first, the size of its contextual effect. Contextual effect is small if the assumption for example does not contain new information or if it is inconsistent with the context. Second, it is determined by the amount of effort required to process the assumption. Optimal relevance is achieved when contextual effects are as large as possible and the amount of effort is as small as possible.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 60)

Principle 3: Temporal Schema Principle

The third principle, the Temporal Schema Principle, applies to clauses that have neither explicit temporal nor aspectual viewpoint information. Clauses without an overt viewpoint morpheme are ‘zero-marked’. In other words, the default interpretation of zero-marked clauses appears as a pragmatic principle. (S&E 2005)

Zero-marked clauses have a consistent default interpretation. The default is this: “Verb constellations that express telic and/or instantaneous events are taken as bounded; state verb constellations are taken as unbounded; activity events (run, cook) are unbounded. These interpretations accord with the temporal schema of each situation type. They are the basic-level interpretations of events and states, and thus the ones interpreted as default.” (S&E 2005: 729)

Nevertheless, explicit temporal information can override the default interpretation. “Context may give information which pragmatically suggests a perfective or imperfective interpretation. For instance, if a telic event is expressed in a context suggesting the Present, it may be taken as Future.

Or, in answer to a question that explicitly expresses an ongoing event, or in the scope of a present adverbial, a zero-marked telic event clause might have an ongoing Present interpretation. This is especially relevant since Mandarin prefers to answer a question with a verb, rather than with an equivalent to ‘yes’ or ‘no’.” (S&E 2005: 730)

(160) 我们(今天)去不去? —— 去。

Wǒmen (jīntiān) qù bù qù? Qù.

Are we going (today)? -- ‘[We’re] going’.

(S&E 2005: 730)

Synthesis 10: Pragmatic principles (Chap. 4.2)

Pragmatic principles:

1. Bounded Event Constraint
2. Simplicity Principle of Interpretation
3. Temporal Schema Principle
4. Principle of Non-Redundancy
5. Rule of Caution
6. Rule of Consistency
7. Adjusting to Rethorical Purposes

5. PATTERNS OF TEMPORAL INTERPRETATION

In this chapter, I will briefly present three patterns of temporal interpretation that are found in written texts of Mandarin. These patterns were applied to Chinese by Smith and Erbaugh (2005) and are of great importance for the discussion of *le*, because they explain how situations are related to time and each other.

The basic pattern of temporal interpretation is deictic, with situations located in relation to Speech Time. Namely, the canonical center of linguistic communication is the speaker, and the canonical temporal orientation point is Speech Time, now. The dynamic pattern demonstrates the temporal advancement of narrative, and since operator *le* is closely related to dynamism, it is expected in such patterns of temporal interpretation.

The third pattern is static pattern, which is used in description and certain other contexts. Although operator *le* is not favored in this type of temporal interpretation, I have to mention it, because it serves for the discussion why descriptive passages are rather stative in nature and, as such, normally not very compatible with *le*.

5.1 Deictic pattern

Deictic pattern, as Smith and Erbaugh (2005) explain, is the main, default pattern of interpretation, in which Speech Time is central. It locates situations either at Speech Time, or gives temporal locations in terms of their relation to Speech Time. The Present is located at Speech Time; the Past precedes it, and the Future follows. “In deixis, the default interpretation locates ongoing events and states in the Present (running, believe), and bounded events in the Past (run, break). The other possibilities are constrained, and require additional explicit information. The key factor underlying the deictic pattern is whether a situation is bounded or unbounded.”³⁴ (S&E 2005: 715)

Just to recall, boundedness is an aspectual notion and was presented as one of the features in Chapter 1. It refers to a property of the situations expressed in sentences.³⁵ “Bounded situations are temporally closed, by implicit or explicit bounds (ran, broke); unbounded situations are ongoing, temporally open (running, breaking).” (S&E 2005: 715)

However, the temporal possibilities are not limited to the default. “Bounded events may be located in the Future, and states or ongoing events may be in the Past or Future. These departures from the pattern are expressed with additional information. However, no bounded events are located in the Present. This is an important, non-accidental, gap in the paradigm. It is due to a general constraint that events in the present cannot be bounded.” (S&E 2005: 716)

As mentioned above, deictic pattern provides that the default for bounded events is Past rather than Future. To explain this, Smith and Erbaugh (2005) invoke a general Simplicity Principle of information processing.³⁶ (page 60) “When faced with information that does not fully determine an interpretation, people choose the simplest interpretation to resolve it.” (S&E 2005: 717) “The Past is simpler than the Future. The two are symmetrically related to Speech Time - the Past precedes, the Future follows. But the Future has the additional factor of uncertainty, a modal meaning (e.g. will, may). Due to the modal factor the future is more complex than the past.” (S&E 2005: 718)

So, due to a general simplicity principle that constrains interpretation, people take sentences expressing bounded events to be in the Past unless there is explicit indication of the Future. This idea of default understanding of bounded and unbounded situations is expressed in Yip and Rimmington (2004) as well, although from a different viewpoint. For correlation of these principles and operator *le*, read chapter 6.1 (p. 153 ff.).

³⁴ Recall the Bounded Event constraint (page 60), Temporal Schema Principle (page 60) and chapter on Situation Aspect (specially page 34) with basic and derived situation types.

³⁵ Boundedness depends on both aspectual viewpoint and situation type.

³⁶ This was already mentioned on the page 60.

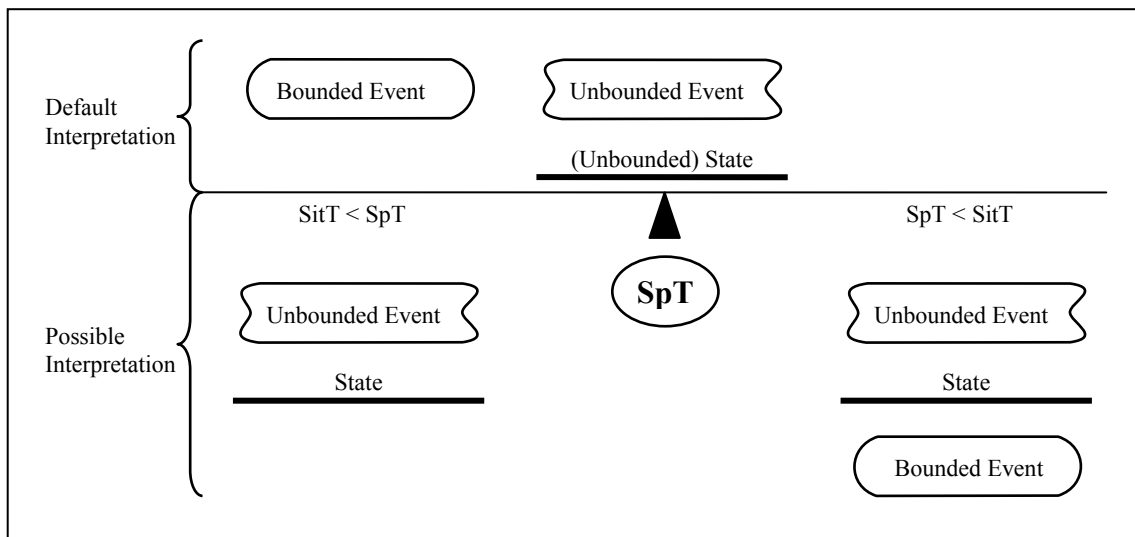


Figure 2: Deictic pattern of interpretation

5.2 Dynamic pattern (Narrative dynamism)

“Narrative primarily introduces event and state entities into a discourse. The situations are temporally related to each other according to their aspectual properties, and information specified by adverbs. In narrative tense conveys continuity.” (S&E 2005: 744) “As the events of the narrative unfold in sequence, we understand that narrative time advances. The dynamism that advances narrative time is due to aspectual information, and to explicit time adverbials and inference. A narrative advances with bounded, perfective events and with explicit temporal adverbials. It fails to advance with states and ongoing events, unless additional information warrants an inference of advancement.” (S&E 2005: 745)

In the narrative dynamism, the central notion is Reference Time. “Time in narrative advances when warranted by aspectual or adverbial information. A narrative begins with a given RT. With a subsequent clause that expresses a bounded event, RT advances to just after the event.” (S&E 2005: 745) According to this principle, bounded events immediately precede RT. “With states or ongoing event clauses, RT does not change: the situations are located at the current RT. For a clause with an adverbial, RT advances to the time specified by the adverbial. Additional information can license an inference of advancement.” (S&E 2005: 745) Narrative advancement differs according to aspect and temporal adverbs.

Dynamic pattern is again presented in Figure 3 below.

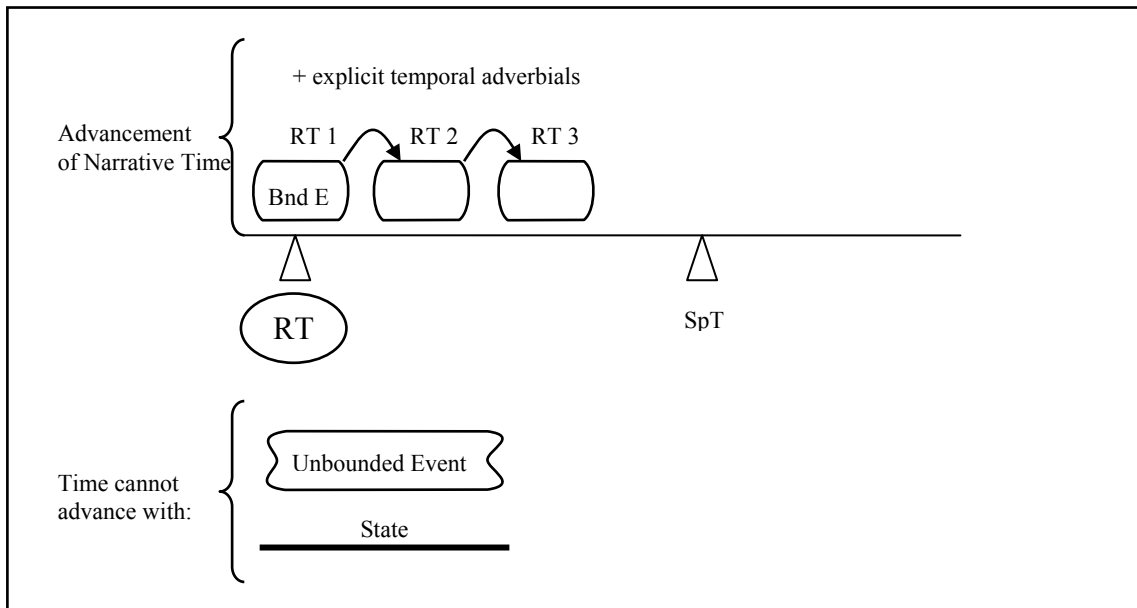


Figure 3: Dynamic pattern of interpretation

5.3 Static pattern (Anaphora)

The third, static pattern “is typical of the discourse mode of Description. In passages of Description, time is stable or suspended, without dynamism. Situations are located at a time already established in a text so that all the clauses of a given passage have the same Reference Time. Description passages appear in fiction, travel writing, and accounts of states of affairs. In the Description mode, tense is anaphoric to a time already established in the discourse.” (S&E 2005: 747)

See Figure 4 below:

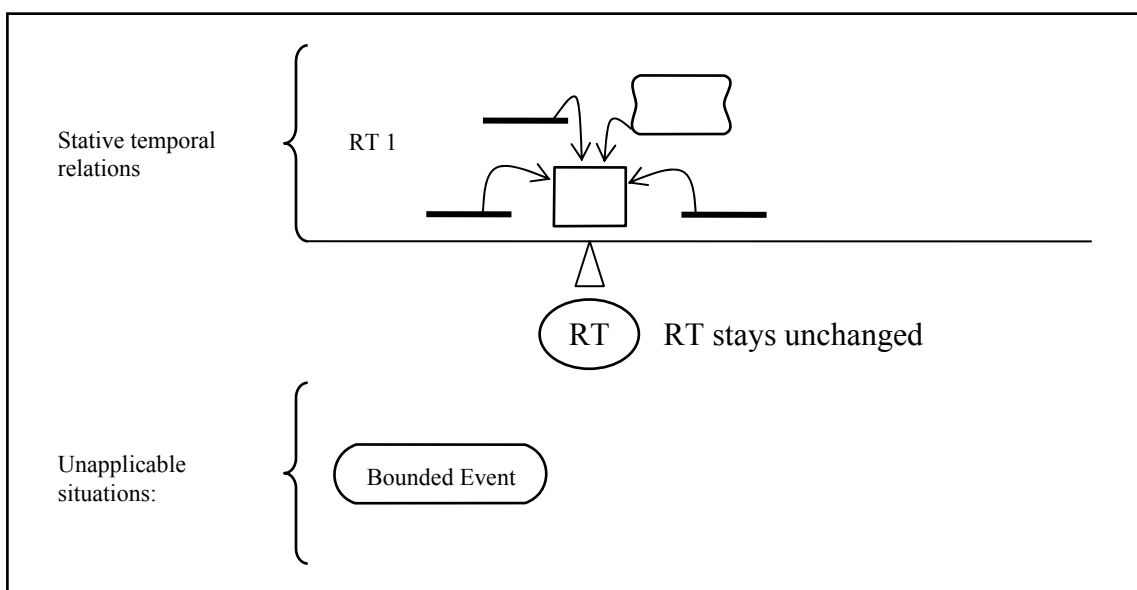


Figure 4: Static pattern of interpretation

I claim different types of temporal interpretation are the cue to understanding of the distribution of operator *le* in different discourse modes, and further text types. I will return to this point later, in the chapter 0 (p. 206).

Synthesis 11: Patterns of temporal interpretation (Chap. 5)

Default deictic pattern:

Situation[-bnd] → located in the Present = Ongoing events, Unbounded states

Situation[+bnd] → located in the Past = Bounded events

Explicit temporal information may override default values.

Advancement of narrative time in Dynamic pattern

explicitly bounded event clauses, zero-marked event clauses

states, unbounded event clauses

Explicit temporal information may override default values.

Recognition of temporal and atemporal relations is pragmatically based.

Static pattern of temporal interpretation

States and unbounded events are located at an established time

Stative entities are expected

6. DISCOURSE MODES AND ITS PASSAGES

Texts are, according to Smith (2000a, 2005), who I follow in this chapter, composed of different discourse modes. They are proposed for written texts and include Narrative, Report, Description, Information, Argument. For the time being, they do not include conversation³⁷, procedural texts, and some other types. Each mode introduces certain types of entities into the discourse, and follows one of three principles of temporal progression, presented above (Chap. 5).

It should be stressed that discourse modes are not the same as texts. “Texts of almost all genre categories are not monolithic, but rather have passages of different modes.” (Smith 2005: 225) In addition, “there is normally some variation within texts of a given genre. Narrative fiction, for instance, expresses events and states in sequence, bound together more or less closely by a unifying theme. But narratives rarely consist entirely of such sequences. They also have descriptive passages, and sometimes commentary. In expository texts one often finds, in addition to the exposition, narrative sequences which depart from the argument line.” (Smith 2005: 225)

³⁷ Conversation and procedural texts are just the main issue in van den Berg and Wu’s (2006) research, what happens to be the complementary part to Smith.

Two linguistic features characterize the modes. The first is the type of situation that a text passage introduces into the discourse. The second linguistic feature is the principle of text progression that holds for a mode. Within a text one recognizes different stretches, e.g. narrative, description, argument, commentary. These stretches tend to have a particular force and a characteristic cluster of linguistic features and interpretations. They realize different discourse modes. (cf. Smith 2005)

For the discussion of *le*, Narrative and Description are the most interesting. They progress by different temporal principles, presented in Chapter 5. “Narrative primarily introduces event and state entities into a discourse. The situations are temporally related to each other according to their aspectual properties, and information specified by adverbs. In narrative tense conveys continuity. Description primarily introduces states and ongoing events into the universe of discourse, and temporally locates them at a single established time. Tense in description conveys a time anaphoric to a previously established time.” (S&E 2005: 744)³⁸

6.1 Classification of situation entities

Smith proposed a classification of situation entities that recognizes several types of non-dynamic, stative situations. “There are three main types of situation entity: Eventualities, or specific events and states; General Statives, or generics and states that involve a pattern or regularity; and Abstract entities, facts and propositions. The three types are distinct on conceptual grounds, and they have distinguishable linguistic characteristics.” (Smith 2005: 225)

6.1.1 Eventualities (particular)

Smith states that “the semantic property of dynamism distinguishes events and states. Clauses expressing events have distributional and interpretational properties associated with dynamism, whereas those of states do not.” (Smith 2005: 225) Recall as well, that the feature [\pm dynamic] makes the same distinction in Xiao and McEnery’s framework. (p. 21)

Sentences (161) and (162) are examples for particular states, i.e. states that hold “at a particular time and place; and may last for a long or short period.” (Smith 2005: 225)

(161) The lobster won the quadrille. Lee rehearsed.
(Events) (Smith 2005: 225)

(162) The cat is on the mat. The Colonel owns the farm.
(States) (Smith 2005: 225)

³⁸ For Report, Information and Argument see Smith (2005).

6.1.2 Statives (general)

The class of General Statives includes Generalizing and Generic sentences.

- (163) Mary often fed the cats last year.
(Generalizing: patterns of situations) (Smith 2005: 226)
- (164) John speaks French.
(Generalizing: patterns of situations) (Smith 2005: 226)
- (165) The lion has a bushy tail.
(Generic: kinds) (Smith 2005: 226)

Generalizing statives “express a general pattern rather than a specific event or state. They are semantically stative, and predicted to be located in the present³⁹, unless there is information to the contrary.” (Smith and Erbaugh 2001). “They are also known as *gnomic*, *dispositional*, *general*, and *habitual*. The latter two labels reflect the fact such sentences often have a frequency adverbial (sometimes, always, never).

One test for whether a sentence is of the Generalizing type is whether it allows a frequency adverbial without disturbing the syntax or interpretation. If it does allow a frequency adverbial, it is almost certainly a generalizing sentence.” (Smith 2005) In Chinese, it is typical for the generalizing (or habitual) clauses that they are compatible with the habitual adverbials like *zong* ‘always’, *changchang* ‘often’, *mei tian* ‘every day’ without changing the sense of the clause, and can be rephrased with ‘every time’ or ‘whenever X,Y’. (Krifka et al 1995)

Although generalizing sentences lack the dynamism of particular event sentences, they have some distributional properties of dynamism (Smith 1991, Smith 1997). These distributional facts reflect the hybrid nature of generalizing sentences. Although stative, they often have dynamic verb constellations (e.g., play tennis) and they involve a pattern of dynamic events. Of course, stative generalizing sentences exist as well (e.g. to be in love). (Smith 2005)

Generic sentences “refer to kinds rather than individuals. In a sentence like *The lion has a bushy tail* the subject NP denotes the entire class of lions, not a particular lion or lions. Definite NPs (*the lion*) and bare plurals (*lions*) are the main types of NP that are taken as kind-referring. Characterizing generic sentences by syntactic means alone is difficult, but there are typical forms and interpretations.” (Smith 2005: 227)

Generic and Generalizing sentences are derived by coercion from verb constellations that express specific eventualities at the basic level of categorization. In context, they may have the generalizing interpretation. Similarly, generic sentences may have event verb constellations, as in *The lion eats meat*. Verb constellations that express states at the basic level also appear in general statives, as in the example above, *have a bushy tail*. (cf. Smith 2005)

³⁹ The generalizing interpretation of sentences is due to the Bounded Event Constraint (page 60).

6.1.3 Abstract entities

Facts and Propositions are situation entities introduced by verb constellations in clausal complements of certain predicates. Facts are objects of knowledge, whereas propositions are objects of belief. (cf. Smith 2005: 227, 228)

- (166) I know that Mary refused the offer.
Mary's refusal of the offer was significant.
(Fact) (Smith 2005: 228)
- (167) I believe that Mary refused the offer.
Mary's refusing the offer was unlikely.
(Proposition) (Smith 2005: 228)

At this point, we should also mention abstract verbs, where time element is irrelevant, but still are, contrary to abstract entities, located spatially and temporally in the world. According to Zhang (1998), abstract verbs are likely to get perfect interpretations. Such verbs are for example *baohan* 'contain', *biaoxian* 'show', *chaoguo* 'surpass', *fanying* 'reflect' and *tixian* 'embody'. For sentences where these verbs occur the time element is irrelevant. There is a reference time but probably no event time. These verbs all describe situations that are at the same time dynamic and stative. (cf. Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 84-86)

- (168) 这次成功体现了新经济政策的正确性。
Zhè cì chénggōng tǐxiàn le xīn jīngjì zhèngcè de zhèngquèxìng.
The success shows/has shown the correctness
of the new economic policy (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 85)
- (169) 他过于依赖儿子了, 甚至超过了儿子对他的依赖。
Tā guòyú yīlài érzi le, shènzhì chāoguò-le érzi duì tā de yīlài.
He was too dependent on his son, so much that it surpassed (had surpassed)
his son's dependence on him (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 85)
- (170) 自己也不明白为什么要这样回答,
这使我的话里包含了一点儿讽刺和自我安慰的味道。
Zìjǐ yě bù míngbái wèishénme yào zhèyàng huídá,
zhè shǐ wǒde huà-lǐ bāohán-le yīdiǎnr fēngcǐ hé zìwǒ ānwèi de wèidào.
I did not know why I responded the way I did, it made my answer contain
a slight tinge of sarcasm and self-satisfaction (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 85)

I will return to these examples in the following chapters, where the focus will be on operator *le*. See Chapter 6.3, p. 175.

Comparison

Eventualities and general statives are located spatially and temporally in the world; abstract entities are not. Conceptually Facts and Propositions can be distinguished from eventualities, which are spatiotemporally located and have causal powers. Facts are not so located, yet they are contingent for truth on situations being a certain way and arguably have causal powers. (Smith 2005) The class of factive predicates includes emotives (regret, resent, deplore), verbs of communication (say, tell, show, indicate), verbs of conjecture (guess, predict, etc), possibilities. Questions of fact are empirical questions although facts are not part of the furniture of the world. (Smith 2005) Propositions are the objects of belief, the contents of mental states like beliefs, expectations, decisions, intentions. Propositions are not located, are not contingent, and do not have causal powers. They are typically expressed by clausal arguments of verbs of propositional attitude and other predicates. Typically propositions appear as clausal arguments of such predicates as believe, doubt, fear, hope, want, think, affirm, deny; be unlikely, consistent, etc. (Smith 2005)

What is important for this discussion is that different types of entities predominate in passages of different modes (Smith 2005), that will be presented in the following chapter.

Temporal ⁴⁰	EVENTUALITIES	
	Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities • accomplishments • achievements • semelfactives 	States <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual-level states • state-level states
	STATIVES	
	Generalizing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gnomic • dispositional • general • habitual 	Generic Abstract verbs
Atemporal	ABSTRACT ENTITIES	
	Facts	Propositions
	emotives (regret, resent, deplore)	clausal arguments of such predicates as believe, doubt, fear, hope, want, think, affirm, deny; be unlikely, consistent
	verbs of communication (say, tell, show, indicate)	
	verbs of conjecture (guess, predict, etc)	
	possibilities	

Table 7: Overview of situation entities

⁴⁰ Located spatially and temporally in the world

Synthesis 12: Discourse modes and its passages (Chap. 6-6.1)

Discourse modes (written texts):

- Narrative (Events & States; narrative dynamism)
- Descriptive (States & Ongoing events; static pattern)
- Report (Deictic)
- Information; (Atemporal)
- Argument (Atemporal)

The linguistic cues for generalizing sentences are:

- (a) a class rather than individual is introduced (*xie ernai* ‘certain concubines’);
- (b) a pattern of events is expressed (*dang...huo...* ‘when... or ...’).
- (c) allow frequency adverbial without (*zong* ‘always’, *changchang* ‘often’, *mei tian* ‘every day’)

→ **Table 7: Overview of situation entities**

6.2 Five modes

Narrative

Narrative consists of consequentially related events, forming the main story line. As the events of the narrative unfold in sequence, we understand that narrative time advances. This dynamism is closely related to aspectual information, explicit time adverbials and inference. A narrative advances with bounded, perfective events and with explicit temporal adverbials. However, it fails to advance with states and ongoing events, unless additional information is present. (cf. S&E 2005: 745)

“The standard narrative time is past, and tense in narrative is consistently past, including the past perfect. The information that tense conveys after the initial sentence of a narrative is continuity. Narrative dynamism is modeled with a mechanism based on Reference Time. Time in narrative advances when warranted by aspectual or adverbial information. A narrative begins with a given RT. With a subsequent clause that expresses a bounded event, RT advances to just after the event. This principle delivers a result in which bounded events immediately precede RT.” (S&E 2005: 745)

Considered from the semantics of situations, bounded events are the key to narrative advancement. In Chinese, narrative time is advanced by clause with perfective *le* and/or RVCs, and by zero-marked event clauses. Recall that according to Temporal Schema Principle (p. 60), telic and/or instantaneous events are taken as bounded, therefore they can contribute to the advancement of narrative time. (cf. S&E 2005: 745)

The main types of entity introduced in a narrative are eventualities, i.e. specific events and states. (Smith 2005: 232)

(171) a. 一个瘦男子来到华厅。(E1)

b. 他多少有点惶恐不安地走进豪华的玻璃门, (E2)

c. 穿过水声恹恹的大堂, (E3)

d. 在 P.R. 侍应生、总台服务员的暧昧的注视下, (E4)

e. 他进二楼的成弧形的走廊。(E5)

f. 他看见了走廊上的一排照片 (E6)

a. Yī-gè shòu nánzi láidào huátīng.

b. Tā duōshǎo yǒudiǎn huángkǒng-bùān de zǒujìn háohuá de bōlǐ mén,

c. chuān-guò shuǐshēng zǒngzǒng de dàtáng,

d. zài P.R. shìyìngshēng, zǒngtái fúwùyuán de àimèi de zhùshì xià,

e. tā jìn èr lóu de chéng húxíng de zǒuláng.

f. Tā kànjiàn-le zǒuláng-shàng de yī-pái zhàopiàn

A young man came to the “China Room”. Terrified and uneasy, he walked through the luxurious glass door, passed through the main lobby which was filled with the sounds of gurgling water, and, under the muddled attentions of the young P.R. workers and reception desk personnel, stepped into the arc-shaped corridor of the second floor. He saw a row of photographs hung along the corridor... (S&E 2005: 747)

Description

In passages of Description, time is stable or suspended, therefore the static pattern is typical for this discourse mode. Situations are located at a time already established in a text so that all the clauses of a given passage have the same Reference Time. In the Description mode, tense is anaphoric to a time already established in the discourse. RT does not change: the situations are located at the current RT. (cf. S&E 2005)

The entities in Description are unbounded events and states, which do not contribute to time advancement. Often a locative adverb or other anchoring information appears at the beginning of a description. Tacit durative time adverbs can have scope over the passages. Event verb constellations in passages of Description are atelic, sometimes by coercion due to the tacit time adverb. If motion is involved, it is without significant changes of state and there is no sense that time advances.⁴¹ (cf. S&E 2005)

The same is found in Standard Chinese. “Clauses with *-guo* do not advance time, they are stative. Clauses with the imperfectives *zai*, and *-zhe*, and zero-marked clauses with state verb constellations,

⁴¹ Occasionally telic verb constellations appear in a descriptive passage. These have an atelic value, due to a regular process of coercion. Durative adverbials trigger a shift to an atelic situation, e.g. She wrote a letter for an hour. The durative adverbial may be tacit.

do not advance narrative time.” (S&E 2005: 746) This is very important, because it is a direct statement, what is stative in nature.

“Description passages appear in fiction, travel writing, and accounts of states of affairs.” (S&E 2005: 747)

- (172) a. 做中人的卫老婆子带她进来了, (E)
b. 头上扎着白头绳, 乌裙, 蓝夹袄, (S)
c. 年纪大约二十六七, (S) 脸色青黄, (S)
d. 但两颊却还是红的。(S)

- a. zuò zhōngrén de Wèi lǎopózi dài tā jìnlái le,
b. tóu-shàng zāzhe bái tóushéng, wū qún, lán jiá'ǎo,
c. niánjì dàyuē èrshíliùqī, liǎnsè qīnghuáng
d. dàn liǎng-jiá què hái hóng de.

Old Mrs Wei, who acted as go-between, brought her in. Her hair was tied with white bands, she wore a black skirt, blue jacket and pale green bodice, and was about twenty-six, with a pale face but rosy cheeks. (web)

Event establishes the prior RT

- (173) a. 大卢遮那佛螺形发髻,
b. 身披同肩式袈裟,
c. 他嘴巴稍跷, 成微笑状。
a. Dà Lúzhēnà fó luó xíng fājì, (S)
b. shēnpī tóngjiānshì jiāshā, (S)
c. tā zuǐbā shāo qiāo, chéng wéixiàozhuàng. (S)

The great Locana Buddha is robed in a kasaya vestment, his hair is coiled in spirals, and the corners of his mouth are tilted slightly upward in a smiling expression. (S&E 2005: 748)

RT is present, simultaneous with ST

In this example, RT equals SpT. However, if the context was extended, like someone saying that he visited that place a few years ago, than the RT of ‘visiting’ would be the anchor for the further description of Budha. In that case, the whole passage would be understood as RT<SpT.⁴² The continuing RT may be past or present - or, in principle, future - according to the context of the passage. In a sense, this pattern complements narrative dynamism: it applies to unbounded situations and locates them at a single time. (S&E 2005)

⁴² I am grateful to Marita Ljungqvist for this interpretation.

Report, Informative and Argument

Although operator *le* is not closely related to these three types of discourse modes, I will briefly mention them to make the picture complete.

In Reports, “eventualities or general statives are related to Speech Time rather than to each other. Time and space adverbials are common in reports, as are changes in tense. Significantly, the events of a report could appear in different order without making a real difference, unlike narrative (Caenepeel 1995) Tense and adverbials are Deictic, oriented to Speech Time.” (Smith 2005: 233)

Informative texts are atemporal. “Typically they have many situation entities of the general stative type. In this example almost all the sentences are generalizing statives, expressing a pattern or generalization rather than specific events or states.” Advancement in this passage is by primary referent. The primary referents are underlined. (Smith 2005)

(174) (1a) When people try to get a message from one individual to another in the party game telephone, (1b) they usually garble the words beyond recognition. (2a) It might seem surprising, then, (2b) Fact that mere molecules inside our cells constantly enact their own version of telephone without distorting the relayed information in the least. (3) Actually, no one could survive without such precise signalling in cells.

“There is an intuition of metaphorical motion in this passage above, from the general to the particular case under discussion. Thus the primary referents deliver the hierarchical structure typical of discursive texts.” (Smith 2005)

Argument discusses “states of affairs, facts, and propositions. The text may ascribe a certain significance to a state of affairs; give the author’s personal opinion; ask a question; make a prediction. Often an Argument text brings something to the attention of the reader, or makes a claim and supports it in some way. Claims themselves do not have a particular linguistic form: they appear in all sorts of linguistic structures.” (Smith 2005) The passage introduces abstract entities in positions of prominence, as is typical of the argument mode; primary referents are underlined. (Smith 2005)

(175) (1. event)

a [The national outpouring after the Littleton shootings] has forced us to confront something (E, Fact)

b that we have suspected for a long ime: (Generalizing stative)

c the American high school is obsolete and should be abolished. (Proposition)

(2. event)

a In the last month, high school students present and past have come orward with stories about cliques and the artificial intensity of a world efined by insiders and outsiders,

b in which the insiders hold sway because of superficial definitions of good looks and attractiveness, popularity and sports prowess. (Generalizing stative)

The primary referents suggest a hierarchical structure in this case also: we go from ‘the American high school’ to specifics about the schools. (Smith 2005)

6.3 Relating Situation entities and patterns of TI to discourse modes

At the beginning of the present chapter, it was mentioned that discourse modes are characterized by situation entities and text progression. Every discourse mode has its own predominant situation entities. Narratives are in general composed of dynamic eventualities, descriptions of static eventualities, whereas reports include eventualities and general statives. Two atemporal modes, i.e. informative mode and arguments consist of general statives and/or abstract entities.

Discourse modes follow different patterns of temporal interpretation. Narrative mode is associated with dynamic pattern, whereas descriptive mode is based on static pattern. And inverse, some pattern can be found in different modes. The deictic pattern is found in the discourse modes of Report, Information, and Argument.⁴³

Synthesis 13: Situation entities and patterns in discourse modes (Chap. 6)

5 modes	Situation entities in the passage	Pattern	Principle of text progression
Narrative	Eventualities (events, states)	Dynamism	The situations are temporally related to each other according to their aspectual properties, and information specified by adverbs.
Descriptive	Eventualities (states, ongoing events)	Anaphora	Temporally located at a single established time
Report	Eventualities (events, states), General statives	Deictic	Temporally related to Speech Time. Time and space adverbials are common. Tense and adverbials are Deictic, oriented to SpT
Informative	General statives	Deictic	Atemporal. Express a pattern or generalization. Advancement is by primary referent
Argument	Abstract entities General statives	Deictic	Atemporal.

For discussion on the operator *le* only the first three modes, specially the first one, are of interest. Nevertheless, for better understanding, one should keep the whole picture in mind. I will return to

⁴³ Report passages give an account of situations and their significance from the temporal standpoint of the reporter. Passages in the other two modes are essentially atemporal. They too follow the deictic pattern. (Smith and Erbaugh 2005)

this point at the end of my paper, in the chapter 1 (p. 206). Recall that these five modes were proposed for written texts and do not include conversations and procedural texts. Therefore, the later text types are not included.

PART II:

TREATMENT OF LE WITHING VARIOUS DOMAINS

1. OPERATOR *LE* IN RELATION TO SITUATION ASPECT

In the Part I, Chapter 1, I briefly presented Xiao and McEnery's aspectual model, which I follow in my work. As mentioned there, we should distinguish *situation aspect* from *viewpoint aspect*. At the beginning of Part II, I will first incorporate *le* into situation aspect. But before doing that, I must point out, that *le* can operate upon different scopes, and this is the content of subchapter 1.1 in Part II.

1.1 The scope of operator *le*

There is no doubt that the scope of verbal *-le* and sentence-final *le* is not equal. Verbal *-le* operates upon events (or more precisely 'situations'), whereas sentence-final *le* can take under its scope the whole sentence and even larger units like segments of discourse.⁴⁴ Double-*le* constructions are not contradictory to one-*le* approach, since simultaneous occurrences of *le* just act on different levels, as I will show in the following chapters.

Ljungqvist Arin says, "when *le* occurs directly after the verb, its scope is normally the verb or VP and the durational adverbs." (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 69) Aside from the verb, "a verb phrase includes those grammatical elements that occur with the verb as well as most of the noun phrases that refer to the participants in the event denoted by the verb. What is excluded from the verb phrase is the subject and/or the topic." (L&T 1981: 140)

This can also be observed from rules proposed by Xiao and McEnery in the Chapter 1.1.4 (pages 28-36). The final interpretation of situation type depends on several elements. Syntactic units actually reflect some semantic contents and features, which are in fact relevant here.

When *le* occurs **sentence-finally**, the scope is larger and includes other components in the whole sentence. (Foley & Van Valin 1984, Chu 1998, Ljungqvist Arin 2003, Soh & Gao 2006) According to Yip and Rimmington (2004: 315), sentence-final *le* can be put at the end of virtually any

⁴⁴ One should not simplify this statement by concluding that verbal *le* has no effect on the discourse level.

statement.⁴⁵ Here is a very nice example from Ljungqvist Arin, which is showing that the occurrence of verbal *le* is more restricted than that of sentence-final *le*.

(176) * 他常常看了电影。

* Tā chángcháng kàn-le diànyǐng.

Not acceptable (intended meaning):

He often watched movies.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 69)

(177) 他常常看电影了。

Tā chángcháng kàn diànyǐng le.

He often watches movies now /

He has started to go to the movies often

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 69)

The so-called “**double le**” construction typically involves two occurrences of *le* in a sentence. One comes after the verb, and the other comes at the end of the sentence, as in the example below: (Ma 2006: 2)

(178) 他看了五本书了。

Tā kàn-le wǔ-běn shū le.

He has read five books.

(Ma 2006: 2)

Double-*le* construction has rarely been the focus of research among scholars. I believe there is also no need to treat it separately, since it behaves similar to both verbal and sentence-final *le*. Apart from that, double-*le* construction is not a very common pattern in Chinese, as shown by researches (Chang 1986, Chu 1998, Ma 2006, among others) and proofed in Corpus.⁴⁶

	absolute value	percentage
Verbal <i>le</i>	2.887.214	92,93%
Sentence-final <i>le</i>	216.194	6,96%
Pure sentence-final position	52.798	1,70%
Sentence-final and post-verbal at the same time	163.396	5,26%
Double <i>le</i> construction	3.325	0,11%
Total instances of <i>le</i>	3.106.733	100%

Table 8: Distribution of operator *le* (Sketch Engine)

⁴⁵ Cf. Chapter 7.1.5 *Le*-expository sentences (181 ff.)

⁴⁶ Since Sketch Engine includes journalism material from Xinhua News Agency of Beijing and Central News Agency of Taiwan, strong predominance of verbal *le* is expected. However, results might be different in other genres. Compare also Figure 23 (p. 202), which demonstrates the distribution of *le* in several text genres. After considering different structure of the two corpora, we see that results are still in congruence.

I agree with Soh and Gao (2006) who claim that “the distribution and the interpretations of double *le* sentences follow from the combination of the individual semantic contributions of verbal *le* and sentential *le*.” (S&G 2006: 116) ⁴⁷ But before discussing the double-*le* construction, let us first focus just on verbal *le* and sentence-final *le*. A fusion of both will be the step three.

1.2 Verbal *le* in relation to Situation Aspect

Situation aspect was presented in Chapter 1.1 (pages 20-36). Here, I will incorporate verbal *le* to different situation types.

According to my proposal, operator *le* contributes to change in dynamics, more precisely, it gives an initial impulse to stative environments, and final impulse to dynamic environments. On the level of situation aspect this means that *le* gives to states the *inchoative* reading (0→1) and to events the terminative or completive reading (1→0). I argue that the telicity feature decides, which of the two readings will be appropriate. Telic events with *le* result in *completive* reading, whereas atelic events result in *terminative* reading.

Operator *le* can be used with most states and events, but some states cannot take *le*. According to my hypothesis, elements have to be compatible with each other (i.e. principle of compatibility), and since *le* contributes to ‘change in dynamics’, the situations that *le* is operating upon, have to allow the possibility ‘to undergo changes.’ Therefore, stage-level states are compatible with *le*, and individual-level states are not. Furthermore, if states are temporarily bounded, they become shifted activities and result in terminative reading, as well. But in order to show these ideas, I have to present the previous findings, as well.

I have to stress once more, that we are talking about postverbally used *le* here. Environments, where *le* is sentence-final at the same time, are a more complex matter.

States

There is much disagreement in the literature about whether verbal *-le* can appear in stative sentences (L&T 1981, Huang & Davis 1989, Shi 1990, Ross 1995, Sybesma 1997, Kang 1999, Lin 2000, Wu 2000). I follow Soh and Gao who claim that “verbal *-le* may not appear in stative sentences in general, except in sentences that denote bounded states.” (S&G 2006: 110) Further on, I argue states can also be combined with verbal *le* if they are at least potentially dynamic. Whole picture will be presented at the end of this chapter and summarized in Figure 6, page 90.

⁴⁷ Ideas about combined meanings can also be found in Chan (1980), Li and Thompson (1981) and Shi (1988) among others.

- (179) * 我喜欢了木瓜。
 * Wǒ xǐhuān-le mùguā.
Unacceptable (intended meaning): I liked papaya. (L&T 1981: 202)
- (180) * 我担心了你。
 * Wǒ dānxīn-le nǐ.
Unacceptable (intended meaning): I worried about you. (S&G 2006: 110)
- (181) 他胖了三公斤。
 Tā pàng-le sān gōngjīn.
 He gained for 3 kilos. (i.e. he became fat for 3 kilos)
- (182) 我担心了你两天。
 Wǒ dānxīn-le nǐ liǎng-tiān.
 I worried about you for two days. (S&G 2006: 110)

Soh and Gao (2006) say, “when the state is bounded by a duration phrase, verbal *le* may appear, with a completive reading.” (S&G 2006: 110) I agree that durational phrases influence the boundedness feature, as mentioned by Xiao and McEnery, as well. Recall rule 7 (page 31):

$$\text{Core}_{[-\text{bnd}]} + \text{durational phrase (for-PP)/from-to} \Rightarrow \text{Clause}_{[+\text{bnd}]}$$

However, I argue that verbal *-le* in interaction with bounded states results in terminative, not completive reading. State can only be terminated, not completed. In terms of present framework, states with durational phrases have features [+dyn][+dur][+bnd][−tel][−res] and belong to derived stage level states. (recall Table 3, page 34)

Durational phrases are also part of Li and Thompson’s (1981: 185) description of where to use *-le*. They claim events⁴⁸ become bounded in four ways, one of them is being a quantified event, that can be reached by naming the amount of time it took, among other means.

In the Part I it was shown, that states are not a homogeneous situation type, but should be distinguished into two groups – stage level states and individual level states. Both of them differ from other types of situations such as activities, achievements, and accomplishments in that they can take degree adverbs such as *hen* or *feichang* ‘very’, while other eventualities cannot. However, though both stage-level states and individual-level states are compatible with degree adverbs, they do not have the same behavior with respect to the aspect marker *le*. The stage-level states can occur with the aspect marker *le*, whereas the individual-level states cannot, as the examples (183) and (184) show. (Chang 2003: 99)

⁴⁸ L&T’s term ‘event’ should not be misleading and associated with only dynamic part of situations. Their examples include events and states (p. 186-192).

(183) 他饿了。/他累了。
Tā è le. /Tā lèi le.
He got hungry. /He got tired. (Chang 2003: 99)

(184) * 他好客了。/* 他怕蛇了。
* Tā hàokè le./ * Tā pà shé le.
Intended: He became hospitable./ He became afraid of snakes (Chang 2003: 99)

It is noted that both stage-level states and individual-level states are compatible with the adverbial *youdian* ‘slightly’, but not with the adverbial *chabuduo/jihu* ‘almost’, as exemplified in (185) and (186). The incompatibility of these two kinds of states with the adverbial *chabuduo/jihu* ‘almost’ indicates that they do not involve a boundary or an endpoint. (Chang 2003: 103)

(185) 他有点儿饿/累/好客/怕蛇。
Tā yǒudiǎnr è/lèi/hàokè/pà shé.
He is slightly hungry/tired/hospitable/afraid of snakes. (Chang 2003: 103)

(186) * 他差不多（几乎）饿/累/好客/怕蛇。
* Tā chābùduō(jīhū) è/lèi/hàokè/pà shé.
Intended: He is almost hungry/tired. (Chang 2003: 103)

Surprisingly, with the aspect marker *-le*, the stage-level states turn out to be grammatical when occurring with the adverbial *chabuduo/jihu* ‘almost’, as shown below. (Chang 2003: 104)

(187) 他差不多（几乎）饿了/累了。
Tā chābùduō(jīhū) è le/lèi le.
He is almost hungry/tired. (Chang 2003: 104)

In contrast, the individual-level states are not compatible with the aspect marker *le*. Because they do not occur with the aspect marker *le*, their occurrence with the adverbial *chabuduo/jihu* ‘almost’ is impossible, as illustrated in (188). (Chang 2003: 104)

(188) * 他差不多（几乎）好客了/怕蛇了。
* Tā chābùduō(jīhū) hàokè le/ pà shé le.
* He is almost hospitable./ He is almost afraid of snakes (Chang 2003: 104)

Chang comes to the conclusion that the presence of the [aspect marker] *-le* is in fact able to evoke an initial point of a stage-level state. (Chang 2003: 105) This complies with Huang et al.’s (2000) analysis that inchoative states (i.e. stage-level states) involve an initial point, while homogeneous states (i.e. individual-level states) do not. Although stage-level states involve an initial point, this point is usually not evoked without the occurrence of the aspect marker *-le*. This explains why

stage-level states are compatible with the adverbial *chabuduo/jihu* ‘almost’ only when the aspect marker *-le* also occurs. (Chang 2003: 106) Individual-level states, on the other hand, have permanent properties and comprise an undifferentiated period with no initial point and endpoint. (Chang 2003: 105)

I agree with Chang that operator *-le* is able to evoke an initial point of a stage-level state. Nevertheless, I suggest a bit different explanation which will manifest itself constantly throughout this book. I propose that individual-level states are not compatible with operator *-le*, because they are strictly inherently stative and do not allow any potential dynamics. As a consequence, they cannot get inchoative readings.

On the other hand, state-level states are in normal circumstances static, but do allow potential dynamics, which is evoked by the presence of marker *-le*. What operator *-le* actually does, is, it gives a stative situation an initial impulse. In that, I agree more with Ljungqvist Arin (2003) who describes such situations in the following way: “A stative situation type verb (which has no boundaries in time), needs to be combined with the boundary-marker *le*, for example, in order to be positioned on the time line. When a stative verb is combined with verbal *le*, it gets an inchoative reading, i.e. one where focus is on the start point of the situation.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 69)

(189) 现在他有了朋友。

Xiànzài tā yǒu-le péngyǒu.

He has (/had) friends now

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003:70)

The state will still stay state afterwards, but the reader will indirectly understand utterance with *-le* as a “state which holds now, but it did not hold before”. Idea of dynamics and one core feature of *le* was proposed by Ljungqvist Arin (2003) and will further be developed and applied through my work. Later, I will return to this point.

In Smith’s (1997: 23, 32) analysis, a state with the aspect marker *le* is considered as a derived activity. According to Smith, state eventualities comprise an undifferentiated period with no initial point or inherent endpoint, and they have no dynamics, while activity eventualities involve an initial point and have dynamic semantics. When occurring with the aspect marker *le*, a state eventuality (i.e., the stage-level state) is conceived of as having dynamic semantics, thus, involving an initial point. When the eventuality in question is presented as a dynamic situation and has an initial point, Smith argues that there is an aspectual shift, changing a state into an activity. (Smith 1997: 23, 32).

Smith is actually describing exactly the same things as Ljungqvist Arin (2003), just from the different viewpoint. If a ‘state’ is defined as ‘situation without initial or final endpoint and without dynamics’, then a sentence with operator *-le* cannot express state. And if a ‘state eventuality’ gets dynamic semantics, then it “shifts” to activities. Different terminology does not change anything. It does not matter, whether we call the sentence in example (191) *state* or *derived activity*.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ For graphical presentation of these notions and terms, see Figure 5.

(190) 他很有钱。

Tā hěn yǒu qián.

He has a lot of money. (state)

(191) 他有了钱。

Tā yǒu-le qián.

He got money (i.e. he didn't have it before, but now he does). (state/derived activity)

Szeto (1988) maintains that the initial point and the endpoint are not parts of the state eventuality. But unlike Smith, Szeto treats the state eventuality with the aspect marker *-le* as an achievement, arguing that the aspect marker *le*, when occurring with a state, indicates entering into a result state from the pre-inceptive situation. That is, the given state is considered as a resultant state reached by the performance of an activity. Szeto assumes that a state with the aspect marker *-le* involves an implicit activity associated with it; therefore, a state with the aspect marker *le* is a complex eventuality, i.e. an achievement. (Chang 2003: 106)

According to my understanding, this statement is also correct, just formulated from a different point of view. Szeto says that “aspect marker *le*, when occurring with a state, indicates entering into a result state from the pre-inceptive situation”. Once again, we come across the idea of a previous state, an impulse, and a resulting state. Szeto focused on the ‘changing’ part, which is why we get to the idea of achievement.

If looking on the whole situation from the starting point, our result will be a ‘shifted activity’. If focusing on the changing point, the notion of ‘achievement’ will be the most appropriate.⁵⁰ And, if one looks at utterance from the end, one will notice a ‘result state with initial endpoint’.

Let me present the whole scene with the following illustration:

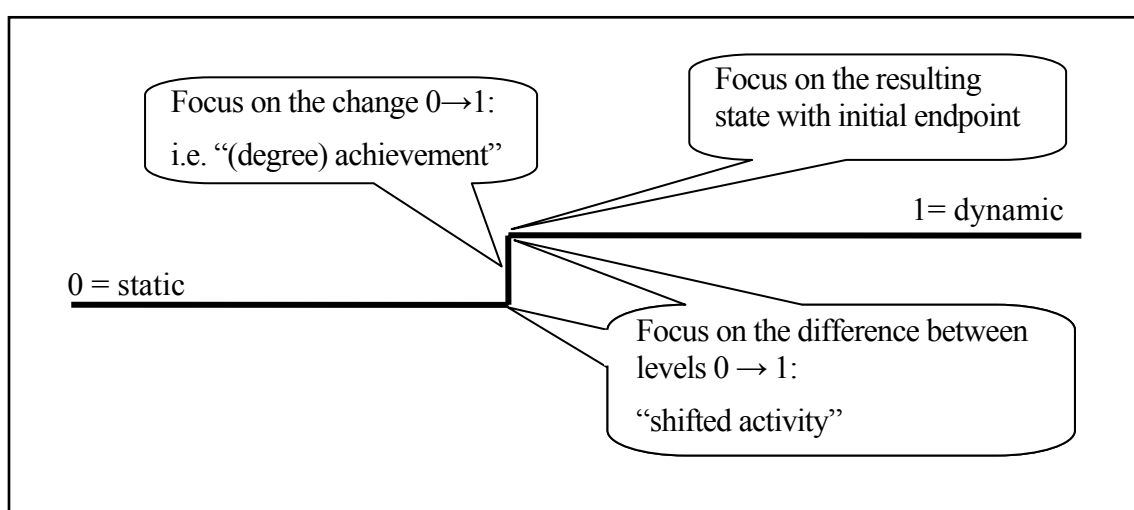


Figure 5: Conceptual differences (achievement, new state, shifted activity)

⁵⁰ If the quantifying phrase is present, the expression ‘degree achievement’ is used. (Lin 2004b)

Synthesis 14: Characteristics of SLSs and ILSs and their interaction with *le* (Chap. 1 - States)

	SLS	ILS
degree adverbs (<i>hen</i> ‘very’, <i>feichang</i> ‘very’) + ~:	☑	☑
~ + <i>le</i>	☑	☒
<i>youdian</i> ‘a bit’ + ~	☑	☑
<i>chabuduo/jihu</i> ‘almost’ + ~	☒	☒
<i>chabuduo/jihu</i> ‘almost’ + ~ + <i>le</i>	☑	☒

Achievements

Achievements are dynamic situations, which do not last for a period of time, but have temporal and spatial endpoints. Recall their values, presented in Table 3, page 34. “When the sentence denotes an achievement, verbal *-le* indicates that the inherent end point of the achievement event is reached, i.e., the event is completed.”⁵¹ (S&G 2006: 108) I follow the viewpoint that telic events are interpreted as completed, and this is certainly the case with achievements.

(192) 他们刚刚到达了山顶。

Tāmen gānggāng dàodá-le shāndǐng.

They just reached the top of the mountain.

(S&G 2006: 108)

Xiao even claims that all achievements taking the perfective *le* have completive readings without exception. (Xiao 2001)

(193) 那家伙烧成了灰，我也能认出来。

Nà jiāhuǒ shāochéng-le huī, wǒ yě néng rènchūlái

Even if that guy was burnt into ashes, I would recognize him.

(Xiao 2001)

(194) 他……知道遇上了高手。

Tā ... zhīdao yùshàng-le gāoshǒu.

He knew that he had encountered a master-hand.

(Xiao 2001)

Accomplishments

It is widely noted that verbal *-le* sometimes indicates the mere termination of the event and sometimes the completion of the event (Tai 1984, Smith 1997, Sybesma 1997, 1999, Klein et. al 2000, Soh and Kuo 2005, Soh and Gao 2006). I propose this difference arises from the interaction

⁵¹ It should be noted that the issue whether Standard Chinese has achievement verbs or accomplishment verbs remains controversial (see Tai 1984, Sybesma 1997, 1999, Soh and Kuo 2005, J. Lin 2004, S&G 2006).

of elements in VP and to some extent depends on the nature of its object NP. Detailed explanation will be presented in Chapter 1.6 on accomplishments (ff. 114). But before explaining this statement, let us look at some observations, made by several researchers.

It is not questionable at all, that when a completive marker such as *wan* ‘finish’ follows the verb, verbal *-le* must indicate that the event is completed, and not merely terminated (Tai 1984, Smith 1997, S&G 2006) The only possible reading is the completive one.

(195) 他吃完了那个蛋糕。

Tā chī-wán-le nà-gè dàngāo.

He ate that cake (and finished it). (*completive reading*)

Verbal *-le* also “adds a completive reading to the sentence that contains a numeral object, but only a terminative reading to the sentence without a numeral object.” (S&G 2006: 110)

(196) 他吃了两个蛋糕，(* 可是没吃完)。

Tā chī-le liǎng-gè dàngāo, (* kěshì méi chī-wán).

He ate two cakes, (* but he did not finish them). (*completive reading*) (S&G 2006: 110)

(197) 他吃了那个蛋糕，可是没吃完。

Tā chī-le nà-gè dàngāo, kěshì méi chī-wán.

He started eating that cake, but he did not finish it. (*terminative reading*) (S&G 2006: 110)

It has to be said more about accomplishments and differences in this situation type. Note that the statement above is not precise enough. Compare these two examples with a similar one, that is supposed to express termination, but it expresses completion.

(198) 他做了那个蛋糕，(* 可是没做好)。

Tā zuò-le nà-gè dàngāo, (* kěshì méi zuò-hǎo).

He baked that cake, but he did not finish them/it. (*completive reading*)

As said at the beginning, this issue will be further discussed in Chapter 1.6 on accomplishments (ff. 114). Nevertheless, in general, there is no problem with this explanation. Beside of that, it is fact, that verbal *le* “shows a strong preference for telic and bounded situations.” (X&McE 2004: 101) In other words, verbal *le* is more likely to co-occur with accomplishments and achievements. There is also “a strong tendency for *le* to occur with situations with spatial or temporal endpoints.” (Xiao 2001)

These rules are borne out, but one should not assume that positive values of telicity and boundedness are obligatory conditions for *-le* to appear. “It is not uncommon for atelic situations (e.g. activities and semelfactives) to take *-le*. It is also not hard to find activities taking the actual *-le*.” (X&McE 2004: 102)

- (199) 审讯已经持续了将近一个上午。
 Shěnxùn yǐjīng chíxù le jiāngjìn yī-gè shàngwǔ.
 The interrogation has gone on for nearly the whole morning. (X&McE 2004: 102)
 → *chixu* ‘last’ is activity [-bnd][-tel]
- (200) 他们打了你几天? ⁵²
 Tāmen dǎ-le nǐ jǐ-tiān?
 For how many days did they beat you? (X&McE 2004: 102)
 → *da* ‘hit’ is semelfactive [+bnd][-tel]

Activities

“Verbal *-le* indicates that the event has terminated. An arbitrary end point of the event is assigned.” (S&G 2006: 108) Activities are atelic dynamic situations, and operator *le* contributes to one-to-zero dynamics, as will be seen from the last part of this chapter.

- (201) 昨天又在单位值夜班, [...] 下班后为了洗个澡顺便去游了泳。
 Zuótiān yòu zài dānwèi zhí yèbān, xià bān hòu wéile xǐ-gè-zǎo shùnbìan qù yóu-le-yǒng.
 Yesterday, I was on night duty again. After getting off work, to take a bath, I went swimming.⁵³ (web)

Since *youyong* ‘to swim’ and *paobu* ‘to run’ are both considered verb-object compounds, I present three other examples with predicates that are undoubtedly a verb-verb compound: *zhiliao* ‘to treat’ and *moca* ‘to rub’. In these cases, activities are interpreted as terminated, as well.⁵⁴

- (202) 法院认为原告所受的损伤并不严重, 但原告却治疗了两年多的时间, 且至今仍在治疗。
 Fǎyuàn rènwéi yuángào suǒ shòu de sǔnshāng bìng bù yánzhòng, dàn yuángào què zhiliao-le liǎng-nián duō de shíjiān qiě zhījīn réng zài zhiliao.
 The court believes that injuries, which the plaintiff has suffered, are not serious, but the plaintiff has been treated for more than two years, and is still receiving treatment these days.(web)

⁵² It is interesting that in both these examples there is a quantified complement present. (Thanks for this note to Marita Ljungqvist)

⁵³ The original examples provided by Soh and Gao (2006: 108) were: *Ta you-le yong*. ‘He swam’ *Wo pao-le bu*. ‘I ran’. In order to avoid common doubts about acceptability of such independent sentences, I selected another example with more context.

⁵⁴ I am grateful to Marita Ljungqvist for this consideration.

→ the activity of ‘treating’ is terminated and not completed, which is explicitly shown in the last part *reng zai zhiliao* ‘is still treating’. Durative phrases are very common with activities, but they do not influence the terminative reading, as shown in the next example.

- (203) 我是一名多汗症患者，有过多手汗、脚汗和腋汗，以前做局部手术治疗了狐臭，但是腋汗仍很严重，引起腋下汗味浓重，给生活带来不便。

Wǒ shì yī-míng duōhànzhèng huànzhě, yǒu-guò duōshǒuhàn, jiǎohàn hé yèhàn, yǐqián zuò júbù shǒushù zhìliáo-le húchòu, dànshì yèhàn réng hěn yánzhòng, yǐnqǐ yèxià hànwèi nóngzhòng, gěi shēnghuó dàilái bú biàn.

I am a patient with hyperhidrosis, my hands, feet and armpits sweat to much. In the past, I had a partial surgery treating the body odor, but my armpit sweat is still excessive, causing heavy dense smell, which is very inconvenient. (web)

- (204) 昨天晚上用卫生纸摩擦了龟头……之后就发现龟头代沟的边缘有些红肿。会不会是发炎了???

Zuótiān wǎnshàng yòng wèishēngzhǐ mócā-le guītóu ... zhīhòu jiù fāxiàn guītóu dài gōu de biānyuán yǒu xiē hóngzhǒng. Huì bù huì shì fā yán le???

Last night I rubbed my glans with toilet paper, and then I noticed some red swelling at the slit. Could that be inflammation???

(web)

Semelfactives

As seen in the Part I, semelfactives have the features [+dyn][–dur][±bnd][–tel][–res]. Since they are prone to shift between single-event and multiple-event reading, their final temporal endpoints can be overridden and thus they have the feature [±bnd].⁵⁵ (X&McE 2004: 54) In both cases, the presence of operator *le* results in terminative reading.

- (205) 我感觉嗓子有点痒，然后就咳嗽了一下。

Wǒ gǎnjué sāngzi yǒudiǎn yǎng, ránhòu jiù késòu-le yī-xià.

I felt my throat was a bit itchy, so I coughed (once). (web)

- (206) 像今天早上六点多，[他]一直咳嗽了好几分钟，……

Xiàng jīntiān zǎoshàng liù-diǎn duō, [tā] yīzhí késòu-le hǎo jǐ-fēn zhōng, ...

Like today in the morning about past six, he was continuously coughing for several minutes, ... (web)

- (207) 打印机眨了3分钟眼，变成桔黄灯了。

Dǎyìnjī zhǎ-le 3 fēnzhōng yǎn, biànchéng jiéhuáng dēng le.

The light on the printer was blinking for 3 minutes, then it turned yellow. (web)

⁵⁵ They are interpreted as [+bnd] because of the quantified complement.

Common features and reconsideration

It is primarily the nature of the verb that determines the interpretation of sentences with verbal *le*, as noted in Ljungqvist Arin (2003). It is also true that other elements can change the features of the final situation type as presented in Xiao and McEnery (2004).

I agree with Smith (1997) and Xiao and McEnery's (2004) statement that "the closure type indicated by *-le* depends upon situation aspect, i.e. telic situations are completed whereas atelic situations are terminated when they interact with *-le*." They say, "when a telic situation is presented perfectly as a single unanalyzable whole, its inherent final spatial endpoint is naturally included, thus resulting in a completive reading. On the other hand, an atelic situation does not have an inherent final spatial endpoint, so when is presented perfectly, only an arbitrary final temporal endpoint is included." (X&McE 2004: 97)

This can be seen from the following minimal pair:

(208) 我昨天写了三封信, (*可是没写完。)

Wǒ zuótiān xiě-le sān-fēng xìn, (* kěshì méi xiěwán.)

I wrote three letters yesterday. (*telic* → *completive reading*)

(209) 我昨天写了信, 可是没写完。⁵⁶

Wǒ zuótiān xiě-le xìn, kěshì méi xiěwán.

I did some letter writing yesterday, but didn't finish it.

(*atelic* → *terminative reading*)

(X&McE 2004: 97)

It is also true that verbal *-le* does not occur in sentences that describe stative situations, except when the situations are bounded. (S&G 2006) Recall examples (180) and (182). On the other hand, Sybesma (1997) claims that verbal *-le* may give rise to an inchoative reading when the sentence denotes a state; and then again Lin (2003) claims that it allows (but does not force) a present continuative reading when the sentence denotes an atelic event. In terms of Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 69) "a stative situation type verb (which has no boundaries in time), needs to be combined with the boundary-marker *le*, for example, in order to be positioned on the time line."

On the first sight, the above mentioned statements from Soh and Gao, Sybesma, Lin, Ljungqvist Arin and similar observations in previous researches seem to be contradictive. Just at the situation aspect level, verbal *le* is supposed to be evoking inchoative, terminative, completive and present continuative reading, or cannot be applied at all.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ When bare noun interacts with the accomplishment verb *xie* "to write", the resulting situation can naturally be taken as an activity (i.e. letter-writing). (X&McE 2004: 97) We could say this is Rule 5, as mentioned earlier. (See page 31) At this point, I would like to stress that verb *xiexin* 'write letters' is actually VO-verb with non-referential object. I agree with Soh and Gao saying that bare nouns have the characteristic being non-referential.

⁵⁷ As perfectly explained in Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 22), inchoativity and terminativity are notions at one level, whereas perfectivity is an aspectual distinction on a higher level.

In short, verbal *le* is said to contribute to the following readings:

- unbounded states: \emptyset (verbal *le* cannot be applied)
- bounded states: T (terminative reading)
- states: I (inchoative reading)
- states: present continuative reading
- atelic situations: T (terminative reading)
- telic situations: C (completive reading)

I propose the following complementary explanation, presented by Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 53) and further developed by me. All possible combinations are presented in Figure 6 on the next page, as well.

1. Verbal *-le* in interaction with dynamic and atelic situations produces terminative reading. Here are activities (example (201)), semelfactives (example (206)) and some accomplishments (example (197)). See also Figure 6, Chart E and G.
2. Verbal *-le* in interaction with dynamic and telic situations produces completive reading, where also result is reached. The most typical situation type are achievements (example (192)), but also many accomplishments get completive interpretation (example (196)). See also Figure 6, Chart F.
3. Verbal *-le* is not compatible with inherently homogeneous states (ILSs) which do not allow any potential dynamics, like *shi* ‘to be’, *xiang* ‘to be alike’, *xiangxin* ‘to believe’ (example (180)). See also Figure 6, Chart A..
4. Verbal *-le* in interaction with bounded states (SLSs) which can be shifted to activities, produces terminative reading, since they become a kind of activity. See also Figure 6, Chart C (example (182)) and Chart D (example (181)).
5. Verbal *-le* in interaction with unbounded but potentially dynamic states (SLSs) results in a inchoative reading if the focus is on change, or to present continuative reading, if the focus is on resulting state (example (183)). See also Figure 6, Chart B and Figure 5 for difference in focus.

These five points have one common principle. Verbal *-le* results in a change “dynamic-to-static” (1→0) or “static-to-dynamic” (0→1). The only condition is, a situation must allow dynamics. Basically, my claim is very similar to Ljungqvist Arin’s (2003) theory that the core feature of *le* is marking boundaries. By the bipolar distinction 1-0 and 0-1 I will try to show how this principle is applied at every level in the language.

Figure 6 below is a visual sketch of my proposal. As mentioned before, accomplishments get two interpretations. This issue requires additional consideration, which will be in focus in chapter 1.6 (ff. 114).

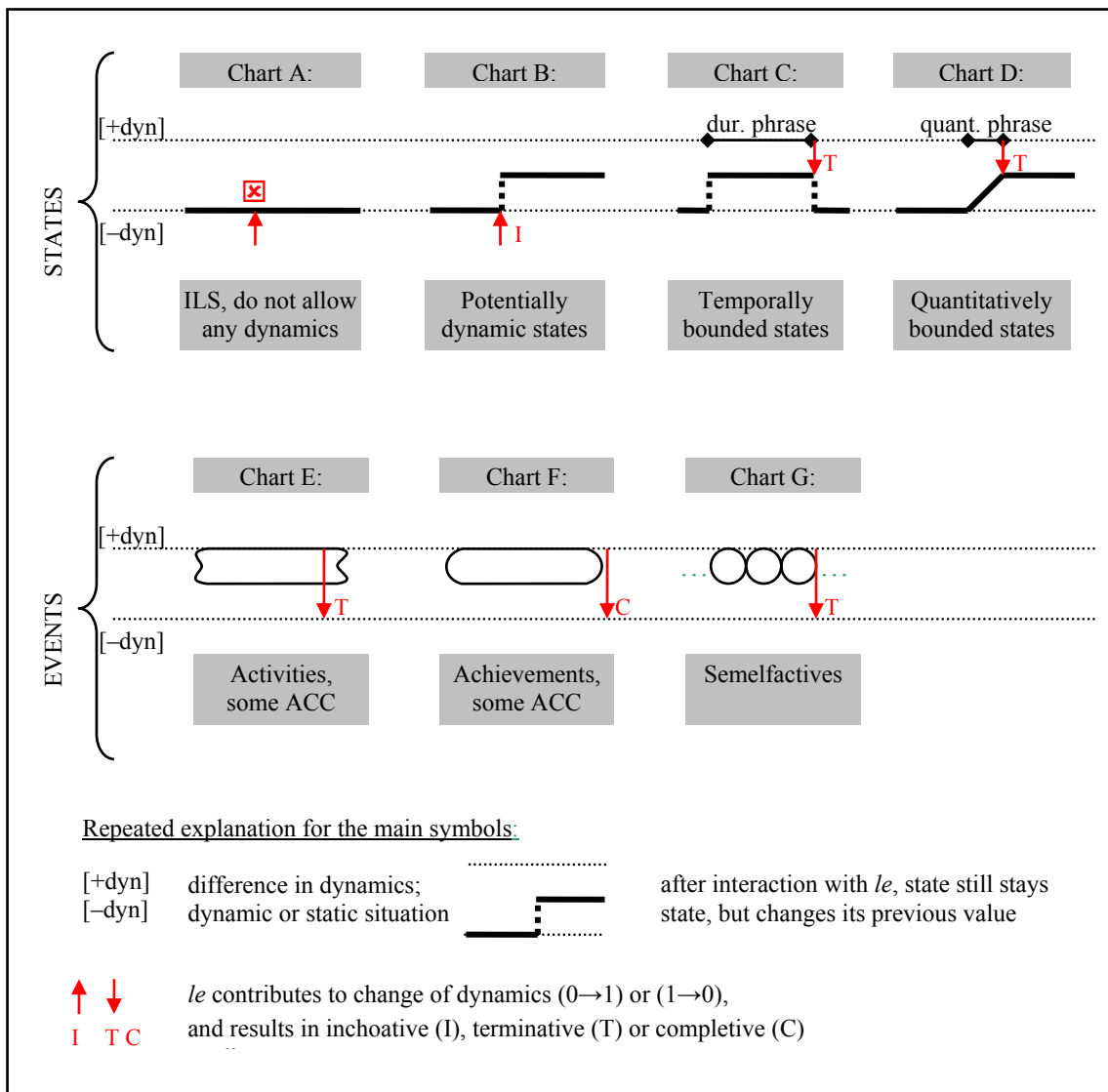


Figure 6: Verbal -le in interaction with situation types

As it can be seen from previous researches (L&T 1981, Huang & Davis 1989, Shi 1990, Ross 1995, Sybesma 1997, Kang 1999, Lin 2000, Wu 2000) and from Figure 6, the most ‘tricky’ situation type are states. I do not consider them really intriguing, since I have shown that there are four kinds of environments, where states may/may not interact with *le*. (Charts A-D)

Let us look at some examples that illustrate the distribution between them.

(210) 但 [他] 当时相信 (*了) 事件可以摆平。

Dàn [tā] dāngshí xiāngxìn (*le) shìjiàn kěyǐ bǎipíng.

But at that time he believed things will settle down peacefully.⁵⁸

(SKE)

⁵⁸ Presence or absence of lexical expressions like *dangshi* ‘at that time’ is irrelevant.

Xiangxin ‘to believe’ is inherently homogeneous state which is not even potentially dynamic. *Le* requires at least some dynamics, therefore these concepts are not compatible.⁵⁹ *Zhidao* ‘to know’ is a state, as well. But it allows the potential initial impulse, which changes the meaning from ‘not knowing’ (state 1) to ‘knowing’ (state 2).

(211) 他们知道了劳动并不容易。

Tāmen zhīdào-le láodòng bìng bù róngyì.

They realized that physical labour is not easy. (i.e. ‘came to know’) (SkE)

This kind of sentences can be interpreted as inchoative or having present continuative reading, depending on focus. Again, consider Figure 5. Here is another example for operator *le* interacting with SLSs.

(212) 他胖了。

Tā pàng-le.

He became fat. → inchoative reading (basic SLS) (X&McE 2004: 108)

The presence of *-le* results in the change-of-state meaning. In other words, *pang* ‘being fat’ allows the potential dynamics of ‘becoming fat’.⁶⁰ Presence of other lexical elements can influence the situation type and final interpretation, like in the following example.

(213) 他胖了很多。

Tā pàng-le hěn duō.

He is much fatter. → perfective⁶¹ (derived SLS) (X&McE 2004: 108)

Example (213) *pangle henduo* ‘being much fatter’ still denotes a state, which primarily has features [\pm dyn][+dur][**-bnd**][-tel][-res], but quantifying phrase *henduo* changed the value [**-bnd**] to [**+bnd**]. This is the reason why we associate this utterance with terminative reading.

Sometimes, the nature of lexical expression is language-specific. A well-known example is *si* ‘die’. This verb has the feature [-dur] and can only be used in that way. One cannot say (like in English) ‘he is dying’ or (like in Slovene) ‘(On) umira’.

⁵⁹ I am talking about postverbally used *le* here, which is clearly NOT sentence-final at the same time. Examples like *Wo xiangxin le.* ‘(Now) I believe.’ will be discussed later.

⁶⁰ More about adjectives and *le* in the Chapter 3 (ff. 129)

⁶¹ I agree with Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 70) that adding final end-point to a situation is actually terminative reading. Then, at higher level it may coincide with perfective reading.

(214) * 他在死呢。

* Tā zài sǐ ne.

Intended: He is dying

To express the intended meaning, we have to use other lexical forms. I claim this is true in many situations. Some other specific examples will be quoted in later chapters.

(215) 他快要死了。

Tā kuài yào sǐ le.

He is dying (lit.: he will die soon.)

Another example would be ILS state *xing* ‘to be named/to have a family name’ or ‘pisati se’(Slovene). It does not allow any dynamics, so to express the meaning ‘My family name was A, and now it is B’ or ‘Pisal sem se A, zdaj se pišem B’ (Slovene). This sentence has to be formulated in a different way.

(216) 当时我姓张，现在我姓李。

Dāngshí wǒ xìng Zhāng, xiànzài wǒ xìng Lǐ.

At that time my family name was Zhang, now it is Li.

1.3 Sentence-final *le* in relation to Situation Aspect

The second step will be incorporating sentence-final *le* to different situation types. I will show that the same principle can be applied to this level, as well. Stative situations get the initial impulse, whereas dynamic situations result in getting final impulse.

In the next sections, I will also show that utterances with sentence-final *le* often implicate that the situation is related to Speech Time. But before discussing this idea, I have to briefly present double-*le* constructions, as well.

States

Sentential *le* appears freely in stative sentences. Sentential *le* provides a change of state or inchoative reading in these sentences. (S&G 2006, Ljungqvist Arin 2003)

(217) 他担心他的安全了。

Tā dānxīn tāde ānquán le.

He worries about his safety, (which he did not before).

(S&G: 111)

- (218) 他是学生了。
Tā shì xuéshēng le.
He is a student now (wasn't before) (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 71)
- (219) 以前很不喜欢面包的，不知道怎么回事现在喜欢面包了。
Yǐqián hěn bù xǐhuān miànbāo de, bù zhīdào zěnmé huí shì xiànzài xǐhuān miànbāo le.
I really didn't like bread before, but - I don't know how -, now I like it. (web)
- (220) 我又喜欢水了。
Wǒ yòu xǐhuān shuǐ le.
I like water again. (i.e. first I liked it, then not, and now I like it again.) (SkE)

As shown in these examples, sentential *le* also occurs with semantically stative verbs such as *shì* 'to be' or *xǐhuān*. 'like'. Recall that "verbal *-le* is not permitted with such non change-of-state verbs." (Chappell 1988) It is interesting that in children's speech, the combination of noun+*le* can be found with the same interpretation of a newly arisen situation. (Chappell 1988)

- (221) 房子了。
Fángzi le.
(Now I've built) a house!
(context of children playing with building blocks). (Erbaugh 1978: 35)

Liu (1964:248) also points out that *le* may also be used with nouns in listing constructions.

- (222) 衣裳了、鞋了、帽子了，什么都有。
Yīshang le, xié le, màozi le, shénme dōu yǒu.
Clothes, shoes, hats — we've got everything.

Ljungqvist Arin (2003:19) noted that *le* can rarely occur postponed to nouns. To my understanding, if the whole utterance is composed only from a noun (phrase) and *le*, this *le* can be regarded as sentence-final.

- (223) 春天了。
Chūntiān le.
It is spring now. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003:19)

Activities

"With activities, unlike verbal *-le*, which indicates that the event is terminated, sentential *le* expresses the idea that the event has started and may or may not be terminated." (S&G 2006: 112) Recall that verbal constelations can express states (Chapter 6.1, p. 67), and activities on this level

actually represent a stative situation (i.e. the new knowledge/habit of ‘swimming’ or ‘drinking coffee’ in the following examples). Therefore, the effect of operator *le* is the same. It gives initial impulse to a stative situation.

(224) 他游泳了。⁶²

Tā yóuyǒng le.

He started swimming.

(225) 他喝咖啡了。

Tā hē kāfēi le.

He drinks coffee (now) (he didn’t before)

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 72)

Achievements

“When sentential *le* occurs with an achievement, it has the same effect on the meaning of the sentence as verbal *-le*, contributing a completive reading” (S&G 2006: 111). Achievements are dynamic in any way. Operator *le* contributes to one-to-zero dynamics on both positions.

(226) 我们到达山顶了。

Wǒmen dàodá shāndǐng le.

We have reached the top of the mountain.

(S&G 2006: 111)

(227) 那么漂亮的女生最后居然跳河了。

Nàme piāoliàng de nǚshēng zuìhòu jūrán tiào hé le.

Such beautiful young lady at the end suddenly jumped into the river.

(S&G 2006: 111)

Accomplishments

“In accomplishment sentences that have an explicit completive marker, or ones that contain a numeral object, there does not appear to be any difference between verbal *-le* and sentential *le*. Both give rise to the completive reading.” (S&G 2006: 112)

⁶² This is sentence-final and not post-verbal position, although *youyong* ‘to swim’ is a verb. Because it is VO verb, operator *le* can also be placed between verbal and nominal part. The form *you-le-yong* is not used very frequently in main clauses, nevertheless it can provide additional information on discourse level. Namely, examples have shown that the form *you-le-yong* is used in those environments, where the event of swimming is the peak event of some discourse unit, as well. For instance, in a passage where the president Yang’s health was in question, the speaker answered:

他说，杨主席身体也很好，他不久前随杨尚昆主席出访印尼时，杨主席在海滨游了泳。

He said that President Yang is also feeling very well. Recently, while accompanying him on his visit to Indonesia, President Yang Shangkun was swimming at the Riviera.

- (228) 他作完功课了。
Tā zuòwán gōngkè le.
He has finished his homework. (S&G 2006: 112)
- (229) 他画三个圈圈了。
Tā huà sān-gè quānquān le.
He has drawn three circles. (S&G 2006: 112)
- (230) 他去纽约了。
Tā qù Niǚyuē le.
He has gone to New York. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 71)

With other accomplishment sentences, verbal *-le* and sentential *le* do not provide the same meaning. Verbal *-le* indicates that the event is terminated (Smith 1997, Soh and Kuo 2005, Soh and Gao 2006), while sentential *le* indicates that the event has started (Soh and Gao 2004). Whether the event has terminated or not is left open. (S&G 2006: 112) Marita Ljungqvist noted that “the reason for this is that *xie na feng xin* ‘to write that letter’ is interpreted as an activity rather than an accomplishment, so the VP is ambiguous between those two readings.”⁶³

- (231) 他写那封信了。
Tā xiě nà-fēng xìn le.
He has started writing the letter. (S&G 2006: 112)

Semelfactives

Semelfactives are basically understood as events which happen instantaneously and have semantic feature [-durative]. Sentence-final *le* contributes to one-to-zero dynamics and indicates the event has finished.

- (232) 她知道这个新闻是假的，因为她眨眼了。
Tā zhīdào zhè-gè xīnwén shì jiǎde, yīnwéi tā zhǎyǎn le.
She knew this news was untrue, because she blinked. (web)

On the other hand, semelfactives can be understood as repeatable events, and thus are similar to activities. In such cases, sentence-final *le* contributes to zero-to-one dynamics and results in inchoative reading⁶⁴. Consider example (233) below.

⁶³ Via consultations. Consequently, this is the same reason for inchoative reading in the following passages, related to sentence-final *le* in similar contexts.

⁶⁴ Such sentences can be tested with insertion of expressions that denote *beginning*, e.g. *kaishi* ‘to start’. If the meaning doesn’t change, the effect of operator *le* and the chosen lexical expression are in harmony.

- (233) 结果，到了第二天早上，又有人急急地敲门了：咯咯咯咯咯...
 Jiéguǒ, dào-le dì-èr tiān zǎoshàng, yòu yǒu rén jíjí-de qiāomén le: gē gē gē gē gē ...
 As a result, on the second day in the morning,
 someone came to knock impatiently again: knock, knock, knock, knock, ... (web)

Data from the corpus has shown a tendency to include some additional lexical expressions which indicate the beginning, e.g. *kaishi* ‘start’, *you* ‘again’. To my opinion, this affinity results from the pragmatic principle, which suggests one should avoid ambiguity.

Consider also example from Huang (1988), where also durational phrase follows the verb.

- (234) 李四跳三个钟头的绳了。⁶⁵
 Lǐsì tiào sān-gè zhōngtóu de shéngle
 Lisi has jumped a rope for three hours.
 (not: *Lisi has begun jumping a rope for three hours) (Huang 1988)

I propose this can also be considered as double *le* construction, whereby the first *le* is omitted because is not necessary. For more about double *le* sentences, see next chapter.

With all situation types, the idea of reversal is present. Something that holds now, did not hold before and the opposite. For example, “in case of an accomplishment with a completive marker, sentential *le* triggers a presupposition about an immediate past event that is in opposition to the current one.” (S&G 2006: 114)

- (235) 他作完功课了。
 Tā zuòwán gōngkè le.
 He has finished his homework. (S&G 2006: 114)

Soh and Gao say that “sentential *le* marks a transition from this past event to the current event. The transition point is the end point of the event and this is what gives rise to the completive reading. The same explanation can be extended to sentences that denote an achievement or an accomplishment with a numeral object.” (S&G 2006: 114)

Common features and reconsideration

The most commonly associated with sentence-final *le* is change of state or inchoative reading. (Li and Thompson 1981, Ross 1995, Sybesma 1999, Lin 2003, Xiao and McEnery 2004: 131). Li and Thompson also describe *le*’s basic communicative function as signaling ‘Currently Relevant State’

⁶⁵ According to the opinion of native speakers, this sentence would sound more natural with both *les*.

(abbreviated as CRS), i.e. “*le* claims that a state of affairs has special current relevance with respect to some particular situation”. (L&T 1981: 240) Soh and Gao (2006) propose that sentential *le* marks a transition from this past event to the current event. Sentence-final *le* triggers a presupposition about an immediate past event or state that is in opposition to the one described by the sentence.

This is basically the same as saying that sentence-final *le* marks change of state and carries an idea of another previous state. According to Yip and Rimmington, “the prime syntactic function of *le* in all *le*-expository sentences is to indicate a reversal, i.e. a declaration that what is the case now is not what it was before.” (Y&R 2004: 327) Ljungqvist Arin proposed marking boundary as an invariant core feature of *le*, regardless to its position. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 123) etc. In other words, notions related to sentence-final *le* are *change of state*, *currently relevant state*, *transition*, *opposition*, *reversal*, *boundary*, *perfect*, i.e. relating situations to reference time, *inchoativity* in the sense of beginning a new situation etc.

From the examples above we saw that the interpretation of utterances with sentential *le* depends on situation type. Sentence-final *le* is said to contribute to the following readings:

- states: I (inchoative reading, change-of-state reading)
- activities I (inchoative reading, change-of-state reading)
- achievements C (completive reading)
- accomplishments C (completive)
- I (inchoative)
- semelfactives T (terminative)

‘Depending on situation type’ should be understood in a wider scope. Recall the chapter 6.1 on situation entities. Verb constellations express specific eventualities at the basic level of categorization, but they may have generalizing or generic interpretation. Let us look at an example, taken from Ljungqvist Arin (2003).

(236) 他看电影了。

Tā kàn diànyǐng le.

He watched movies./ He watched the movie (terminative)

He is watching movies/the movie now (inchoative) (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 73)

As Ljungqvist Arin says, verb phrase *kan dianying* can describe “1) a generic activity without boundaries ‘watch movies’ (as in regularly going to the cinema), 2) a (non-generic) activity, i.e. a situation with a potential final boundary ‘watch movies’ (a specific instance of engaging in this activity) or 3) an accomplishment ‘watch a/the movie(s) (a specific amount of movies) depending on the context.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 72)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I advocate that operator *le* has just one function (change in dynamics), however it basically results in two major interpretations (one-to-zero impulse and zero-to-one impulse). In this sense I agree with Ljungqvist Arin (2003) saying that there is only one core feature of *le*. On the other hand, I also agree with Soh and Gao (2006: 113) who claim that “when

the situation is atelic, the point that the transition makes reference to is the beginning point; and when the situation is telic, the point that the transition makes reference to is the end point.”

1. Sentence-final *le* in interaction with states, which are – seen as a whole – stative and atelic, results in an initial impulse. Also states that are incompatible with verbal *le*, are included here. Sentences with activity verb constellations are also stative and atelic, therefore result in getting initial impulse. The same holds for atelic accomplishments.
2. Achievements as a whole are dynamic and telic, so they result in a one-to-zero dynamics and finally completive reading. The same is true for telic accomplishments.

Recall Figure 6 about verbal *-le*. I claim, on the sentential level, the situation is the same. Figure 7 below gives a similar visual sketch of my proposal. Note, however, that something more has to be said about sentence-final *le*. Notions like *perfect*, *currently* relevant state, opposition to *immediate past* are of great value, as well.

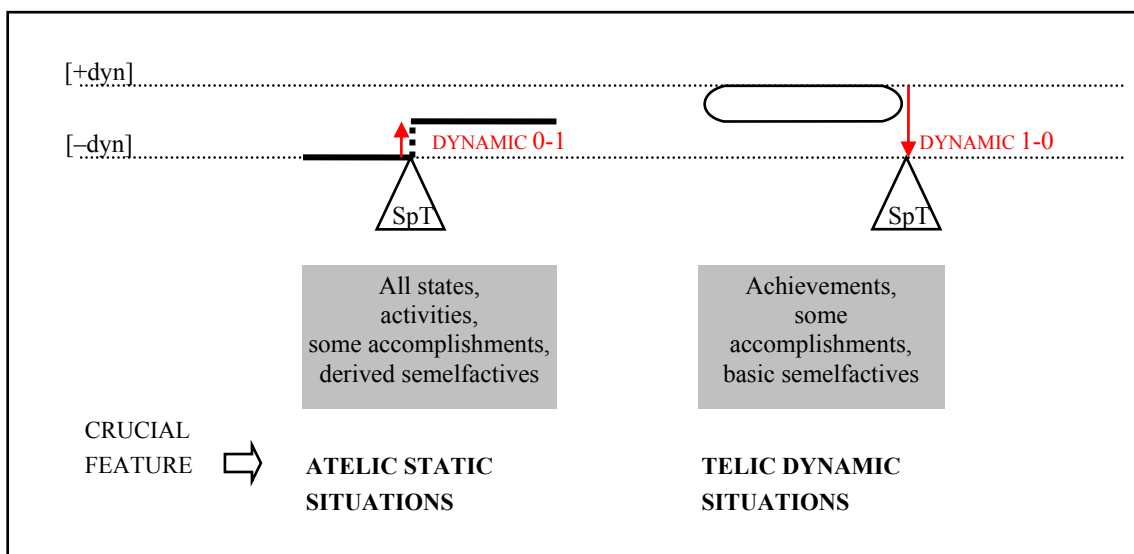


Figure 7: Sentence-final *le* in interaction with situation types

1.4 Double-*le* in relation to Situation Aspect

In the third part, I will try to show how the same principle applies to double-*le* constructions. Skeptics to one-*le*-approach might be suspicious whether two instances of the same *le* can be used in a single sentence. I claim they can, because operator *le* first modifies event and then the whole sentence, or in other words – sentential *le* scopes over verbal *-le*.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ In the following chapters I will show that there are many levels where operator *le* works.

States

Double *le* cannot appear in sentences that denote unbounded states. According to the observations, presented in Chapter 0, about how states are interacting with verbal *le*, this is rather obvious, therefore it will be refreshed just in the ‘Common features and reconsideration’ section below.

(237) * 我担心了你了。

Wǒ dānxīn-le nǐ le.

I worry LE you LE

Intended: I have worried about you.

(S&G 2006: 114)

Soh and Gao note that “sentences that denote bounded states allow double *le*, and these sentences have a completive reading.⁶⁷ The presence of double *le* does not seem to provide any additional meaning to the sentence compared to sentences with only verbal *le* or sentential *le*.” (S&G 2006: 114) I do not completely agree with this statement, because sentences with only verbal *le* (like example (182)) are entirely placed in the past, whereas sentences with double-*le* usually relate to present. On the other hand, it is true that there are big similarities in interpretation. For the time being, let us just focus on Soh and Gao’s findings, whereas my ideas will be presented in the ‘Common features and reconsideration’ section below, as well.

(238) 我担心了你两天了。

Wǒ dānxīn-le nǐ liǎng-tiān le.

I have worried about you for two days

(S&G 2006: 114)

Activities

“With sentences denoting activities, double-*le* sentences are interpreted as terminated, patterning with sentences with verbal *le*, and unlike those with sentential *le*.” (S&G 2006: 115)

(239) 他抽了烟了。

Tā chōu-le yān le.

He has smoked.

(Not ‘He has started smoking.’)

(web)

(240) 刚才出去前我们都已经洗了澡了。

Gāngcái chūqù-qíán wǒmen dōu yǐjīng xǐ-le zǎo le.

Just before going out, we already took a shower.

(web)

⁶⁷ I argue it is actually terminative reading, according to five basic features, presented in Part I.

Achievements

“With a sentence that denotes an achievement, the presence of double *le* also does not seem to provide any additional meaning to the sentence, compared to sentences with only verbal *le* or sentential *le*. The completion of the event is expressed.” (S&G 2006: 114)

(241) 我们到达了山顶了。

Wǒmen dàodá-le shāndǐng le.

We have reached the top of the mountain.

(S&G 2006: 114)

Accomplishments

“In accomplishment sentences with a completive marker or a numeral object, the presence of double *le* also indicates completion.” (S&G 2006: 115)

(242) 他作完了功课了。

Tā zuòwán-le gōngkè le.

He has finished his homework.

(S&G 2006: 115)

(243) 他画了三个圈圈了。

Tā huà-le sān-gè quānquān le.

He has drawn three circles.

(S&G 2006: 115)

“With accomplishment sentences where verbal *le* indicates termination and sentential *le* indicates the beginning of an event, sentences with double *le* give rise to a terminative reading, and not an inchoative reading.” (S&G 2006: 115)

(244) 他写了那封信了。

Tā xiě-le nà-fēng xìn le.

He has written the letter.

(Not ‘He has started writing the letter.’)

(S&G 2006: 115)

Semelfactives

Semelfactives with double *-le* produce terminative reading. With durational phrases semelfactives are understood as durative and behave like activities.

(245) 我咳嗽了两个月了，

Wǒ késòu-le liǎng-gè yuè le.

I’ve been coughing for two months now.

(web)

- (246) 老贾头就同老狗对眼睛，老贾头眨了几下眼了，老狗一下都没眨。
 Lǎo Jiǎtóu jiù tóng Lǎo Gǒu duì yǎnjīng, Lǎo Jiǎtóu zhǎ-le jǐ-xià yǎn le,
 Lǎo Gǒu yīxià dōu méi zhǎ.
 Lao Jiatou and Lao Gu were staring in each other's eyes, Lao Jiatou has already blinked
 several times, whereas Lao Gou haven't blinked even once. (web)

Common features and reconsideration

On one hand, double *le* sentences provide a completive reading to telic events (achievements, accomplishments with a completive marker or a numeral object), and a terminative reading to atelic events (activities, accomplishments without a completive marker or a numeral object and semelfactives⁶⁸). (S&G 2006: 116) On the other hand, in a double *le* construction it is the present state rather than the past event that the message focuses on. (Chu 1998: 179)

I claim this can be explained if we agree that verbal *le* is within the scope of sentence-final *le*. The interpretations of double-*le* sentences can be understood if we first take a look of how situations interact with verbal *le*, and then how this larger unit is interacting with sentential *le*. In logical terms, *le* in double-*le* sentences acts in two steps.

- Situation + verbal *-le* = Partial outcome;
- Partial outcome + sentential *le* = Final outcome

First recall, what readings are evoked by verbal *le* and double *le* according to different situation types.

Situation Type		Verbal -le	Double le
proposed understanding:		past	present state, immediate past
STATE	Unbounded [-dyn] states	(not compatible)	(not compatible)
	Unbounded [(+)dyn] states	inchoative	(syntactically impossible or termination)
	Bounded states	Termination	Termination
ACT		Termination	Termination
ACH		Completion	Completion
ACC	Single object	Termination	Termination
	explicit marker, numeral object	Completion	Completion
SEM		Termination	Termination

Table 9: Comparison of verbal *-le* and double-*le* constructions

⁶⁸ Soh and Gao (2006) do not treat semelfactives as independent group, so this part of the statement was added by me.

Except from one group within states, the double-*le* utterances seem to be equal to utterances with only verbal *le*. However, they are not completely the same. General principle which holds for all instances can be formulated in two clauses, i.e. atelic situations result in terminative reading, and telic situations result in completive reading.

Look at Table 9 in detail. **First**, unbounded states cannot even receive a ‘initial impulse’ reading. They are not grammatical with verbal *le* due to the ‘compatibility principle’, consequently, consequently, double-*le* constructions are also not expected to occur. Consider also Figure 8 (page 105), Chart A.

(247) * 我姓了李了。

* Wǒ xìng-le Lǐ le.

* I family name LE Li LE

Second, verbal *-le* can occur with potentially dynamic states, e.g. *Ta pang le*. ‘he became fat’. Basically, in such cases it is difficult to judge or distinguish verbal and sentence-final *le*.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, we cannot speak about double *le* construction. This is presented in Figure 8 (page 105), Chart B.

However, if a lexical expression for temporal span is added, e.g. *san nian* ‘three years’, the utterance can be understood in only one way.

(248) 他胖了三年了。⁷⁰

Tā pàng-le sān-nián le.

Since he became fat, it has been three years.

or: He is fat for last three years.

or: He became fat and since then three years have passed.

The state *pang* ‘to be fat’ is potentially dynamic and operator *le* gives to this state the initial impulse ‘to become fat’. Change of state is instantaneous, i.e. has feature [–durative]. On the other hand, temporal span (*san nian* ‘three years’) has feature [+durative], what is not compatible on the situation level. Another evidence for incompatibility of temporal span and instantaneous change is provided in the same utterance with only verbal *-le*. *Ta pang-le san nian* (he fat LE three years) is not acceptable, as presented in Figure 8 (page 105), Chart C.⁷¹ This is an example, confirming the ‘compatibility principle’.

⁶⁹ Some means and principles are presented in Li and Thompson (1981: 296-300), although I do not think they are necessary.

⁷⁰ Adding temporal expression is not the same as adding quantifying phrase, e.g. *san gongjin* ‘three kilograms’. Consider Figure 6. Even more obvious example would be *ta si-le san-nian le*. ‘Since he died, it has been three years’.

⁷¹ Some native speakers consider this sentence grammatical under the condition that *pang* is expressing a process and functions as activity ‘to gain weight’. Then it is understood as having feature [+dur].

Henceforth, example (248) cannot be understood as ‘he was growing fat for three years’, but has the only meaningful interpretation ‘since the change of becoming fat happened, it has been three years’.⁷² In Figure 5 (page 83) it was shown that one can focus on different parts of states. Here, focus is on the new state which lasts for three recent years.

Third, bounded states get terminative reading with verbal *-le*, as well as with double *le*. Recall example (238), repeated here for convenience. In addition, double *le* sentences carry on the idea of linking situations to Speech Time.

(249) 我担心了你两天了。

Wǒ dānxīn-le nǐ liǎng-tiān le.

I have worried about you for two days

(S&G 2006: 114)

The situation is linked to Speech Time in the sense that *worries* started two days ago and lasted for two days till now, i.e. speech time. Whether the situation is going to continue or not, cannot be concluded from this statement. Consider Figure 8, page 105, Chart D.

As seen in the previous chapter, the impact of double-*le* is basically the same as of verbal *-le*. To some speakers the presence or absence of *le* does make some difference, to other there is absolutely no difference between two versions. I propose this might be one of the reasons, why sometimes verbal *le* can be omitted without any difference in interpretation.

(250) 我学（了）三年中文了。

Wǒ xué (-le) sān-nián Zhōngwén le.

I have studied Chinese for three years.

or: I started to study Chinese in the past

and it has been three years that I’ve been doing it.

Chang (1986: 16)

Recall as well example (234), repeated here for convenience, with the note that some native speakers find the double *le* sentence more natural.

(251) 李四跳（了）三个钟头的绳了。

Lǐsì tiào sān-gè zhōngtóu de shéngle

Lisi has jumped a rope for three hours.

(Huang 1988)

As I mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 1.3, utterances with sentence-final *le* (including double-*le*) often implicate that the situation is related to Speech Time.⁷³ This can be found in conversational contexts. Actually, many previous researches made the same observation. Recall

⁷² Some native speakers rephrased this sentence as *Ta fapang le san-nian le*, using an accomplishment verb.

⁷³ This claim will be further discussed after Figure 8.

notions like *currently relevant state*, *perfect tense*, *implicit information about immediate past*, *completed action as of the presence*, etc. Nevertheless, the basic effect of operator *le* stays unchanged. It contributes to initial impulse to stative situations and final impulse to dynamic situations.

Figure 8 is showing, that operator *le* in double-*le* sentences first operates upon situations themselves, and then upon these new ‘partial units’, i.e. situations with verbal *le*. As we see, in all cases operator *le* provides an impulse for a change.

Effect of double-*le* is basically equal to verbal *-le*, with additional information about present relevance. A few more things have to be said about accomplishments, but I will return to this issue in chapter 1.6, page 114.

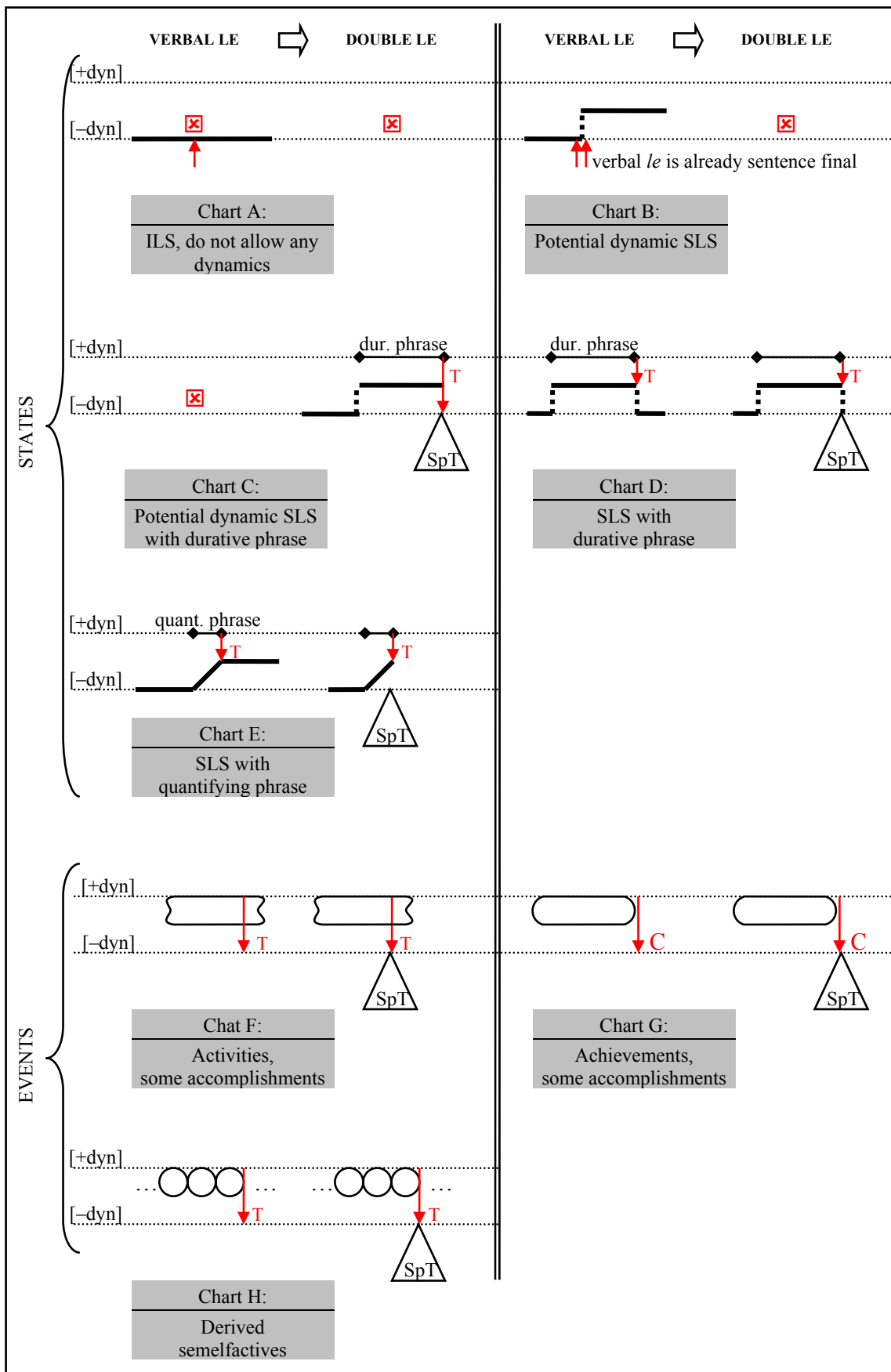


Figure 8: Double *le* in interaction with situation types

The idea of linking utterances to Speech Time is very strong. For example, sentence (234), repeated as (251) cannot be used in a past environment, as presented in (252). However, it is perfectly acceptable in explicit present situations, as in example (253).

(252) * 那一天, 李四跳 (了) 三个钟头的绳了。

* Nà yī-tiān, Lǐsì tiào sān-gè zhōngtóu de shéng le

Intended: On that day, Lisi jumped a rope for three hours.

(253) 你看吧, 李四跳 (了) 三个钟头的绳了。

Nǐ kàn ba, Lǐsì tiào sān-gè zhōngtóu de shéng le

Look at that, Lisi has been jumping a rope for three hours (now).

Many native speakers consider double-*le* sentences as strictly related to Speech Time, whereas some of them allow the possibility to use this structure for completely past contexts, as well. However, this is possible just with limited temporal expressions. But first, consider Figure 9 with some special contexts.

Only in those cases, where Reference Time is oriented and has a specific final endpoint, sentence-final *le* can be anchored to it, as in the sentence (254):

(254) 到 11 点为止, 李四 (已经) 跳了三个钟头的绳了。

Dào 11 diǎn wéi zhǐ, Lǐsì (yǐjīng) tiào-le sān-gè zhōngtóu de shéng le.

Till eleven, Lisi jumped a rope for three hours.

But even here, some native speakers would prefer another way to express the same idea.

(255) 李四跳了三个钟头的绳, 一直跳到 11 点。

Lǐsì tiào-le sān-gè zhōngtóu de shéng, yìzhí tiào dào 11 diǎn.

Lisi was jumping for three hours, right up to eleven.

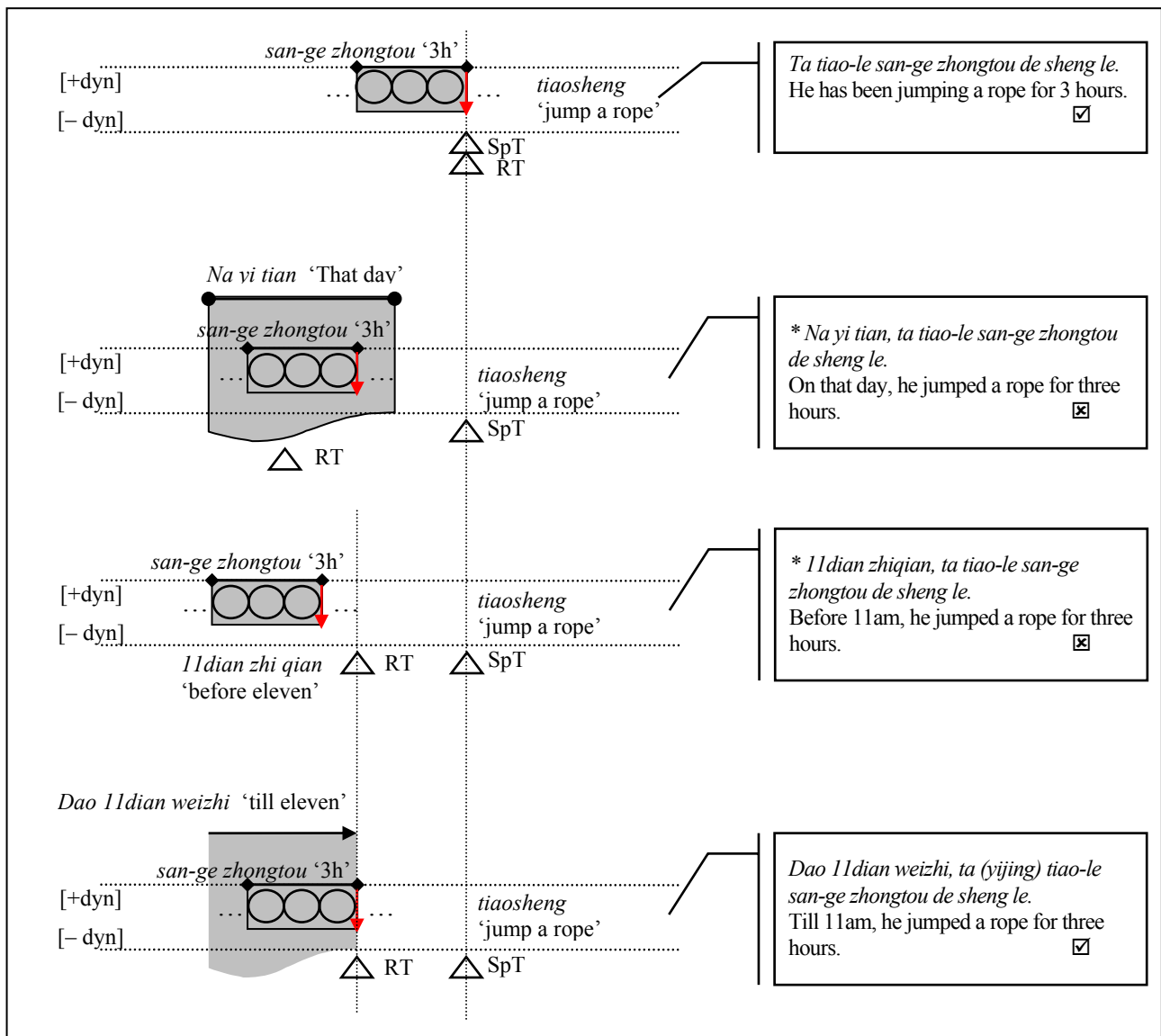


Figure 9: Double-le in relation to Reference Time

As I mentioned before, utterances with sentence-final *le* often implicate that the situation is related to Speech Time. I assume that this fact is a logical consequence of the principle that Speech Time by default equals Reference Time, supposing that no other lexical means indicate the opposite. (Recall Chapter 4 and Figure 1.) In some special context with the appropriate RT, sentence-final *le* then relates a content of the double-le sentence to the specified RT.

1.5 Operator *le* in relation to Situation Aspect (unified view)

In these sub-chapters, I have shown several meanings associated with operator *le* on the level of situation aspect. If focusing on events (situations), operator *le* is placed on the post-verbal position. Its basic function is change in dynamics, regardless to the scope it is operating upon. Stative

situations get an impulse toward dynamics, whereas dynamic situations in interaction with *le* result in change towards stative part.

Regarding states, I have shown that potentially dynamic states or bounded states are compatible with operator *le*, whereas strictly homogeneous states cannot appear together with *le*. I propose, that this fact is actually a natural consequence of the **principle of compatibility** (my second assumption), according to which ‘only elements with compatible features produce acceptable sentences’. Since operator *le* contributes to change in dynamics, it requires environments that **do** allow dynamics.

Although states are stative, SLSs allow the possibility to be changed, and operator *le* is the element, which contributes to this change. In addition, bounded states are temporarily ‘shifted’ to activities, which makes them dynamic. On the other hand, ILSs do not presuppose any changes, therefore they are not compatible with operator *le*. Events are not questionable at all, because they inherently include the notion of dynamics.

Which meanings are labeled to such changes in dynamics, depends on the semantic value of situation. It was shown theoretically in Part I and demonstrated in present chapter that verb alone is not enough to consider situation aspect, but whole verb phrases should be taken under consideration. This fact has been already born out in previous researches.

To be specific, depending on lexical value of situation, dynamics evoked by operator *le* can result in inchoative, terminative or completive reading of events and states. One might ask, if operator *le* evokes only change in dynamics, how come *two inputs* (dynamic vs. static) create *three outputs* (inchoative, terminative and completive). I propose dynamic situations result in two different reading according to telicity value of events. In this point, I follow Smith (1997) and Xiao and McEnery’s (2004).

When the whole sentence is in focus, then operator *le* is placed on the sentence-final position. Its basic function stays unchanged, i.e. it contributes to change in dynamics. But since its scope is different, the resulting readings are also different. Operator *le* on the sentence-final position links utterances to speech time and contributes to change-of-state meaning for stative situations and perfect reading for dynamic situations. Double *le* is a fusion of both levels and as such in its basic meaning often coincident with verbal *le*, but is adding additional information about linking situations to speech time.

Before taking a closer look at accomplishments, consider again the table with distinctive features, presented in Xiao and McEnery (2004).

V-class		[±dyn]	[±dur]	[±bnd]	[±tel]	[±res]	example
ILS	basic	–	+	–	–	–	<i>ai Mali</i> ‘to love Mary’
	derived	–(+)	+	+	–	–	<i>ai Mali ai ta san-nian</i> ‘to love Mary for three years’
SLS	basic	±	+	–	–	–	<i>gao</i> ‘be tall’
	derived	±	+	+	–	–	<i>gao-le san-gongfen</i> ‘to grow up for 3 cm’
ACT	basic	+	+	–	–	–	<i>tui yi-liang che</i> ‘to push one chart’
	derived	+	+	±	–	–	<i>tui che tui yi-ge xiaoshi</i> ‘to push chart for 1 hour’ <i>xie lunwen xie yi-ge xiaoshi</i> ‘to write thesis for 1 hour’
ACC	some O	+	+	+	–	–	<i>chi na-tiao yu</i> ‘to eat that fish’ <i>xie yi-feng xin</i> ‘to write a letter’
	some O	+	+	+	+	–	<i>chi yi-tiao yu</i> ‘to eat one fish’ <i>xie yi-ge hanz</i> ‘write one character’
ACH	basic	+	–	+	+	+	<i>ba chabei da-po</i> ‘break that cup’
	derived	+	+	+	+	+	<i>zhuyi-dao wenzhang zhong de san-chu cuowu</i> ‘to note three mistakes in the paper’
SEM	basic	+	–	±	–	–	<i>shan yi-xia</i> ‘sparkle a bit’
	derived	+	+	±	–	–	<i>kesou 5 fenzhong</i> ‘to cough for 5 minutes’

Table 10: Distinctive features of situation types

I added one row to Xiao and McEnery’s table, namely a subcategory to accomplishments. The fact is that some accomplishments result in terminative and some in completive readings. The other change regards the dynamics value of derived state-level states. I agree SLS are stative, but they allow potential dynamics, symbolized as (+). If they didn’t, they could not be bounded.

Consider this table again in the scope of my proposal. Verbal *-le* can be easily combined with events. They all have one common characteristics, i.e. they have feature [+dynamic]. States have caused the most problems because of their heterogeneous nature. Operator *le* is not compatible with basic individual level states, but can appear with derived individual level states and stage level states. All these states allow at least some dynamics, for example the ability of expressing change of state or to be bounded for some specific time⁷⁴ or quantity, in other words, they can be ‘shifted’ to activities for a period of time. Boundedness value is then the distinguishing factor between inchoative and terminative reading.

⁷⁴ Recall also Xiao and McEnery’s (2004) Rule 7: ‘Core[–bnd] + durational phrase ⇒ Clause[+bnd]’ (page 31) For the same reason, Li and Thompson’s (1981: 185-186) statement that suffix *le* is used with bounded events, whereas boundedness is indicated by quantification of event, more specifically by the amount of time (among other means), is a very valuable and useful hint, when to use verbal *le*.

As we see, there is only a small group of situations that are not compatible with operator *le*. (cf. page 89). This fact was also observed by Ljungqvist Arin, who has stated in her thesis that “verbal *le* does not occur with a limited number of verbs describing states such as *shi* ‘be’ and *xiang* ‘resemble’”. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 68)

I will sum up this part with the following conclusion: Operator *le* is due to its nature compatible with situations which allow at least some dynamics.

It has been stated in the previous researches that telicity is the key factor to distinguish terminative and completive interpretation. I perfectly agree with this idea and will further develop it in the next chapters. We saw that – after interaction with operator *le* in post-verbal position – achievements and some accomplishments get completive reading, whereas all other events result in terminative reading. From Table 10 it can be seen that only these three groups have value [+telic]. I suggest operator *le* provides only change in dynamics (one-to-zero), whereas the semantic properties of predicate further specify, which meaning will be finally realized. It is not operator *le* that carries terminative or completive meaning, but rather its interaction with different situations.

The same principle can be observed on the next, sentential level. To explain this, I will borrow a minimal pair from Ljungqvist Arin (2003), first mentioned as (21) and (22), but repeated here for convenience.

- (256) * 他常常看了电影。
* Tā chángcháng kàn-le diànyǐng.
* He often watched movies
* He often watches movies (Ljungqvist Arin 2003:69)

- (257) 他常常看电影了。
* Tā chángcháng kàn diànyǐng le.
He often watches movies now. /
He has started to go to the movies often. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003:69)

Ljungqvist Arin proposed the following explanation for such limitations. “The scope of sentence-final *le* — i.e. the unit to which a boundary is added — is the whole sentence and not only the VP, the reason why the habitual reading of the situation described by the proposition “he often watches movies” can be kept intact is clear. The situation has no natural boundaries of its own, it describes a habitual situation and is similar to a state. The result is an inchoative reading. This shows that when *le* occurs directly after the verb, its scope is normally the verb or VP and the durational adverbs. However, when it occurs sentence-finally, the scope can be larger than that and include other components in the whole sentence, such as expressions denoting habituality and even other grammatical markers.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003:69)

In general, I agree with such explanation, but propose a slightly different approach. Operator *le* on the postverbal position focuses on situations, i.e. events and states. As mentioned above, because of

its dynamic nature it requires the corresponding dynamic situation. In the pair above, *kan dianying* ‘to watch movies’ is dynamic and is therefore compatible with operator *le*. Even though an adverb like *yijing* ‘already’ or *turan* ‘suddenly’ further specifies the focus on the situation, such event and operator *le* are still compatible, since all elements contribute to the notion of change. *Yijing* ‘already’ suggests that situation realized before expectations, or in Reichenbach’s terms, SitT < RT.⁷⁵ Similarly, *turan* ‘suddenly’ explicitly indicates some change and contributes to focus on the change itself. Consider also Ljungqvist Arin’s (2003) examples with *si* ‘die’.

(258) 他已经死了。
 Tā yǐjīng sǐ le.
 He is already dead. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 23)

(259) 他突然死了。
 Tā tūrán sǐ le.
 He suddenly died. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 23)

Ljungqvist Arin explains the sentence with *yijing* ‘already’ gets terminative and perfect reading, whereas sentence with *turan* ‘suddenly’ results in terminative and perfective reading. Difference arises because of focus. Consider the figure below:

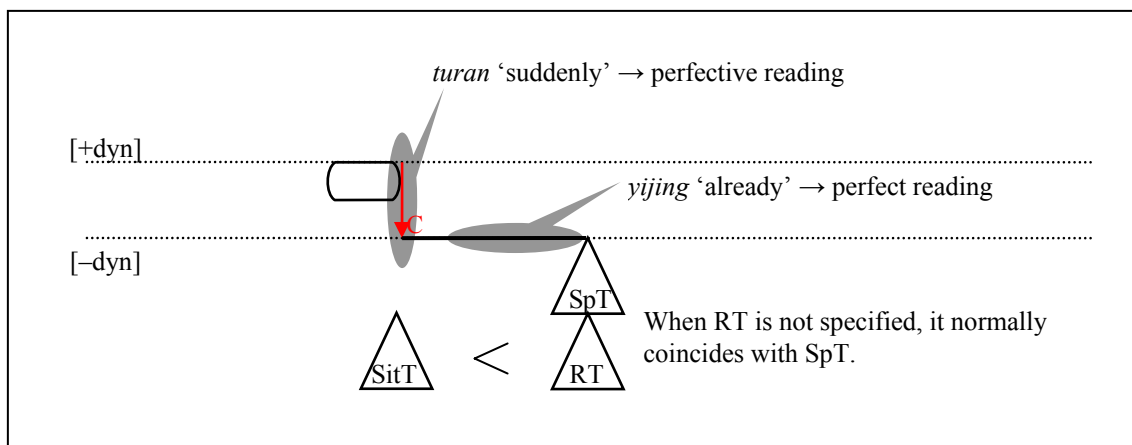


Figure 10: Sentence *Ta yijing si le* ‘He is already dead’ vs. *Ta turan si le* ‘He suddenly died’

On the other hand, adverbs like *changchang* ‘frequently’ express repetition, and such situations are not compatible with operator *le* on this level. If we are focused on actual situations, then the notion of ‘repeating’ (contributed by *changchang* ‘frequently’) and the notion of ‘change’ (contributed by *le*) are conflicting and are not compatible with each other. According to my ‘principle of compatibility’, this is the reason, why sentences with *changchang* ‘frequently’ cannot take verbal *le*. I suggest, that adverbs belong to the scope of verbal *le*, but their semantic value has to include

⁷⁵ Recall chapter on Reichenbach’s Three Times, page 45.

features, which are compatible with the notion of change. Consider as well the next chapter on viewpoint aspect.

In the chapter 6.1 on situation entities it was presented that verb constellations which express specific eventualities at the basic level may have the generalizing interpretation in the wider scope. In Chinese, it is typical for the generalizing (or habitual) clauses that they are compatible with the habitual adverbials like *zong* ‘always’, *changchang* ‘often’, *mei tian* ‘every day’ (recall page 67)

If situation *changchang kan dianying* ‘often watch movies’ is considered as specific entity, it is not compatible with operator *le* (which would otherwise be used on the postverbal position). However, if this verb constellation is understood as expressing some habit, then operator *le* is placed on the sentence-final position and gives to this habit – which is semantically stative – a ‘zero-to-one’ impulse. Finally, such sentence would be understood as inchoative, denoting change-of-state or carrying the idea that someone did not have the habit of ‘frequently watching movies before’, but it has now.

So, if a sentence is considered as a stative unit, we then have two further possibilities. It might allow potential dynamics or not. Compare the following examples.

(260) 大鱼吃小鱼。

Dà yú chī xiǎo yú.

Big fish eat small fish.

(261) 黑魔鬼幼时只是靠鼻子觅食，最好喂红虫，
饲料并不喜欢，长大后就会吃小鱼了。

Hēi mó guǐ yòu shí zhī shì kào bí zi mì shí, zuì hǎo wèi hóng chóng,

sì liào bìng bù xǐ huān, zhǎng dà hòu jiù huì chī xiǎo yú le.

Young Black devil fish rely only on their sense of smell to get food. They like red worms most, but cannot stand fish food at all. Adult Black devil can also eat small fish. (web)

Sentence (260) is expressing a general truth, which does not presuppose any changes. Therefore, operator *le* is not expected to occur in such utterances. On the other hand, *eating fish* in example (261) is also stative, but allows potential dynamics, i.e. whereas young Black devils cannot eat fish, they do start eating small fish when they grow up. This actually corresponds to Chang’s (1986) statement, that “in general, *le* is not used in cases where factual statements are asserted, specifically when its presence would result in an undesirable ‘change of state’ reading.” (Chang 1986: 146)

All the other states that do allow potential dynamics, can be combined with sentence-final *le* what results in dynamics zero-to-one and is realized as change-of-state in comparison with the previous situation. Consider Yip and Rimmington’s (2004) statement, that sentence-final *le* can be put at the end of virtually any statement. (Y&R 2004: 315) and Chan’s observation, that “verbs which normally denote a process can also be used to depict a new habitual situation when marked by sentence-final *le*.” (Chan 1980: 53)

After considering all possible interactions between situation types and operator *le*, we saw that different *inputs* can result in the same *output*; and other way round, very similar *inputs* can result in different *outputs*. Compare Figure 6 (page 90), Figure 7 (page 98), and Figure 8 (page 105)

As such, it is easy to agree with Ljungqvist Arin that “both verbal and sentence-final *le* can produce an inchoative reading of a stative predicate or sentence describing a state.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 68)

(262) 现在他有了朋友。

Xiànzài tā yǒu-le péngyǒu.

He has friends now

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 70)

(263) 现在他有朋友了。

Xiànzài tā yǒu péngyǒu le.

He has friends now

And, it also became clear why very similar structures result in different interpretations.

(264) 我在那里住了两个月了。

Wǒ zài nàlǐ zhù-le liǎng-ge yuè le.

I've lived there for two months (now).

(L&T 1981: 270)

→ I came to that place two months ago, and in these two months (up to now) I've been living there. It is implied that I will keep living there from now on, but actually there is no such guarantee.

(265) 香港老板卷着我们的钱逃走了三天了。

Xiānggǎng lǎobǎn juǎn-zhe wǒmen de qián táo zǒu-le sāntiān le.

The proprietor from Hong Kong has run away with our money for three days

→ Three days ago, the proprietor ran away with our money. Since he is gone, three days have passed till now.

Operator *le* on the sentence-final position may provide many other implications, arising from the change in dynamics on other levels. I will return to this point in the chapter 1.2 (p. 207), where I will touch modality, relevance, discourse marking etc. as well.

In the next chapter I will try to demonstrate diverse nature of accomplishments. After that, the second part of aspect will follow, i.e. viewpoint aspect.

Synthesis 15: Operator *le* in relation to Situation Aspect (Chap. 1-1.5)

Situation aspect level:

1. Stative, unbounded, not even potentially dynamic situations (ILS)
→ incompatible with *le*
2. Stative, unbounded, but potentially dynamic situations: (basic SLS)
→ zero-to-one dynamics (0→1)
= inchoative reading
3. stative, bounded and potentially dynamic situations (derived SLS)
→ one-to-zero (1→0) dynamics
= terminative reading
4. dynamic situations (events)
→ one-to-zero (1→0) dynamics
= terminative/completive reading

Termination or completion:

[+tel] situations → completive reading

[-tel] situations → terminative reading

Tendencies for operator *le*:

[+tel] or [+bnd] situation → strong tendency for *-le* to occur ⇔ ACC & ACH

Recall also:

→ Figure 6: Verbal *-le* in interaction with situation types

→ Figure 7: Sentence-final *le* in interaction with situation types

→ Figure 8: Double *le* in interaction with situation types

1.6 Diversity within accomplishments

In, this subchapter accomplishments are discussed in more detail, because some of the sentences with *le* get terminative reading, while the others get completive reading. Based on Soh and Kuo's (2005) ideas, I propose that the nature of object noun phrase can change the value of telicity of the whole sentence, which makes accomplishments a diverse group. Telic verbs with bounded object NP result in telic core, whereas potentially bounded and unbounded objects lead to atelic core. The first group of accomplishments with *le* is therefore understood as 'completed', while the later results in terminative reading. Lexical means that explicitly indicate bounded object NPs are numeral phrases, whereas bare nouns and demonstrative phrases just 'potentially' bound the object NPs.

The role of *le* stays unchanged, i.e. it contributes to the one-to-zero change in all accomplishments.

Accomplishments are considered as events with the feature [+telic]. A standard claim in the literature on telicity (or delimitation) is that a quantized NP as the direct object of certain classes of verbs delimits the expression it appears in.⁷⁶ Tenny (1994: 10-18) refers to verbs that receive a delimited reading with a quantized direct object as being “measured out” by the quantized direct object. In the present paper, such verbs are written as having the feature [+tel].

Previously, on page 84, I claimed the situation gets more complicated when it comes to accomplishments. I claim the reason is hidden just in telicity. Consider the following examples:

(266) 他吃了两个蛋糕，（*可是没吃完）。

Tā chī-le liǎng-gè dàngāo, (* kěshì méi chī-wán).

He ate two cakes, (but he did not finish them).

(S&K 2005)

(267) 他吃了那个蛋糕，可是没吃完。

Tā chī-le nà-gè dàngāo, kěshì méi chī-wán.

He started eating that cake, but he did not finish eating it.

(S&K 2005)

Sentence (266) has completive reading, whereas sentence (267) results in terminative reading. I believe Soh and Kuo (2005) managed to explain these phenomena with the notion of boundedness. Recall chapter 1.3.1 on boundedness in noun phrases, page 38.

Accomplishments are structurally composed of a verb and its object noun phrase. In the ‘**Verb + NP**’ structure, there are generally two types of NPs: the bare NP and the quantified NP. Ma (2006: 157) noted that the quantified NP has a keener need for *le* than the bare NP, other conditions being equal. As we will see, this tendency is to be expected.

Soh and Gao assume that **numeral object** has features [+b, ±i]. They claim “when the object is [+b] (e.g., *san ben shu* ‘three books’), the perfective accomplishment event must be interpreted as completed.” (S&K 2005)

I understand such phenomena in the following way. Objects which have value [+b]⁷⁷ contribute to telicity of situations, therefore sentences like (266) get value [+telic] and are understood as **completed**.

It is also worth noting that “an accomplishment can be understood in terms of the source-path-goal schema in which the goal is achieved after traveling the path”. (Zhang (1995) in Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 2) The example below in showing this point:

⁷⁶ There are several discussions whether quantized direct objects contribute to telicity or not. For different approaches see Krifka (1989), Verkuyl (1993), Tenny (1994), Jackendoff (1996), Smollett (2004), among many others.

⁷⁷ I keep the symbol [+b] for boundedness in noun phrases, whereas symbol [+bnd] refers to situations

(268) 他推了两辆车。

Tā tuī-le liǎng-liàng chē.

He pushed two carts/cars.

According to Zhang (1995) and Ljungqvist Arin (2003), this sentence represents an activity, not an accomplishment, because object NP does not have ‘path reading’. Even if the action of *pushing a cart* is interrupted, it can still be said of the subject that he/she *has pushed a cart*. Therefore, it has terminative reading.

The default interpretation is (probably) activity reading. However, it is interesting that to some native speakers this utterance can only have completive reading, because they understand it as pushing two *cars* and not *carts*. The only relevant interpretation is ‘to push one car first, and then push the other (i.e. one is not strong and big enough to push two cars at the same time)’. The principle of relevance finally decides which reading will be applied. I perfectly agree with Ljungqvist Arin (2003) that relevance is an important notion in interpreting utterances.

Two possible interpretations of the same utterance only further confirm that the idea of ‘source-path-goal’ should not be neglected, on the contrary, perceiving situation as developing or traveling toward a goal carries the notion of telicity, whereas perceiving it as a bare unit (although quantified) does not.⁷⁸

Object NP in sentence (267) is specified with demonstrative phrase, which is, according to Soh and Kuo (2005) only potentially bounded. To my understanding, potential bounded objects with value [\pm b] do not fully contribute to telicity of the situation, since their ‘boundary’ is floatable, so the situation has value [-telic].

However, also the value of boundedness in demonstrative phrases can be changed with additional means. If such object noun phrase is placed before verb with the coverb *ba*, sentence results in completive reading, as in the example below: (EC, Tian 2006: 266)

(269) 他把那个蛋糕吃了。

Tā bǎ nà-ge dàngāo chī-le.

He has finished up that cake.

(Tian 2006: 266)

It was noted in literature that sometimes a *ba*-sentence contains only a simple main verb and operator *le*. It is said that in such cases the meaning of *le* is similar to the resultative complements *wan* ‘to complete’, *hao* ‘to be satisfactory’, *zou* ‘to be away’ and *diao* ‘to get rid of’. (EC) Therefore, *le* is supposed to bare the original meaning of *liao* ‘to complete’. Example for this are sentences like (269) or

⁷⁸ See also later chapters, where I show why only a path-VP may contribute to a perfect-of-persistent-situation reading of a sentence, as noted by Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 94)

(270) 他把酒喝了。

Tā bǎ jiǔ hē le.

He has finished up the wine.

The full form of the above sentence would be:

(271) 他把酒喝完了。 or: 他把酒喝掉了。

Tā bǎ jiǔ hēwán le. or: Tā bǎ jiǔ hēdiào le.

He has finished up the wine.

Soh and Kuo (2005) also noted that numeral one is an element with double behavior. When *yi* ‘a/one’ is interpreted as a numeral ‘one’, the noun phrase is [+b, ±i], and the resulting reading is completive. On the other hand, when *yi* is interpreted as an indefinite determiner ‘a’, the noun phrase is [±b, ±i], what results in terminative reading. Object NP’s with numeral *yi* ‘a/one’ can therefore follow Rule 4a or Rule 4b. Here is another example:

(272) 他吃了一个蛋糕。

Tā chī-le yī-gè dàngāo.

He ate a cake, (but he did not finish it).

He ate one cake, (and he finished it).

There are some other things that affect reading of accomplishments, say Soh and Kuo (2005). Compare sentence (272) with (273).

(273) 他做了一个蛋糕，（*可是没做好）。

Tā zuò-le yī -gè dàngāo, (* kěshì méi zuò-hǎo).

He baked one cake, (but he did not finish it).

(S&K 2005)

Zuo ‘make’ is a verb of creation. “These accomplishment situations involve certain types of created objects such as *yi ge dangao* ‘a cake’ as an object of *zuo* ‘bake’, and *yi-jian fangzi* ‘a house’ or *yi zuo qiao* ‘a bridge’ as an object of *zao* ‘build’. It is contradictory to conjoin a perfective accomplishment sentence involving these created objects with an assertion that the event is not complete.” (S&K 2005) “No such contradiction is found with other objects of creation, such as *yi-feng xin* ‘a letter’ as an object of *xie* ‘write’, and *yi-fu hua* ‘a picture’ as an object of *hua* ‘draw’.” Other examples include *feng yi-jian yifu* ‘sew a dress/shirt’ and *ke yi-ge renxiang* ‘carve a portrait.’ (S&K 2005)

(274) 他画了一幅画，可是没画完。

Tā huà-le yī-fú huà, kě shì méi huà wán

He drew a picture, but he didn’t finish it.

(S&K 2005)

Soh and Kuo say that “the same verb of creation may or may not require that the event be completed, depending on the choice of the object. There is a contrast between the created object *yi-fu hua* ‘a picture’ and *yi-ge quan-quan* ‘a circle’. The same contrast is found between the created object *yi-feng xin* ‘a letter’ and *yi-ge zi* ‘a character’.” (S&K 2005)

(275) 他写了一封信，可是没写完。

Tā xiě-le yī-fēng xìn, kěshì méi xiě-wán.

He wrote a letter, but he didn’t finish it.

(S&K 2005)

(276) 他写了一个字，（*可是没写完）。

Tā xiě-le yī-ge zì, (* kěshì méi xiě-wán).

He wrote a character, (* but he didn’t finish it.)

(S&K 2005)

There are two classes of created objects. In one class, the created object cannot be considered the relevant object until the process of creation has reached its inherent end point. Soh and Kuo (2005) call this class of created objects No Partial Object (NPO). Examples include *yi-jian fangzi* ‘a house’ in a building event, *yi-ge dangao* ‘a cake’ in a baking event, *yi-ge quan-quan* ‘a circle’ and *yi-ge zi* ‘a word’ in a writing event. (S&K 2005)

In another class of created objects, the object can be considered the relevant objects before the inherent end point of the event is reached. Soh and Kuo (2005) call this class of created objects Allows Partial Object (APO). Examples include *yi-feng xin* ‘a letter’ in a writing event, *yi-fu hua* ‘a picture’ in a drawing event. In these creation events, a partial object that qualifies as the relevant object exists before the creation event reaches its inherent end point. (S&K 2005)

“When the sentence contains a creation verb with an NPO object, the contrast between a demonstrative object and a numeral object can not be detected. This is because the event with NPO must reach the inherent end point regardless of the form of the object.” (S&K 2005)

(277) # 他做了 a) 两个蛋糕 b) 一个蛋糕 c) 那个蛋糕，可是没做好。

Tā zuò-le a) liǎng-gè dàngāo b) yī-gè dàngāo c) nà-gè dàngāo, kěshì méi zuòhǎo.

He baked two cakes/a (one) cake/that cake, but he did not finish them/it.

(S&K 2005)

“When the sentence contains a creation verb with an APO object, the contrast between a numeral and a demonstrative object surfaces.” (S&K 2005) Consider the following examples:

(278) 他画了 a) 两幅画 b) 那幅画，可是没画完。

Tā huà-le a) #liǎng-fú huà, b) nà fú huà, kě shì méi huà wán.

He drew two pictures/that picture, but he didn’t finish them/it.

(S&K 2005)

(279) 他画了一幅画，可是没画完。

Tā huà-le yī-fú huà, kěshì méi huà-wán.

He drew #one picture/a picture, but he didn’t finish it.

(S&K 2005)

They claim, with the NPO class, *le* indicates the completion of the event to the point where the object is created. With the APO class, *le* indicates the completion of the event to the point where a partial object is created. (S&K 2005) I propose, seen as a whole, NPOs have pure [+b] feature, whereas APOs carry just [\pm b] value. Soh and Kuo (2005) already concluded that NPO class of created objects has a clear point in which one considers the object created, whereas with the APO class these limits are blurred. They suggest that this is related to our knowledge of when a particular object of creation is considered created. I also suggest that the principle of relevance can override such limits. For example, if *writing a character* referred to a freshman who just started to learn Chinese and has difficulties with the Chinese script, also terminative reading of sentence (276) would become acceptable. Again, if *making a circle* referred to some night activities where people make huge circles on the fields to evoke a debate whether aliens came, then this kind of circle can stay unfinished. Such sentence would allow terminative reading.

These findings of Soh and Kuo (2005) can provide a missing link, why some accomplishments get terminative reading, whereas some of them result in completive reading. For the sake of convenience, I will repeat the examples from this last chapter in the table below.

		bare [-b] ⁷⁹	demo [\pm b]	Num [+b]
unaffected object	他买了.....书。 He buy LE ... book	T	C (NPO)	C
affected object	他吃了.....蛋糕。 He eat LE ... cake.	T	T	C
	他做了.....蛋糕 He make LE ... cake	T	C	C
	他画了.....画。 He paint LE ... picture	T	T (APO)	C
	他写了.....字。 He write LE ... character	T	C (NPO)	C
unaffected object	他推了.....车。 ⁸⁰ He push LE ... car(t).	T	T	T (no path) C (path)

Table 11: Terminative and completive reading of accomplishments

So, telic verbs with [+b] object NP result in telic core, whereas potentially bounded ([\pm b]) and unbounded ([-b]) objects lead to atelic core. It was also mentioned in Sybesma (1997: 253) that the demonstrative object behaves like a bare noun phrase, which is potentially mass. As mentioned also by Soh and Kuo, “it is not contradictory to conjoin a perfective accomplishment sentence with a bare noun phrase object and an assertion that the event is not complete.” (S&K 2005)

⁷⁹ This group can be understood as representing activities.

⁸⁰ The expression *John pushed the cart* has actually “non-measuring-out” direct object. As Jackendoff (1996: 309) points out, it is the location of the cart that measures out the event here, and not the cart itself. So, this is an example of activity, not accomplishment. But because of the similarity with other examples, I included it in the table. On the other hand, if object *cars* is interpreted as path-reading, then situation becomes telic.

In the manner of Xiao and McEnery's definitions, I propose the two 'sub-rules' to rule 5 (page 31). Despite the fact that countability and boundedness of object NPs seem to coincide, I follow Soh and Kuo's two-component approach, presented in the Chapter 1.3.1, p. 38.

Original rule from Xiao and McEnery (2004: 64)

Rule 5: NP + Verb[+telic] + NP[+/-count] ⇒ Core[+/-telic]

Modified rule with stress on boundedness value of object NPs, not countability (my proposal)

Rule 5a: NP + Verb[+telic] + NP[+b] ⇒ Core[+telic] (Num NP)

Rule 5b: NP + Verb[+telic] + NP[-/±b] ⇒ Core[-telic] (bare nouns, Demo NP)

Figure 11: Two additional rules at core level (my proposal)

To stress again, whether and object is considered NPO or APO depends on relevance, as well. From here on, principle stays unchanged. NPOs contribute to completive reading, whereas APOs contribute to terminative reading of the sentences with operator *le*.

Let us return to Ma's observation about co-occurrence of bare noun objects and operator *le*. She noted that the quantified NPs have a keener need for *le* than the bare NPs. (Ma 2006: 157) On the basis of present discussion, I propose the following explanation. Bare object NPs have value [-b], which results in activity or accomplishment reading. In both cases, such utterances get terminative reading if interacting with operator *le*.

It is actually true, that there is often⁸¹ something strange and "unfinished" about a sentence containing *-le* and a simple unquantified direct object noun. Thus, by themselves, sentences seem incomplete and odd. Li and Thompson propose the following explanation: "a simple unquantified direct object is usually indefinite and even nonreferential, and normally a simple verb phrase with such a direct object is *not* bounded." (L&T 1981: 200)

(280) ? 我理了发。

Wǒ lǐ-le fā.

I had a haircut.

(L&T 1981: 200)

(281) ? 我喝了茶。

Wǒ hē-le chá.

I drank tea.

(L&T 1981: 200)

⁸¹ On the other hand, there are not so few examples with this kind of structure. See discussion in chapter 6.2.2, (p. 167) and specially in chapter 8 (p. 186 ff.)

On the other hand, object NPs with numeral phrase have by default value [+b], what results in completive reading. Therefore, I also follow Smith (1991: 106-107) that “-*le* indicates completion in a telic/bounded event, but termination in an atelic/non-bounded event”.

When taking this principle into account, it is easy to understand, why some authors - including Xiao - claim accomplishments can only be interpreted as completed. (Xiao 2001) Beside of that it is also true, that other elements in utterance provide additional information leading to clear completive reading.

(282) 我急忙以高价租了一辆北京吉普车，直驶王庄。
 Wǒ jí máng yǐ gāo jià zū-le yī-liàng Běijīng jí pǔ chē, zhí shǐ Wáng zhuāng.
 I hurriedly hired a “Beijing” jeep at a high price,
 and headed direct for Wangzhuang. (Xiao 2001)

(283) 我急忙以高价租了一辆北京吉普车，可是没租到。
 Wǒ jí máng yǐ gāo jià zū-le yī-liàng Běijīng jí pǔ chē, kě shì méi zū dào.
 Lit.: I hurriedly hired a “Beijing” jeep at a high price,
 but didn’t succeed hiring it. (Xiao 2001)

Here is his argumentation: “The situation ‘I hired a Beijing jeep’ is an accomplishment presented perfectly. Even if a conjoined second clause could cancel its completive reading, the second clause would clash with some other sentential element, i.e., ‘at a high price’. We normally assume that when the price is settled, the deal is done. Furthermore, if the completive reading of the actualized accomplishment could be cancelled, there would be no subsequent event ‘headed for Wangzhuang’.” (Xiao 2001: 629)

2. OPERATOR *LE* IN RELATION TO VIEWPOINT ASPECT

In this Chapter, I will show that labels like *entirety*, *a single whole*, *external view*, *actuality*, *realization*, *perfective viewpoint* etc. can be expressed with Reichenbach’s three times. In such terms, operator *le* is used in contexts, where SitT ≤ RT (actuality; section 2.1) and Sit included in SitT (holisticity; section 2.2). In addition, I will argue that dynamicity of *le* (section 2.3) is actually a logical consequence of the ‘principle of compatibility’. Namely, to be in congruence with each other, the contexts, where *le* is supposed to appear, should be at least potentially dynamic. Therefore, we associate operator *le* with dynamicity.

Because situations themselves are in focus here, operator *le* is realized post-verbally.

When comparing researches on aspectual value of verbal *-le*, it seems that there are crucial differences among approaches. But on the other hand, every paper on its own is reasonable. I propose that a lot of misunderstanding stems from discrepancy in concepts.

Just to give a simple example. Li and Thompson (1981: 185-186) consider verbal *le* as marker for ‘perfective aspect’. In other words, they say this indicates that an event is being viewed in its entirety or as a whole. “Viewing” situations belongs to *viewpoint aspect*.

Similar notions can be found in Xiao and McEnery’s (2004: 89) and Dai’s (1997) work, although they sound different. The aspect marked by *-le* is in their framework called the ‘actual aspect’. The actual aspect provides an external viewpoint from which a situation is presented as an actualized single whole. The aspect marker *-le* demonstrates the temporal features of actuality, holistic and dynamicity. As we see, viewpoint aspect is mentioned again.

“Presenting a situation in its entirety or as a whole is not identical to indicating its boundary. A boundary of a situation is intrinsic to situation aspect whereas the perspective from which a situation is presented is independent of situation aspect and subject to speaker choice.” (X&McE 2004: 106)

According to (Chu 1998: 79-80) *-le* (a) marks an event as viewed in its entirety and with a focus on the endpoint; (b) indicates a peak event and therefore appears in foreground; and (c), due to its focus on the endpoint, also serves to explicitly express temporal and logical sequence of events which would otherwise be less obviously so related.

It is true that definitions do not completely overlap, nor in the scope of features attributed to *-le*, or in the scope of research. That is why every approach is unique and valuable on its own way, but nevertheless, the basic idea does not change. *Le* might be considered separately as marker for *perfective aspect*, *actual aspect*, *marker of realization*, *marker with the core feature boundary*, *marker of anteriority* etc., but I propose that everything is right. All of the statements have a common denominator. More about that in the following chapters, where temporal interpretations will be the center of discussion.

I consider Xiao and McEnery’s (2004) framework very valuable, so the next three subchapters will be devoted to the three aspectual features, they ascribed to operator *le*: *actuality*, *holistic* and *dynamicity*.

2.1 The actuality of *le*

Actuality means that “the situation denoted by a sentence actually occurs or materializes, i.e. the situation becomes a reality with respect to the relevant reference time. Reference time may correspond to the past, present or the future.” (Smith 1981: 214). Reference time as anchor for interpretation of realization is important, and that is evident from the following examples:

(284) 现在连我们母子的生活都有了困难。

Xiànzài lián wǒmen mǔzi de shēnghuó dōu yǒu-le kùnnán.

Now I even have difficulty supporting my child and myself.

(X&McE 2004: 115)

(285) 早在 1954 年, 日本对汽车进口规定了严格的配额。
Zǎo zài 1954 nián, Riběn duì qìchē jìnkǒu guīdìng-le yángé de pèié.
As early as 1954, Japan imposed strict quotas on
automobile imports (X&McE 2004: 115)

(286) 我明天下了班去看电影。
Wǒ míngtiān xià-le bān qù kàn diànyǐng.
I will go to see a movie after work tomorrow. (X&McE 2004: 115)

Sentence (285) is expressing past event, example (284) refers to present situation, whereas sentence (286) indicates future situation. Examples (284) to (286) share one common characteristic – in all cases, a situation is *realized* with respect to the relevant reference time, which is not necessarily speech time. In sentence (285) situation was realized at the reference time *zai 1954 nian* ‘in the year 1954’. In the sentence (284), the reference time is *xianzai* ‘present times, now’, and in the sentence (286) reference time is moved to the future *mingtian* ‘tomorrow’.

I have already argued in chapter 2 that Chinese is generally recognized as a tenseless language (Smith 1997: 263; Dai 1997: 32; Gong 1991). “The temporal reference in Chinese is provided syntactically by time words or semantically through the relation of situations conveyed in discourse.” (X&McE 2004: 115) For this reason it is better to consider the question of time interpretation in Reichenbach’s terms. (recall pages 41-47)

“When a sentence conveys an actualized situation, SitT must be prior to or simultaneous with RT (i.e. $SitT \leq RT$). The actual *-le* cannot be used in situations where SitT is posterior to RT. Therefore the following sentences are unacceptable.” (X&McE 2004: 116)

(287) * 我明天看了电影。
* Wǒ míngtiān kàn-le diànyǐng.
* I went to a movie tomorrow. (X&McE 2004: 116)

(288) * 我明天下班看了电影。
* Wǒ míngtiān xiàbān kàn-le diànyǐng.
* I went to a movie after work tomorrow. (X&McE 2004: 116)

The present reference time: $SitT \leq RT = SpT$

“When RT overlaps with SpT (i.e. $RT = SpT$), or when RT is unspecified,⁸² the actual *-le* signals the actuality of a situation in relation to SpT ‘now’.” (X&McE 2004: 117)

⁸² See also Smith’s *Bounded Event Constraint*, p. 60

(289) 一个耀眼的女人向游泳池走来，只转了转，便离开了。

Yī-gè yàoyǎn de nǚrén xiàng yóuyǒngchí zǒu-lái (Sit₁),
zhǐ zhuàn-le zhuàn (Sit₂), biàn líkāi le (Sit₃).

A seductive woman walked over to the swimming pool,
put only strolled a bit and then left

(X&McE 2004: 117)

Formula for the actuality in relation to the present reference time seems to be equal to the statement above, but the crucial information lies in the word ‘present’. Operator *le* is said to be used for present situations as well. With other word, *le* can be used in situations, which reach to present.

The past reference time: SitT ≤ RT < SpT

“When RT is prior to SpT (i.e. RT < SpT), the actual -le signals the actuality of a situation in relation to past RT.” (X&McE 2004: 118)

(290) 他昨天下（了）班去看了电影，八点钟才回到了家里。

Tā zuótiān xià-le bān qù kàn-le diànyǐng, bā-diǎnzhōng cái huídào-le jiā-lǐ.

Yesterday, he went to the cinema after work.

It was already 8 when he got home.

(X&McE 2004: 118)

(291) 他昨天下（了）班去看了电影才回家。

Tā zuótiān xià-le bān qù kàn-le diànyǐng, cái huíjiā.

Yesterday, he went to the cinema after work before he went home.

(X&McE 2004: 118)

The future reference time: SpT < SitT ≤ RT

“When RT is posterior to SpT (i.e. SpT < RT), the actual -le signals the actuality of a situation in relation to a future RT.” (X&McE 2004: 121)

(292) 我明天下了班去看电影。

Wǒ míngtiān xià-le bān qù kàn diànyǐng.

I will go to see a movie after work tomorrow.

(X&McE 2004: 121)

This rule also applies to the fictitious actuality in conditional clause. (X&McE 2004: 121)

(293) 那家伙烧成了灰，我也能认出来。

Nà jiāhuǒ shāochéng-le huī, wǒ yě néng rènchūlái.

Even if that guy was burnt to ashes, I would recognize him.

(X&McE 2004: 121)

“One exception to this rule is found in highly marked contexts. When the situation expressed in the conditional clause ‘equals’ the situation expressed in the resultative clause, the actual *-le* can even appear in the latter clause without an anchoring RT.” (X&McE 2004: 122)

- (294) 艺术是需要时间的，何况跟了个好导演，
 不就等于找了个好老师嘛。
 Yìshù shì xūyào shíjiān de, hékuàng gēn-le gè hǎo dǎoyǎn,
 bù jiù děngyú zhǎo-le gè hǎo lǎoshī ma.
 Art requires practice; and moreover, working with a good director
 amounts to finding a good teacher. (X&McE 2004: 121)

Although this chapter is focused on the aspectual level of sentences, let us jump to scope of foreground and backgrounding. “An actualized situation cannot serve as the background information in discourse, even if the situation itself is durative in nature.” (X&McE 2004: 127-128) “When a situation is viewed perfectly, its internal stages are no longer visible and the situation can no longer appear in a backgrounded clause.” (X&McE 2004: 128)

- (295) 7月30日，郁家兄弟搜查申办公室时，
 发现卫龙山是申的邻居。
 7 yuè 30 rì, Yù jiā xiōngdì sōuchá Shēn bàngōngshì shí,
 fāxiàn Wèi Lóngshān shì Shēn de línjū.
 On July 30th, when brothers of the Yu’s were searching Shen’s office,
 they found that Wei Longshan was Shen’s neighbor. (X&McE 2004: 128)

- (296) 7月30日，郁家兄弟搜查了申办公室。
 7 yuè 30 rì, Yù jiā xiōngdì sōuchá-le Shēn bàngōngshì.
 On July 30th, brothers of the Yu’s searched Shen’s office. (X&McE 2004: 128)

- (297) * 7月30日，郁家兄弟搜查了申办公室时，
 发现卫龙山是申的邻居。
 * 7 yuè 30 rì, Yù jiā xiōngdì sōuchá-le Shēn bàngōngshì shí,
 fāxiàn Wèi Lóngshān shì Shēn de línjū.
 On July 30th, when brothers of the Yu’s searched Shen’s office,
 they found ...⁸³ (X&McE 2004: 128)

I agree operator *le* is frequently associated with actuality, and verbal *le* is said to appear with realized situations. This is in congruence with Smith’s Bounded Event Constraint (page 60), and

⁸³ Note, that this sentence would become acceptable with *le*, if *shi* ‘at the time’ was deleted. However, in that case, *Yu jia xiongdi soucha-le Shen bangongshi* ‘brothers of the Yu’s searched Shen’s office’ would not be a background information, but the main event, which has for the result the second event, i.e. *faxian Wei Longshan shi Shen de linju*. (I am grateful to Marita Ljungqvist, who has drew my attention to this version of the sentence)

Simplicity Principle of Interpretation (page 60). Bounded situations are by default placed in the past (SitT<RT) and therefore realized. The situation operator *le* is interacting with, is therefore realized or actualized.

Consequently, operator *le* is not used with non-actualized situations. This makes sense. If we are focused on a situation, operator *le* contributes to a change in that situation. However, if we deny the existence of that particular situation, operator *le* cannot interact with it.

One might object my proposal saying that *le* can also be used in negative sentences at the sentence-final position, e.g. *Wo mei qian le* ‘I don’t have money any more’. My claim about operator *le* and realized situations is not contradictive with this fact. On the sentence-final position, operator *le* is interacting with the whole sentence, and entity *mei qian* ‘not having money’ is considered as state with potential dynamics, therefore operator *le* contributes to change of value. State *mei qian* ‘not having money’ gets the initial impulse, so the resulting meaning is ‘For me, the state of not having money was not true before, but became true now’, i.e. ‘I had money before, but do not have it now’. Consider also other examples in chapter 5 (cf. 145).

2.2 The holisticity of *le*

Xiao and McEnery (2004: 125) explain the second feature of *le* as follows: “A situation is presented holistically as a single whole.” Seeing event as a whole when using *le* is also part of the explanation given in Li and Thompson (1981: 185-6): “The verbal aspect suffix *-le* [...] indicates that an event is being viewed in its entirety or as a whole.”

The following minimal pairs are cited from Dai (1997: 43) (X&McE 2004: 125)

(298) 操场上同时进行了两场比赛。

Cǎochǎng shàng tóngshí jìnxíng-le liǎng-cháng bǐsài.

Two matches were held simultaneously on the playground.

(X&McE 2004: 125)

(299) 操场上先后进行了两场比赛。

Cǎochǎng shàng xiānhòu jìnxíng le liǎngcháng bǐsài.

Two matches were held successively on the playground.

(X&McE 2004: 125)

(300) 操场上同时在进行两场比赛。

Cǎochǎng shàng tóngshí zài jìnxíng liǎngcháng bǐsài.

Two matches were being held simultaneously
on the playground.

(X&McE 2004: 125)

(301) * 操场上先后在进行两场比赛。

* Cǎochǎng shàng xiānhòu zài jìnxíng liǎngcháng bǐsài

* Two matches were being held successively
on the playground.

(X&McE 2004: 125)

To demonstrate the connection between this argumentation and examples, I will use graphical means. First, compare these four sentences with Figure 12.

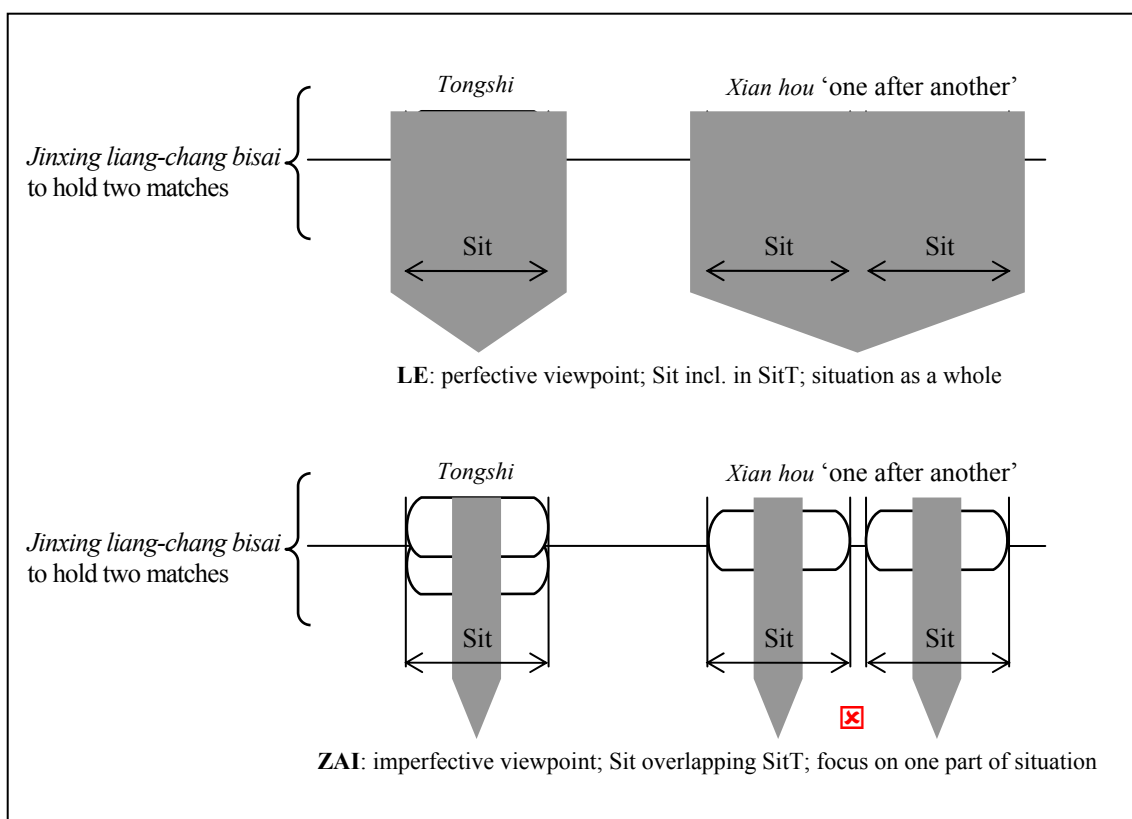


Figure 12: The holistics of *le*; Perfective vs. imperfective viewpoint aspect

Sentences with *le* present situations as a whole, without focusing on internal parts, therefore it is possible to say that ‘two matches were held’ simultaneously’ (example (298)) or successively (example (299)). In both cases, we consider situations as two units within our viewpoint. On the other hand, situations with *zai* ‘progressive marker’ focus on the progression of situation, i.e. just one part of it. In this case, it is possible to view two situations, if they are happening simultaneously (example (300)), but not successively (example (301)). In addition, only if we treat situations as a whole, we can apply a notion of change to that situation. Otherwise we are focused on the internal structure of the situation.

2.3 The dynamicity of *le*

The third feature, associated with *le*, is dynamicity. “Dynamicity is necessarily related to change, which may be embodied in a heterogeneous temporal structure or changing points. The dynamicity of the actual aspect can focus on both heterogeneous internal structures and changing point.” (X&McE 2004: 128)

(302) 为此，邓丽君伤心地哭了三天。

Wéi cǐ, Dèng Lìjūn shāngxīn de kū-le sān-tiān.

For this reason, Deng Lijun cried sadly for three days

(X&McE 2004: 129)

Activity verb *ku* ‘cry’ is unbounded, but durational phrase *sāntiān* ‘three days’ changes the value of a clause to [+bounded]. Recall rule 7, page 31. Situation in (302) has features [+dyn][+dur][+bnd][–tel][–res]. The requirement for the feature [+dyn] is fulfilled. Presence of *-le* results as one-to-zero dynamics, what can be interpreted as terminative reading.

“The dynamicity of the actual aspect is more clearly demonstrated by its effects of coercing an *unbounded* stative situation into a dynamic one. The actual *le* interacting with unbounded states (either ILS or SLS) demonstrates the feature of ‘ingressive dynamicity’ which triggers these unbounded states into derived activities at the clause level.” (X&McE 2004: 129)

(303) 这事的内情他都知道的。

Zhè shì de nèiqíng tā dōu zhīdào de.

He knows all about it.

(X&McE 2004: 130)

(304) 他知道了这事的内情。

Tā zhīdào-le zhè shì de nèiqíng.

He got to know about it.

(X&McE 2004: 130)

“*Zhidao* ‘know’ is an ILS verb which does not involve a changing point but only has a homogeneous temporal structure. It is normally used to denote a stative situation. When the actual *le* is used, the stative situation is coerced into a dynamic event: an ingressive point plus the resultant state.” (X&McE 2004: 130)

According to my proposal, operator *le* contributes to change in dynamics, and is therefore naturally associated with dynamics. Even more, **at least potential dynamics** in situations **is the necessary condition** for utterances with *le* to be acceptable, what is a consequence of the ‘principle of compatibility’. All elements have to be in harmony to produce meaningful utterance. Here is another example:

(305) 香港老板卷着我们的钱逃走三天了。

Xiānggǎng lǎobǎn juǎn-zhe wǒmen de qián táo zǒu sān-tiān le.

The proprietor from Hong Kong has run away

with our money for three days

(X&McE 2004: 129)

Taozou ‘run away’ is an achievement verb with features [+dyn][–dur][+bnd][+tel][+res]. The only possible interpretation with durational phrase is duration of the resulting state which is (due to

sentence-final *le*) linked to speech time ‘now’. For expressing the same meaning, double *le* construction could be used.⁸⁴

Since these two constructions are exchangeable, one might conclude that also the variation with just verbal *le* would be acceptable. However, this is not the case. Sentence with one *le* on post-verbal position is not grammatical. *Taozou* ‘run away’ is an instantaneous situation (with feature [–dur]), which is not compatible with durative phrase (with feature [+dur]). These two notions are in contradiction, therefore cannot be used together. This is also part of my proposal about the ‘principle of compatibility’.

Synthesis 16: Three features, assigned to operator *le* on aspectual level (Chap. 2)

1. Actuality (SitT ≤ RT)

The present reference time: SitT ≤ RT = SpT

The past reference time: SitT ≤ RT < SpT

The future reference time: SpT < SitT ≤ RT

fictitious actuality in conditional clause

highly marked conditional clause

not in background clauses

2. Holisticity (Sit incl. in SitT)

3. Dynamicity (change in dynamics)

It was shown that the presence or absence of *-le* is sensitive to situation aspect on one hand, and to viewpoint aspect on the other hand. Situations that are viewed in their entirety can on aspectual level result in inchoative, terminative and completive reading.

3. LE IN RELATION TO ADJECTIVES (STATIVE VERBS)

In this Chapter, I will discuss the two patterns with adjectives and operator *le*: pattern “X A-*le* D”⁸⁵ like *Tianqi leng-le hao duo du* ‘The weather cooled down for many degrees’; and pattern “X A-*le*” like *Tianqi leng-le* ‘The weather cooled down’. I will show that gradability is the key factor for boundedness in adjectives, since it inherently carries the notion of potential dynamics. Because

⁸⁴ More about *le* on sentence-final position and double-*le* constructions was written Chapter 1.3 and Chapter 1.4.

⁸⁵ D stands for the differential between the two compared items such as *three centimeters* in *John is three centimeters taller than Bill*

operator *le* requires at least potential dynamic situations, it is expected to occur with gradable adjectives, but not with absolute adjectives (i.e. the compatibility principle).

Further on, I will show that pattern “X A-*le* D” results in terminative reading due to its determined value of change (one-to-zero dynamics). On the other hand, pattern “X A-*le*” results in inchoative reading, because the degree of change is not determined (zero-to-one dynamics). Apart from the temporal reading, these constructions can also result in modal readings (zero-to-one dynamics).

In the Chapter 1.3 (p. 37) I dedicated some pages to the notion of boundedness in adjectives and noun phrases. Boundedness in nouns is associated with countability and the presence of boundary (cf. Chap. 1.6, p. 114) on accomplishments. On the other hand, boundedness in adjectives is associated with gradability. This was indirectly indicated in the passage about states (cf. Ch. 1.1.3, p. 27), where the distinction between individual-level states and stage-level states was made. Gradable adjectives are potentially dynamic, since they allow change of grade. Degree of change can be specified or not. Recall Pattern 4 and Pattern 5 on page 40.

Pattern 4 corresponds to one of the statements in Li and Thompson’s work, saying that “sometimes the quantified event is a state whose limits are set by a phrase expressing the extent to which the subject is in the state.” (L&T 1981: 188)

(306) 这个地方不错，就是吵了一点。

Zhè-gè dìfāng bù cuò, jiù shì chǎo-le yī-diǎn.

This place is not bad, it’s just a little noisy.

(L&T 1981: 188)

(307) 他年纪比我大了几十岁。

Tā niánjì bǐ wǒ dà-le jǐshí suì.

S/he is older than I by a few decades.

(L&T 1981: 188)

In this chapter I will present these two patterns with adjectives and operator *le*. The reason why these two constructions are not part of the previous chapter on states, is because they can also have nontemporal readings, while previous chapters have focused mainly on temporal interpretations of utterances.

“X A-*le* D” Construction (Pattern 4)

Liu (2005) found out that the ‘X A-*le* D’ construction has the following five syntactic and semantic characteristics:

First, “this type of construction might have a dynamic or a stative interpretation, depending on whether the subject has the ability of changing along the scale associated with the adjective involved.” (Liu 2005: 206, Lu et al. 1984)

(308) 头发白了一点儿。

Tóufa bái-le yī-diǎnr.

Dynamic: The hair becomes a little grayer than before

Static: The hair is a little grayer than the standard value of gray assumed by people for the hair. (Liu 2005: 206)

The same characteristic was noted by Li and Thompson. They say that “sentences can have different interpretations, depending on whether the adjective describes a process or a state.” (L&T 1981: 188)

(309) 他胖了一点。

Tā pàng-le yī-diǎn.

Dynamic: He’s gotten a little fatter.

Static: He’s a little (too) fat. (L&T 1981: 188)

(310) 衬衫小了三寸。

Chènshān xiǎo-le sān-cùn.

Dynamic: The shirt got smaller (i.e., shrank) by three inches.

Static: The shirt is (too) small by three inches. (L&T 1981: 188)

One might object that statements about *stative* interpretation of sentences with *le* contradict my proposal about necessary dynamics. If I claim, that operator *le* requires dynamic environments and that the presence of *le* definitely involves some kind of change, how can a sentence with *le* produce a *stative* interpretation? I argue in the following paragraphs that these interpretations do not contradict my proposal, instead, they further strengthen my hypothesis. Sentences of this pattern correspond to Figure 6 on page 90, Chart D. In the dynamic interpretation, change is placed in the real world, so the actual value of ‘whiteness’ changes. In the stative interpretation, the situation in the real world does not change and is therefore stative, but this change is realized on the perceptual level. Finally, the notion of change in dynamics is still present.

This idea is already well known from other authors. In Liu’s (2005) terms, we are dealing with a situation *comparing with respect to the standard value*, according to Li and Thompson’s (1981: 185) account these are *conceptual boundaries*, and in terms of Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 68) this is *attitudinal boundary*.

Dynamic interpretation is temporal, whereas the *static* interpretation is modal in nature. More about modality is written in Chapter 4 (p. 140).

Another feature, that has to be considered when analyzing the interpretation of such sentences, is the principle of relevance. In the sentence below, the most relevant would be stative interpretation.

(311) 这双鞋子大了一号。

Zhè-shuāng xiézi dà-le yī-hào.

Static: This pair of shoes is one-number bigger than the size assumed. (Liu 2005: 211)

It is more probable that speaker is referring to the deviation on the perceptual level than in the real world, unless the sentence is used in a special environment, e.g. in the story ‘Alice in Wonderland’. The principle of relevance guides us to choose the appropriate interpretation.

All these readings have something in common: dynamic interpretation involves changes in the real world, and static interpretation suggests changes in the conceptual world. The notion of *change* is always present, just realized on different levels. Recall some critics saying that verbal *le* does not mean perfective aspect just because there are utterances with *le* where nothing is ‘bounded’. (page 14, examples (44)-(46)). The criticism is unjustified. To understand the proper meaning of the utterance, one should follow the so-called Smith’s *Simplicity Principle of interpretation* (cf. Chap. 4.2, p. 60) or *Principle of relevance*, as developed by Sperber & Wilson (1995) and promoted by among others Marita Ljungqvist Arin (2003).

Second, “if an appropriate context is provided, the X A-*le* D construction, besides the dynamic and the stative reading, might have a third interpretation: the value/extent of A is different in X in comparison to Y. However, for the same sentence, if the aspectual suffix *-le* is deleted, ambiguity will disappear.” (Liu 2005: 207)

(312) 这朵花儿红了一点儿。

Zhè-duǒ huā hóng-le yī-diǎnr.

Dynamic: This flower is a little redder than before

Static: the standard value of redness assumed by people for the flower

Comparison: compared to some specific flower.’ (Liu 2005: 207)

(313) 这朵花儿红一点儿。

Zhè-duǒ huā hóng yī-diǎnr.

Comparison: This flower is a little redder than some specific flower. (Liu 2005: 207)

(314) 这朵花（比那朵花）红了一点儿。

Zhè-duǒ huā (bǐ nà-duǒ huā) hóng-le yī-diǎnr.

Comparison: This flower is a little redder than that one. (Liu 2005: 207)

This meaning is another instance of modal reading. Change in dynamics is relevant at the conceptual level. While *dynamic* reading was focused on the difference between two states of the same flower, and *static* reading was focused on the deviation between norm and expectation for the same flower, the *comparative* reading is focused on the difference between two flowers. As we see from example (331), comparative reading is quite stative in nature, use of operator *le* is in free variation with the absence of *le*, and the comparative reading will become even more obvious

without *le*. This further indicates that operator *le* carries information about dynamics, and is not very desirable in such stative environments like comparison.

I cannot offer any proofed and reliable reasons for why the dynamic reading is more natural and probable than stative reading, and why the comparative reading requires the most particular context, but I guess that our mind requires the least effort to establish the *temporal* differential, some more for *modal* differential, and the most for the differential between two compared items. It seems that the temporal change is the default interpretation; if temporal reading is not appropriate, the reader would choose the modal interpretation; however, if even modal one is not suitable, then *le* might express comparative reading.

The comparative reading is rather stative; therefore interpreting a stative sentence with *le* as comparative requires the most effort. Consequently, it is more reasonable to omit *le*, but because the idea of differential between two layers is present (see Figure 13, Comparative reading), operator *le* can still take this job.

All these readings are shown in Figure 13 again.

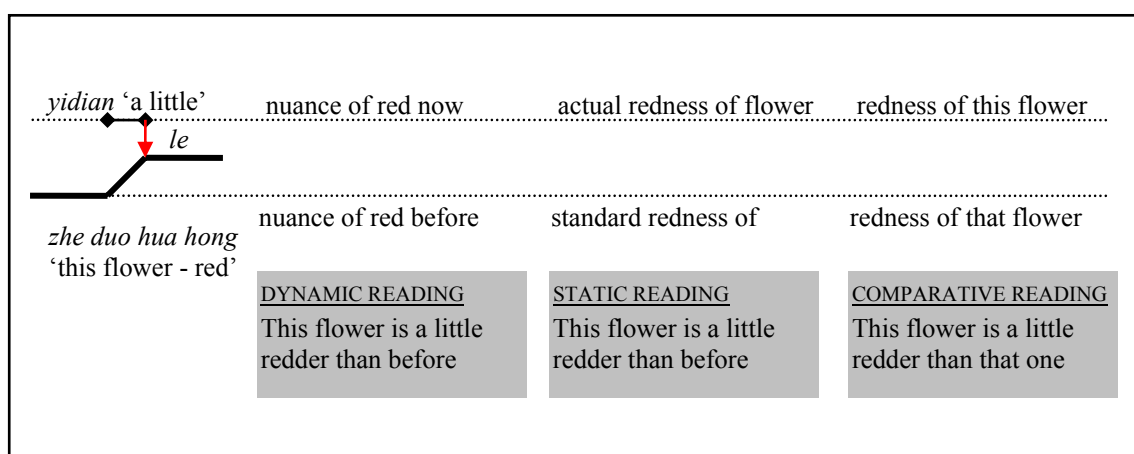


Figure 13: Dynamic, static and comparative reading of the same sentence

Third, “the differential pseudo-object, for example *san gongfen* ‘three centimeters’, cannot be omitted; otherwise, the sentence will be ungrammatical.” (Liu 2005: 207) This was also noted by Zhu (1982: 69) who points out that whenever an adjective takes the aspectual suffix *-le*, a post-adjectival quantifier denoting the differential between the two compared items is obligatorily required.

(315) * 这个孩子高了。

* Zhè-gè háizi gāo-le.

* This child - gao - LE. (unacceptable according to Zhu)

Zhu (1982: 69)

(316) 这个孩子高了三公分。

Zhè-gè háizi gāo-le sān-gōngfēn.

Dynamic: This child is three centimeters taller than before

Static: taller than the standard value of height assumed by people

Comparison: taller than some specific person.

(Liu 2005: 208)

It is true that there is something strange about sentence (315) and is not acceptable. However, I do not agree with the statement that a post-adjectival quantifier must be present. Data from corpus is showing the opposite.

	No. of items	Percentage
Total of <i>gao le</i> ‘tall LE’ in predicative use	1180	100%
‘X A-le D’ (with quantifying phrase)	323	27,4%
‘X A-le’ (without quantifying phrase) – total	857	72,6%
presence of expressions carrying subjective load, e.g. <i>tai</i> ‘too’, <i>guo</i> ‘over’, <i>ke</i> ‘but’ etc.	(249)	(29,1%)
presence of explicit expressions for gradability, e.g. <i>geng</i> ‘more’, <i>yuelaiyue</i> ‘more and more’ etc.	(216)	(25,2%)
presence of expressions for SitT<RT, e.g. <i>yijing</i> ‘already’	(28)	(3,3%)
presence of another means, e.g. <i>zhang</i> ‘grow’, changing <i>gao</i> ‘tall’ to complement etc.	(25)	(2,9%)
‘X A-le’ (without quantifying phrase) – refined	339	28,7%
thereof NPs, which presuppose two-way changes	(299)	(88,2%)

Table 12: Distribution of constructions ‘X gao le’ vs. ‘X gao le D’ (SkE)

Among all instances of *gao le* ‘tall LE’ in predicative use, 27,4% had post-adjectival quantifier phrase, whereas 72,6% did not. At first sight it seems that numbers are speaking even in favor of the shorter version. But after taking a closer look we notice distribution of both patterns is almost equal.

Recall that my second assumption is related to the compatibility of elements. I try to show that elements of utterances have to be in congruence, in order to be compatible with each other; and that some lexical means may – due to their meaning – increase the probability of *le* to appear, while other means may decrease it.⁸⁶ Table 13 is demonstrating this point. Pattern ‘X A-le’ is in the test represented very frequently (72,6%); however, if we take a closer look at the internal structure of the pattern ‘X A-le’, we can see that there are many elements, which increase the probability of *le* to

⁸⁶ I will point to such elements several times in the following chapters.

appear. Expressions that carry subjective load (e.g. *tai* ‘too’, *guo* ‘over’, *ke* ‘but’), implicate the difference between norms and expectations and therefore contribute to modal readings; Expressions for gradability (e.g. *geng* ‘more’, *yuelaiyue* ‘more and more’) explicitly denote changes on temporal level; adverbs like *yijing* ‘already’ or *zao jiu* ‘long ago had already’ place situations before Reference Time, which is another feature, often related to *le*, and mentioned first in the Chapter 2, in the passage about 3T and temporal adverbs.

Praxis has shown that it is hard to master the usage of such elusive element like *le*, and there are practically no strict rules for it. But on the other hand, it was frequently mentioned that, for example, “*yijing ... le*” ‘already ... le’ is a commonly used pattern; or that “... *le ... , jiu ...*” is a structure, indicating two immediate events.⁸⁷ I suggest this tendency is the result of congruence or overlapping in meanings.

Let me rephrase the data from Table 13. Almost one third of the examples ‘*X gao le*’ without quantifying phrase also included some expressions carrying subjective load, one fourth of the examples included some explicit expressions indicating a change in value, and 6% some intensifiers, placing situations before Reference Time. If excluding such examples, we see that proportion between the two patterns is almost equal. The reasons, why the sentence (315) is unacceptable, must be elsewhere. The following sentences proof this point.

(317) 这个孩子太高了，要买半票方可以。

Zhè-gè háizi **tài** gāo le, yào mǎi bànpiào fāng kěyǐ.

This child it **to** tall, you just have to buy a half-ticket.

(web)

(318) 现在的孩子越来越高了，这个标准是不是有点不讲理？

Xiànzài de háizi **yuèlái**yue gāo le, zhègè biāozhǔn shì bú shì yǒudiǎn bù jiǎnglǐ?

Nowdays, children **are getting** taller; isn’t this criterion a bit to unreasonable?

(web)

(319) 转眼间，孩子长高了，进入大班，……

Zhuǎnyǎnjiān, háizi zhǎnggāo le, jìnrù dàbān, ...

In the twinkling of an eye, kids grew up, enrolled in a big class, ...

(web)

(320) 北京孩子个子高了身体差了

Bèijīng háizi gèzi gāo le, shēntǐ chā le

Children in Beijing are taller, but in worse physical condition

(web)

When certain lexical elements (in bold) are present, the sentences become acceptable.⁸⁸ It seems that the major reason, why sentence (315) is not acceptable, lies in the semantic composition in a sentence. An interesting fact is, that 88% of all utterances of the so-called *pure* ‘X A le’

⁸⁷ See also list of so-called 10 common patterns with *le*, chapter 2 (210 ff.)

⁸⁸ Note however, that not all combinations are possible.

construction include a noun, which can be changed in both ways⁸⁹, e.g. *shuiping* ‘level’, *shouru* ‘income’, *jiaqian* ‘price’, *xinyu* ‘reputation’, *diwei* ‘position/status’, *jijixing* ‘activeness’, *chengdu* ‘degree’, *xiaolü* ‘efficiency’ etc. It is also true that non of these examples referred to humans, whereas example (315) does. However, if target is more precise, e.g. *haizi gezi gao le* ‘child - high - tall - le’ as in example (320) the sentence becomes perfectly acceptable. Anyhow, although sentence (315) is not acceptable, it is not because of the operator *le* or omitted quantifier phrase. So, such situations cannot be regarded as counter-examples to my proposal.

Fourth, “the X A-*le* D construction does not tolerate insertion of a pseudo-object like *Lisi* in the position between the inflected adjective and the differential pseudo-object.” (Liu 2005: 208)

(321) 张三高李四十公分。

Zhāngsān gāo Lǐsì shí-gōngfēn。

Zhangsan is ten centimeters taller than Lisi.

(Liu 2005: 208)

(322) * 张三高了李四十公分。

* Zhāngsān gāo-le Lǐsì shí-gōngfēn。

(Intended: Zhangsan is ten centimeters taller than Lisi.)

(Liu 2005: 208)

Liu (2005) rephrased this phenomenon as follows: “Occurrence of the aspectual suffix *le* in the X A-*le* D construction prevents a referential expression like *Lisi* from serving as the differential pseudo-object.” (Liu 2005: 208) Or other way round, this is an explicit form of comparing situations. When all elements of comparison are explicitly given, it is obvious that sentence should have comparative reading. Comparison is stative, and due to explicit lexical forms there is no space for mental process implicating comparative reading. Therefore, operator *le* is not needed, in fact it is not allowed here.⁹⁰

As we saw on page 136, operator *le* is not favored in comparing constructions.

Fifth, “absolute (or non-gradable) adjectives, like *zhen* ‘true’, *jia* ‘fake’, *dui* ‘right’, *cuo* ‘wrong’, *heng* ‘horizontal’, *shu* ‘vertical’, *wen* ‘warm’, and *zi* ‘purple’, are not allowed in the X A-*le* D construction, as the following examples illustrate.”⁹¹ (Liu 2005: 208)

⁸⁹ ‘In both ways’ means that the value can increase or decrease, e.g. *higher* or *lower* level/income/price/reputation etc.

⁹⁰ Compare with the discussion in relation to Figure 13.

⁹¹ These examples are not quite consistent in their acceptability. So, it is arguably true that, in some sense, absolute adjectives like *wen* ‘warm,’ and *zi* ‘purple’ allow an imprecise use that reflects a semantic shift away from ‘default’ absolute quality meaning toward a purely relative one. This phenomenon might imply that *wen* ‘warm’ and *zi* ‘purple’ are not typical absolute adjectives.

- (323) * 他的说法真了一点儿。
 * Tāde shuōfǎ zhēn-le yī-diǎnr.
 * His saying is a bit more true (Liu 2005: 208)
- (324) * 这个Gucci 的手表假了一点儿。
 * Zhè-gè Gucci de shǒubiǎo jiǎ-le yīdiǎnr.
 * This Gucci watch is a bit more fake (Liu 2005: 208)
- (325) * 你的答案对了（错了）一点儿。
 * Nǐde dá'àn duì-le (cuò-le) yī-diǎnr.
 * Your answer is a bit more right (wrong). (Liu 2005: 208)
- (326) * 这条线横了（竖了）一点儿。
 * Zhè-tiáo xiàn héng-le (shù-le) yī-diǎnr.
 * This line is a bit more horizontal. (Liu 2005: 208)

I will here present a possible explanation for why absolute adjectives are not allowed in this construction. Absolute adjectives are inherently homogenous and do not allow any dynamics. They are not even potentially dynamic, therefore are, due to the compatibility principle, at the situation level incompatible with operator *le*.⁹² However, *le* on the modal level contributes to change norm-deviation or reality-expectations. One might add some subjective load, like in the example (327) below.

- (327) 故事太假了！一点也不好看！
 Gùshi tài jiǎ le! Yī-diǎn yě bù hǎokàn!
 The story is so fake! It's really not worth reading! (web)

In such cases, even absolute adjectives can be used with *le* – or other way round. There is nothing contradictive about this. On the aspectual level there is no place for potential dynamics, whereas modal level provides other, non-temporal interpretations.

As shown in the chapter 1.5 (p. 107), operator *le* on the post-verbal position focuses on situations. It is very obvious that in pattern “X A-le D” we are speaking about verbal *le*. If situation is stative and does not presuppose dynamics, verbal *le* is not expected (Figure 6, p. 90). Therefore I perfectly agree with the fifth observation.

⁹² It might be interesting to examine the distribution of the dynamic *le* vs. stative *shi...de* construction, which are - according to my preliminary observations - to a certain extent complementary. Absolute adjectives sound more natural with the later form, i.e. *shi zhen de*; *shi jia de*; *shi dui de* etc.

“X A-le” (Pattern 5)

This pattern is very similar to the previous one, but provides less variety in interpretation. Compare sentences (328) and (329) from Liu (2005).

(328) 这朵花红了一点儿。

Zhè-duǒ huā hóng-le yī-diǎnr.

Dynamic: This flower is a little redder than before

Static: This flower is a little redder than the standard value of redness assumed for the flower

Comparison: This flower is a little redder than some specific flower.’ (Liu 2005: 209)

(329) 这朵花红了。

Zhè-duǒ huā hóng-le.

This flower has gotten red. (The speaker announces a new ‘discovery’ of the redness of the flower.) (Liu 2005: 209)

Adjective (or stative verb) is used to denote state. Gradable adjectives are inherently heterogeneous, and therefore potentially dynamic. States like *Zhe-duo hua hen hong* ‘This flower is red’ are unbounded. The presence of *le* results in the zero-to-one dynamics, what means initial impulse to this state. These kind of sentences could be sketched as the situation in Figure 6 on page 90, Chart B. Whether this initial impulse should be understood as change in real world or on the conceptual level, is then question of relevance.

In my opinion, example (328) differs from (329) just in one crucial feature, i.e. telicity.⁹³ Because of the quantifier phrase, clause gets the value [+tel], which is dynamic in itself. The presence of operator *le* invokes one-to-zero dynamics, which results in completive reading.⁹⁴

Degree achievements⁹⁵ in Lin’s (2004b) terms are incompatible with both durative and frame adverbials. Recall these facts from examples repeated below:

(330) ?? 他在一年内高了。

?? Tā zài yī-nián nèi gāo-le.

?? He grew in a year. (frame adverbial; in-adverbial; time-frame)

(331) * 他高了一年。

Tā gāo-le yī-nián.

He grew for a year. (durative adverbial; for-adverbial; time-span)

⁹³ Naturally, the value of boundedness also changes to positive. See chapter 1.1.2, page 23.

⁹⁴ About when the one-to-zero dynamics is interpreted as terminative or completive reading, see previous chapters (cf. 108).

⁹⁵ Recall Figure 5, page 83.

This is further confirming that operator *le* contributes to zero-to-one dynamics or an initial impulse of situation. If the focus was on the value of change, i.e. if the quantifying phrase was present, then such utterance resulted in terminative reading.

Operator *le* evokes change in dynamics, but to do this, all elements have to be compatible with each other (i.e. ‘principle of compatibility’). If some features are contradictive, then such utterance is not acceptable.

The figure below is demonstrating my point:

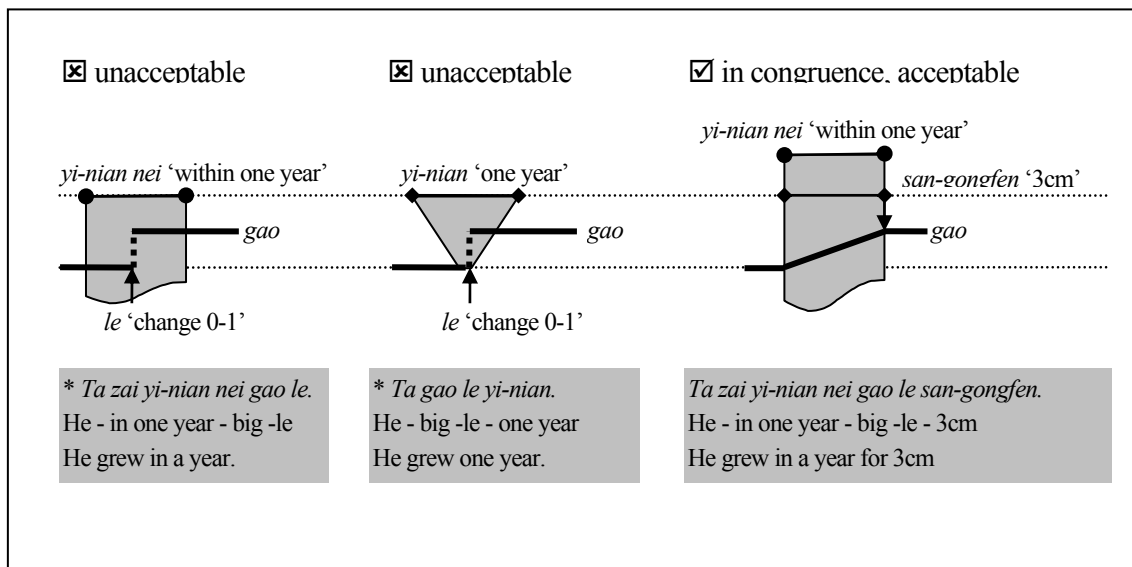


Figure 14: Acceptability as result of compatible elements - an example

It was presented (p. 37) that gradability is the key factor for boundedness in adjectives, but I suggest gradability inherently carries the notion of potential dynamics. Since operator *le* requires at least potential dynamic situations, it is expected to occur with gradable adjectives, but not with absolute adjectives.

Further on, if the value of change is determined, then we are speaking about dynamic bounded situations, which result in terminative reading, but if degree of change is not determined, operator *le* results in inchoative dynamics.

Synthesis 17: Operator *le* in relation to adjectives (Chap. 3)

‘S + V *le* + D’ (Pattern 4; Liu 2005)

1. static and dynamic interpretation. (real vs. conceptual changes)
2. possible also comparative interpretation.
3. absolute adjectives are not allowed

→ terminative reading

‘S + V *le*’ (Pattern 5; Liu 2005)

1. static and dynamic interpretation. (real vs. conceptual changes)

→ inchoative reading

→ incompatible with time frame adverbials (*in*-adverbials), durative adverbial (for-adverbial)

4. MODALITY AND LE

Operator *le* can also produce modal readings, which are a kind of zero-to-one dynamics. *Le* itself is still just an impulse between two levels/layers, therefore it depends on the value of these layers, which modal reading will be produced.

A small part of modal readings was presented in the previous chapter, whereas in this part I will focus mainly on the variety of atemporal readings. I will mainly summarize the findings from other authors, and show that sentence-final *le* can produce more diverse readings, since its scope is larger. Namely, if *le* is placed postverbally, it can express a deviation between norms and expectations. On the other hand, if *le* is used sentence-finally, it may express (1) a deviation between norms and expectations; it can (2) correct a wrong assumption or counter expectations; it might have (3) an excessive meaning; and especially in conversations, it can (4) demand immediate indication for reversal

It has been frequently observed that operator *le* does not have temporal meanings. This claim holds mainly for sentence-final *le*. Xiao and McEnery (2004: 131) claim that “the sentential *le* in some cases functions as a modal particle to mark the speaker’s attitude”. Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 115) is adding that very few authors have mentioned the fact that also in verbal position, *le* can express modality, whereas modality concerns the way the speaker’s attitude towards the information in the sentence is expressed, as well. So, operator *le* can express deontic modality in Lyons’ terms, regardless to its position in sentence.

Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 67) proposes that the invariant semantic core-feature of *le* is boundary. In such cases, “the boundary separates two non-temporal domains that have to do with the speaker’s attitude towards what is expressed in the sentence. *Le* expresses a contrast between for example the norm and the deviation from the norm or between expectation and reality.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 75-76) I completely agree with this explanation.

“In terms of modality, the boundary functions as a divider marking a contrast between different opinions or attitudes, between reality and mind or between (what is considered to be) norm and deviation from the norm. This use of *le* is non-temporal and concerns the speaker’s subjective view on how the information in a certain utterance is related to the non-linguistic context. One could say that in these cases, *le* marks an attitudinal boundary as opposed to a temporal boundary.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 116)

(332) 这凳子倒不错，只可惜太小了一些。

Zhè dèngzi dào bú cuò, zhǐ kěxī tài xiǎo-le yī-xiē.

This bench is not too bad, it’s just a pity that
it is somewhat too small.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 116)

Recall also chapter 3 about adjectives or stative verbs, pages 129-140. Pattern “X A-le D” can produce static reading, which is actually modal in nature.

(333) 这朵花红了一点儿。

Zhè-duǒ huā hóng-le yī-diǎnr.

Dynamic: This flower is a little redder than before

Static: This flower is a little redder than the standard value of redness assumed for the flower

Comparison: This flower is a little redder than some specific flower.’ (Liu 2005: 207)

Xiao and McEnery noted that “*le* is typically distributed in sentences with adjectival predicates and often co-occurs with adverbs of degree denoting subjectivity like *tai* ‘too’ and *zui* ‘most’”. (X&McE 2004: 131)⁹⁶

(334) 我们为他付出的代价太大了。⁹⁷

Wǒmen wèi tā fùchū de dàijià tài dà le.

The price we paid for it was too high.

(X&McE 2004: 131)

It should be noted, however, that not all degree adverbs are appropriate here. Degree adverb *hen* ‘very’ does not carry subjective load, so the same sentence with *hen* would not be acceptable.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Note, that this is also one of the 10 common patterns, listed by Ma (2006). The complete list is available on p. 210

⁹⁷ Ljungqvist Arin (2003), following Shi (1988), names this ‘excessive modality’. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 141)

⁹⁸ This does not mean that the combination ‘*hen+A+le*’ is impossible. See results in chapter 2 (cf. 210)

- (335) * 我们为他付出的代价很大了。
* Wǒmen wèi tā fùchū de dàijià hěn dà le.
The price we paid for it was very high. (X&McE 2004: 131)

Correlation between discrepancy reality-expectations and operator *le* is observed also by Yip and Rimmington. “A speaker’s response to a situation that is markedly better or worse than expected is regularly couched in a *le*-expository form.”⁹⁹ (Y&R 2004: 319)

- (336) 我们太幸运了。
(Wǒmen) tài xìngyùn le.
We are really lucky. (Y&R 2004: 319)
- (337) 这真是再好不过了。
(Zhè) zhēn shì zài hǎo bú guò le.
You can’t do better than this. (Y&R 2004: 319)
- (338) 这条裙子漂亮极了。
(Zhè-tiáo qúnzi) piāoliàng jí le.
This skirt is extremely pretty. (Y&R 2004: 319)
- (339) 这个人怀透了。
Zhè-gè rén huáitòu le.
This man is thoroughly bad. (Y&R 2004: 319)
- (340) 屋子里闷死了。
Wūzi-lǐ mèn sǐ le.
It’s really stuffy in the room. (Y&R 2004: 319)

“A similarly committed response can also be expected from the listener when a speaker asks questions demanding immediate indication as to whether a reversal of the existing situation can be expected or brought about.” (Y&R 2004: 320)

- (341) 情况究竟怎么样了?
Qíngkuàng jiùjìng zěnmeyàng le?
What’s the situation really like? (Y&R 2004: 320)
- (342) 这么晚了。他到底来不来了?
Zhème wǎn le. Tā dàodǐ lái bù lái le?
It’s so late. Is he really coming or not? (Y&R 2004: 320)

⁹⁹ For more on *le*-expository sentences see chapter 7.1.5, p. 181.

The following sentences are showing, as Yip and Rimmington said, that “sometimes the speaker may even explicitly indicate that the new situation is counter to his/her expectation.” (Y&R 2004: 320)

(343) 想不到在这儿见到你了。

Xiǎng-bù-dào zài zhèr jiàndào nǐ le.

I didn't realize that I would bump into you here.

(Y&R 2004: 320)

(344) A: 要不要爸爸洗?

B: 不要。

A: 要谁?

B: 妈妈。

A: 妈妈不洗了。

A: Yào bù yào bàba xǐ?

B: Bù yào.

A: Yào shéi?

B: Māma.

A: Māma bù xǐ le.

A: Do you want Daddy to wash you?

B: No.

A: Whom do you want?

B: Mummy.

A: Mummy isn't going to wash you (though you thought she was).

(L&T 2004: 267)

“It is often the case that it is the impact of change or reversal as much as the change itself that is in the mind of the speaker.” (Y&R 2004: 320)

(345) 我们看过那个电影了。

Wǒmen kàn-guò nà-ge diànyǐng le.

We have seen that film. [we don't want to see it again]

(Y&R 2004: 320)

(346) 儿子偷了父亲的钱了。

Érzi tōu-le fùqīn de qián le.

The son stole his father's money. [that is unthinkable]

(Y&R 2004: 320)

Ljungqvist Arin noted that verbal *le* can carry modal meanings. But *le* can contribute with more modal ‘nuances’ when it occurs in sentence-final position. “The modal meanings expressed by *le* stem from its core meaning boundary and can be subsumed under the notion of contrast.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 137)

“For verbal *le*, this contrast seems basically to concern the distinction between on one hand the norm and on the other the deviation from the norm. This use can be found also with sentence-final

le. Another type of contrast is found in those sentences with sentence-final *le* that implicate correction of a wrong assumption or contrary to someone's expectations." (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 137)

Here is another example of how different scholars treat similar situations in different ways. The idea of doing *contrary to someone's expectations* is in Chu's (1998: 154) eyes considered as *change-of-state* in combination with pragmatic principles.

- (347) A: 今天中午我请文山吃饭。我也请你。
B: 伯母, 谢谢您, 我不在您这儿吃饭了。我一回儿就得走, ……
A: Jīntiān zhōngwǔ wǒ qǐng Wénshān chīfàn. Wǒ yě qǐng nǐ.
B: Bómǔ, xièxiè nín, wǒ bù zài nín zhèr chīfàn le. Wǒ yī-huǐr jiù děi zǒu, ...
A: I am asking Vincent to have lunch with us today. Why don't you join us.
B: Thank you, Auntie. I would like to, but I can't eat here.
I have to leave in a little while because ... (Chu 1998: 154)

Where sentence-final *le* occurs in exclamations expressing that the speaker is unhappy with a new situation, the contextual influence is of great importance. It is difficult to distinguish whether *le* contributes to the temporal reading or a modal reading or perhaps to both. (cf. Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 141)

- (348) 我烦了。
Wǒ fán le.
I'm (I have become) so tired of this! (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 141)
- (349) 我饿了。
Wǒ è le.
I'm so hungry (now)! (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 141)

Fusion of meanings was mentioned by Li and Thompson, as well. They say, a *le* sentence can express several functions at the same time, for example to signal a new situation, to correct a false impression, and to imply what hearer should do next. (L&T 1981)

- (350) 我喝了三杯了。
Wǒ hē-le sān-bēi le.
(Look, I tell you) I've drunk three glasses!
I've drunk three glasses (and quit saying ganbei)! (L&T 1981: 279)
- (351) 我洗好了衣服了。
Wǒ xǐhǎo-le yīfú le.
I've finished (the project of) clothes washing (which you knew I had to do).
I've finished clothes washing (so, now we can go to the movies) (Chang 1986: 80)

Note, that Li and Thompson's examples are actually double-*le* sentences, and as discussed in Chapter 1.3 and 1.4, these sentences are linked to Speech Time, which enables such a variety of readings.

Synthesis 18: Modal meanings of operator *le* (Chap. 4)

Modal meaning of verbal *le*:

= norm/deviation

Modal meanings of sentence-final *le*:

= norm/deviation;

= correcting a wrong assumption; counter expectations

= excessive meaning

= conversation: demanding immediate indication for reversal or not

Patterns:

tai + A + *le*

(*tai*) + A + *le* + D

Modal adverbs:

hen 'very', *ting* 'very', *shifen* 'rather', *wanfen* 'ten-thousand', *feichang* 'very', *ji* 'extremely' and *jiduan* 'extremely', *you-dianr* 'a little' and *you-xie* '-ish'; *geng*, 'more', *gengjia* 'more', *gengwei* 'more', *yuefa* 'more', and *yuejia* 'more'; *shaowei* 'rather', *duoshao* 'ratherish' and *luewei* 'slightly'; *zui* 'most' and *ding* 'top'; *bijiao* 'more', *jiao* 'more', and *hai* 'even'

→ operator *le* is not expected to occur close to these expressions.

5. VERB-FINAL CONSTRUCTIONS

In this chapter, I will focus on constructions, where *le* is placed post-verbally and sentence-finally at the same time. Therefore, it is hard to determine the scope of *le*. The semantic value of the utterance and the presence of other lexical means can guide us to choose the appropriate reading(s), which are, as predicted, just a variety of one-to-zero dynamics or zero-to-one dynamics.

The operator *le* in Chinese can appear in two syntactic positions in the sentence. One is directly after the verb or verb compound; the other is at the end of a sentence. When the verb is at the end of the sentence *le* occurs at the same time directly after the verb and at the end of the sentence. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 48) In verb-final structures it is not possible to distinguish between verbal and sentence-final *le*. It is frequently said, in such cases two *les* have merged into one, or some instances represent verbal *le*, while the other ones represent sentence-final *le*.

Li and Thompson (1981) advocate two *les* approach and propose the following criteria for distinguishing one *le* from the other. They say that there are three possibilities: (i) it could be *le*, which marks currently relevant state (CRS), (ii) it could be perfective *-le*, or (iii) *le* could have the function of both *-le* and *le*, in which case the sentence must have the meaning of a *perfective* event that is a *Currently Relevant State*. (cf. L&T 1981: 296) I will first quote their explanation for all three possibilities, and then add my comment.

First, according to Li and Thompson, a sentence-final *le* is simply CRS *le* in sentences expressing imminent states to which some reaction is expected; in negative sentences; and with nonperfective but changed states. (cf. L&T 1981: 296-297)

- (352) 小黄快要来了!
 Xiǎo Huáng kuài yào lái le!
 Xiao Huang is coming! (L&T 1981: 296)
- (353) 火车马上就开了。
 Huǒchē mǎshàng jiù kāi le.
 The train is leaving immediately. (L&T 1981: 296)
- (354) 我不进来了。
 Wǒ bù jìnlái le.
 I'm not coming in. (L&T 1981: 297)
- (355) 过了上下班的时候，公共汽车就空了。
 Guò-le shàng xià bān de shíhòu, gōnggòng qìchē jiù kōng le.
 Once rush hour is over, the buses will be empty. (L&T 1981: 297)
- (356) 我醒过来了。
 Wǒ xǐng-guòlái le.
 I woke up. (L&T 1981: 297)

Second, a sentence-final *le* is simply perfective *-le* “only with verbs that have an end point as part of their inherent meaning, such as *mie* ‘extinguish’ and *si* ‘die’.” (L&T 1981: 298)

- (357) 炸弹爆了。
 Zhádàn bào le.
 The bomb exploded. (L&T 1981: 298)
- (358) 火灭了。
 Huǒ miè le.
 The fire went out. (L&T 1981: 299)
- (359) 他死了。
 Tā sǐ le.
 He died. (L&T 1981: 298)

“If we add a specific time phrase, the perfective meaning of *le* will be more prominent.” (L&T 1981: 299). This is to say, if we place a situation in/at some specific time frame.

- (360) 炸弹九点钟爆了。
 Zhádàn jiǔ-diǎn zhōng bào le.
 The bomb exploded *at nine o'clock*. (L&T 1981: 299)
- (361) 火昨天晚上灭了。
 Huǒ zuótiān wǎnshàng miè le.
 The fire went out *last night*. (L&T 1981: 299)
- (362) 他 1969 年死了。
 Tā 1969 nián sǐ le.
 He died *in 1969*. (L&T 1981: 298)

Third, in other cases, one should consider a fusion of meanings.

Li and Thompson’s descriptions are actually very good hints for interpreting utterances, and represent different combinations of factors. I will present them in the following figures. One *le* approach completely avoids the dilemma of labeling *le* as ‘post-verbal’ or ‘sentence-final’. Operator *le* contributes to change in dynamics in all cases. But how precisely this change is interpreted, is the matter of interaction with other elements, our focus and the most relevant interpretation.

Because of Bounded Event Constraint (page 60) and Simplicity Principle of Interpretation (page 60), bounded situations are by default considered as past situations. Recall as well chapter on Viewpoint aspect (pages 121-129), where situations with verbal *le* are said to be actualized. If Reference Time equals to Speech Time¹⁰⁰, the idea of some current relevance will be present. Other lexical means also help to determine the most probable meaning. I will summarize these ideas in Figure 15 for convenience.

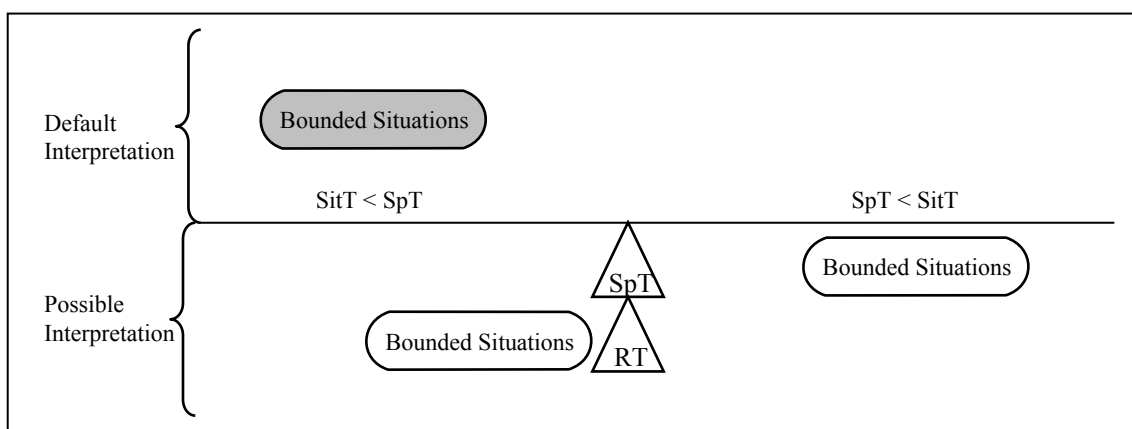


Figure 15: Default interpretation of bounded situations

¹⁰⁰ If not specified otherwise, Reference Time does equal to Speech Time. Recall Chapter 2.

Consider these last examples, again. Sentence (352) is anchored at Speech Time, contains a future oriented expression *kuai yao* ‘soon will’ and focuses on the immediate future.¹⁰¹ Expression *mashang* ‘immediately’ in the next example is of the same kind. These are examples for **imminent situations** and can be presented in the following way.

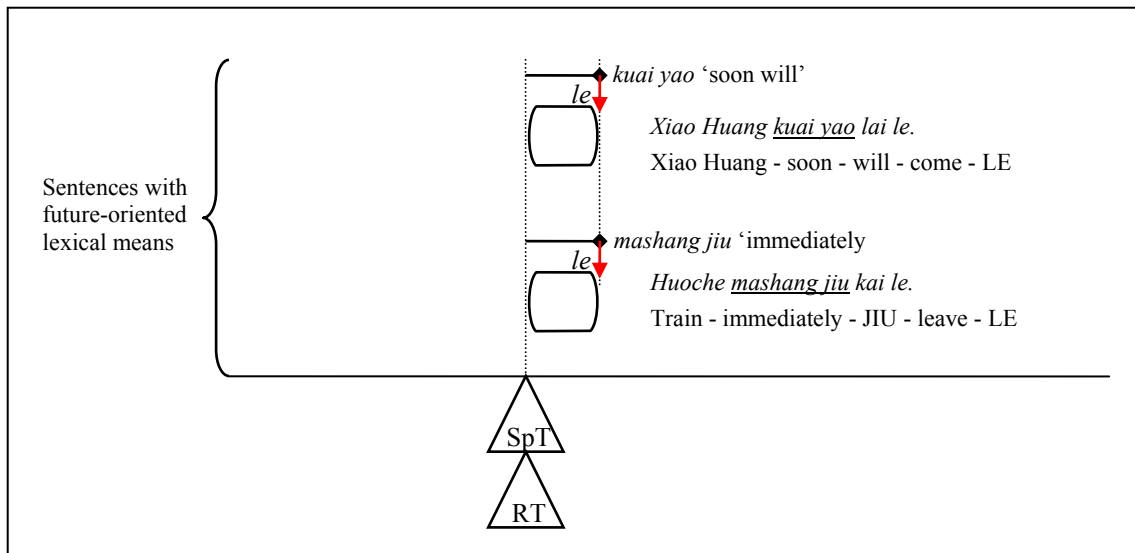


Figure 16: Sentences with *le* expressing imminent situations

Actually, it is general agreed that sentences with *le* can produce imminent interpretations. Let me mention just two examples from grammars.

Yip and Rimmington (2004: 317-318): “Some expressions, which clearly signal new situations, past or future, are naturally linked with end-of-sentence *le*: time adverbs like *yijing* ‘already’, *kuai* ‘is about to’, *yao* ‘will soon’; modal verbs, which indicate future possibilities, obligations or necessities; and all sentences with resultative complements signifying that something has ‘already’ been or will be accomplished or brought about. ... By tagging *le* to the statement [speaker] wants to affirm the message and make the listener aware of its importance or relevance to the immediate situation. This immediate situation [is] commonly located in the present.”

PAVC1 (1999: 235): “If you want to indicate that an action of affair will soon occur, then add a *le* at the end of the sentence. In addition, *kuai* ‘soon’, *kuai yao* ‘soon will’, *yao* ‘will’ or *jiu(yao)* ‘then will’ are often placed in front of the verb.”

¹⁰¹ By omitting the phrase *kuai yao* ‘soon will’, resulting sentence would mean ‘Xiao Huang came’. Recall Figure 13 that past time is default interpretation for bounded situations. On the other hand, one cannot just simply replace the phrase *kuai yao* ‘soon will’ with time expression which indicates far future, e.g. **Xiao Huang san nian yihou yao lai le.* ‘Xiao Huang will come after three years’. This indicates that Speech Time and the notion of ‘immediate future’ is important.

- (363) 我们快要放假了。
 Wǒmen kuàiyào fàngjià le.
 We'll soon have vacation. (PAVC1 1999: 235)
- (364) 他要回国了。
 Tā yào huíguó le
 He is returning home. (PAVC1 1999: 235)
- (365) 火车快要开了。
 Huǒchē kuàiyào kāi le.
 Train will be leaving soon. (PAVC1 1999: 235)

Example (354) represents **negative sentences** with *le*. I agree such utterances have currently relevant meanings, and I suggest this is an obvious result of fusion of features in such cases. The notion of negating situations is not in congruence with the notion of presenting situations as whole, which are by default placed before RT. If a situation does not exist, operator *le* cannot indicate change of that particular situation. Therefore, verbal *le* is not found in such environments. However, if negated sentence is considered from a wider scope, i.e. as stative situation with negative value, operator *le* indicates the initial impulse of that particular state. Figure 17 is showing my point.

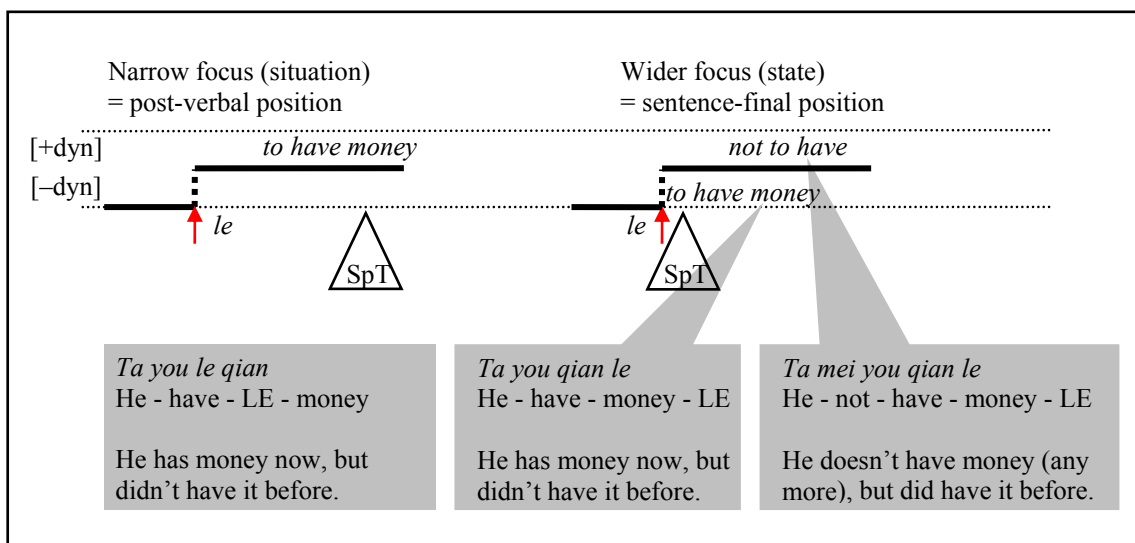


Figure 17: The same effect of *le* on stative situations on different levels

Example (356) *Wo xing guolai le*. 'I woke up' serves to demonstrate Li and Thompson's last point about CRS interpretation, i.e. **nonperfective** but **changed states**. If one is focusing on a situation 'of waking up' as an active process, the completive reading will be the most appropriate. Further on, as mentioned before in Figure 5 (p. 83), the change itself (i.e. 'to wake up') or the resulting state (i.e. 'to be awake') can be focused on. This point can also be seen from Yip and Rimmington's observation, saying that "an end-of-sentence *le* following a verb may often represent the completion of the action indicated by the verb as well as the emergence of a new situation." (Y&R 2004: 323) This interpretation is also sketched on the left part of Figure 17.

- (366) 天清（黑；亮；……）了。
 Tiān qīng (hēi; liàng; ...) le.
 It has cleared up (It's gone dark; It's light now; ...) (Y&R 2004: 323)
- (367) 雨停了。
 Yǔ tíng le.
 It's stopped raining. (Y&R 2004: 323)
- (368) 你胖了。
 Nǐ pàng le.
 You've put on weight. (Y&R 2004: 323)
- (369) 我的孩子都大了。
 Wǒde háizi dōu dà le.
 My children are all grown up. (Y&R 2004: 323)
- (370) 我们赢了。
 Wǒmen yíng le.
 We won. (Y&R 2004: 323)
- (371) 谁输了？
 Shéi shū le?
 Who lost? (Y&R 2004: 323)

In general, sentence (355) can also be called nonperfective changed state, since this state (i.e. buses being empty) holds at any time (i.e. past, present, future), and represents a change regarding to some other state (i.e. before/at rush hour). But in my opinion, such interpretation arises because of our common knowledge (i.e. about traffic). Operator *le* still contributes to the same change, as presented in Figure 18.

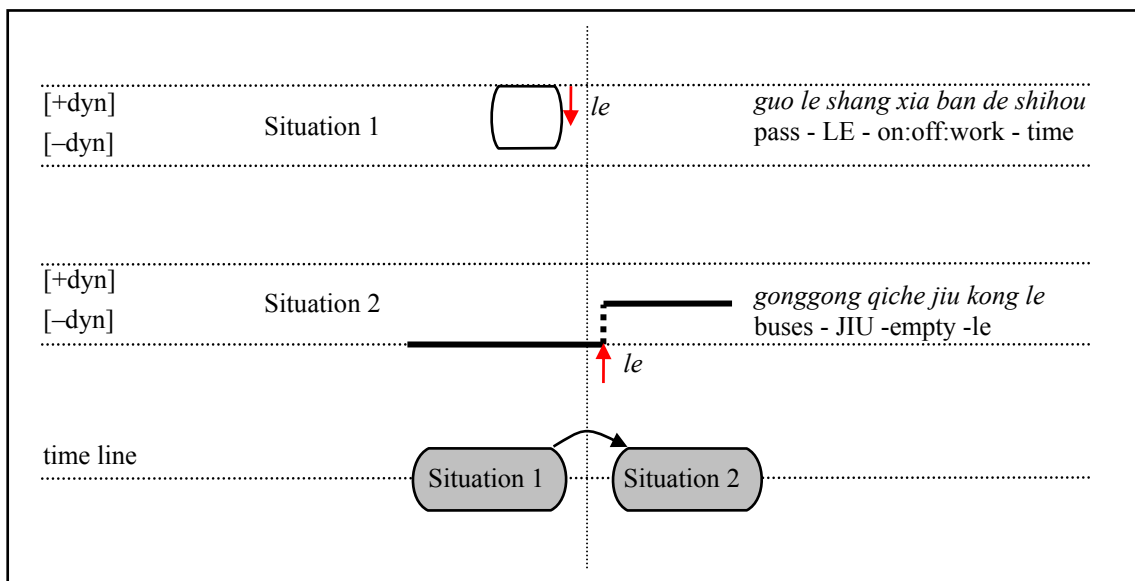


Figure 18: Le in generalizing stative - an example

Sequences like this are more likely to be understood as generalizing statives (c.f. section 9.1.2, p. 67), and not as particular eventualities (c.f. section 9.1.1, p. 66). It is then the Principle of relevance that guides us to choose the proper interpretation. However, if a specific temporal frame was given, the same sentence would be understood temporally.

(372) 昨天过了上下班的时候，公共汽车就空了。

Zuótiān guò-le shàng xià bān de shíhòu, gōnggòng qìchē jiù kōng le.

Yesterday, as rush hour was over, the buses became empty.

This is already an example of sequencing among situations, what is related to the notion of ‘anteriority’.

These were instances of so-called ‘pure CRS *le*’. The other possibility was ‘pure perfective *le*’. Examples included verbs that have an end point as part of their inherent meaning, and as such have value [-dur][+tel]. Bounded events are by default placed before Speech Time, therefore understood as past situations. It is also not very probable that instantaneous events happen just before Speech Time, what makes them currently relevant. Beside of that, the addressee has to ask him/herself, what is the relevant information in that environment, i.e. is focus placed on event or resulting state. However, with appropriate context, such utterances can also be currently relevant.

The third group includes mixed interpretations. According to Yip and Rimmington, even three functions can be fused to one. “In some cases, even the meaning of the isomorphic *liao* ‘to end’ may be implied in an end-of-sentence *le*, thus giving it a three-in-one function.” (Y&R 2004: 323)

(373) 请把剩下的酒喝（掉）了！

Qǐng bǎ shèngxià de jiǔ hē (diào) le!

Please finish off the remaining wine.

(Y&R 2004: 323)

(374) 垃圾我已经倒（掉）了。

Làjǐ wǒ yǐjīng dǎodiào le.

I have already tipped out the rubbish.

(Y&R 2004: 323)

(375) 她把不要的衣服全扔（掉）了。

Tā bǎ bú yào de yīfú quán rēngdiào le.

She threw out all the clothes she did not want.

(Y&R 2004: 323)

I agree that these sentences express the same meaning as their longer counterparts with *diao* ‘drop/finish’. At first sight, it really seems that *le* still carries the meaning of *liao* ‘to end’. Since my work does not include diachronic perspective, I cannot judge to which extent (if any) the original

meaning influences the interpretation of sentences in standard Chinese.¹⁰² However, it is worth noting that all these examples have one feature in common, mentioned first on page 116. Namely, object is somehow highlighted, either with coverb *ba* or regarded as topic. In both cases, its boundary is more specific. Recall example (269) (p. 116), where potentially bounded NP became clearly bounded and sentence resulted in completive reading.

I propose that it is not the operator *le*, that still carries the original meaning of *liao* ‘to complete’; instead, such sentences get completive reading because of their value [+telic], contributed by *diao*.¹⁰³ Without resultative complements, these verbs would be atelic. There is no doubt about that for the verb *he* ‘to drink’ (example (373)) or *reng* ‘to throw’ (example (375)), but it might be questionable for *dao* ‘turn around’ (example (374)). Here is an example, showing that also *dao* is atelic, because it is compatible with *for*-adverbials.

(376) 不想再跟朋友倒垃圾，倒了半天，还是流...

Bù xiǎng zài gēn péngyǒu dào lājī, dào-le bàn-tiān, hái shì liú ...

I’m not going to topple garbage bins with friends any more. I was emptying it for ages, but things were still pouring out. (web)

In addition, other lexical means in these sentences are also in congruence with the meaning ‘to complete’ and even increase the likelihood of *le* to appear. The first one is imperative sentence, requiring the action of drinking wine to be completed; the second sentence includes *yijing* ‘already’, what means that SitT < RT; and the third one includes expression *quan* ‘whole’.

Chappell (1988) listed the major syntactic constructions with *le* which are verb-final. I gathered them in the form of the following table:

¹⁰² If the reader is interested in diachronic development of *le*, he/she should refer to some other researches, e.g. Ljungqvist (2007), Van den Berg and Wu (2006), Shi (1988), Cao (1995) among others.

¹⁰³ This value is not so obvious, because object is not typically bounded with numeral phrase.

	Pattern	Explanation
1	Subject NP - V _i - <i>le</i> ¹⁰⁴	Intransitive predicates with no postverbal complements
2	Object NP - (subject NP) - V _t - <i>le</i>	Object Preposing
3	Topic NP - NP - V - <i>le</i>	Topic - Comment
4	Subject NP - <i>ba</i> - object NP - V - <i>le</i>	Causative or disposal <i>ba</i> construction
5	NP - <i>bei</i> - NP - V _t - <i>le</i>	Passive constructions with no postverbal complement nouns
6	NP - <i>jiao</i> - NP - V _i - <i>le</i>	Causative constructions with intransitive main verbs

Table 13: Verb-final structures with operator *le* in Chinese

6. TEMPORAL INTERPRETATIONS

In Chapter 5, I presented Smith's Temporal Schema Principle, according to which bounded situations are placed in the past and unbounded in the present. Since *le* contributes to boundedness value of situations (usually one-to-zero dynamics), sentences with *le* by default tend to get past interpretations. On the other hand, bounded situations do not need the presence of *le*, in order to be understood as past.

Since lexical means may influence temporal interpretations, I will focus on directional complements (increase the likelihood of *le*), future-oriented verbs (decrease the likelihood of *le*), modal verbs (decrease the likelihood of *le*) and other perfectivizing means (decrease the likelihood of *le*). Adverbial expressions may also increase or decrease the probability of *le*.

With directional complements, verbal *le* tends to be used for narration, whereas sentential *le* carries a notion that a situation is brought up to speech time. I will show as well, that Chang (1986) was wrong in claiming that the verb in VP's with verbal *le* is invariably monosyllabic.

6.1 Default temporal interpretations

The basic pattern is deictic, with situations located in relation to Speech Time. In deixis, the default interpretation locates ongoing events and states in the Present, and bounded events in the Past. It was shown in Chapter 0, (page 85), that verbal *le* shows a strong preference for telic and bounded situations. If we know that bounded situations are by default understood as past events, it becomes

¹⁰⁴ Note that the operator *le* is not an obligatory component of these seven syntactic constructions. When it is present, the problem of identification as either post-verbal or sentence-final *le* arises.

clear why operator *le* is often associated with past time. Many authors have already pointed out this relation. (Y&R 2004: 103; Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 77)

Yang (1995) adds that all telic situations can be presented with the actual viewpoint.¹⁰⁵ In addition, atelic situations, when they are bounded temporally by delimiting mechanism¹⁰⁶, can also take *le*. But without such delimiting devices providing a temporal boundary, atelic situations cannot felicitously co-occur with *le*. (cf. X&McE 2004: 102)

- (377) * 小李爱了小赵。¹⁰⁷
* Xiǎo Lǐ ài-le Xiǎo Zhào.
(Intended meaning) Xiao Li loved Xiao Zhao. (X&McE 2004: 102)
- (378) 小李爱了小赵三年。
Xiǎo Lǐ ài-le Xiǎo Zhào sān-nián.
Xiao Li loved Xiao Zhao for 3 years.
(state bounded by a *for*-adverbial) (X&McE 2004: 102)
- (379) * 李四推了车。
* Lǐsì tuī-le chē.
(Intended meaning) Lisi pushed the cart. (X&McE 2004: 103)
- (380) 李四推了推车。
Lǐsì tuī-le tuī chē.
Lisi pushed the cart a bit. (activity bounded by verb reduplication) (X&McE 2004: 103)
- (381) * 李四咳嗽了。
* Lǐsì késòu-le
(Intended meaning) Lisi coughed. (X&McE 2004: 103)
- (382) 李四咳嗽了一声。
Lǐsì késòu-le yī-shēng
Lisi coughed once.
(semelfactive bounded by a verbal classifier phrase) (X&McE 2004: 103)

Boundedness is actually also the key factor in Li and Thompson's (1981) work for perfectivity and verbal *le*. They say that aspect suffix *-le* expresses perfectivity (L&T 1981: 185) and that sentences with verbal *le* often seem to be referring to past time, because many perfective events reported in speech are events that occurred prior to the time of speaking. Unless the context makes it clear that a different time is being referred to, a perfective sentence with verbal *le* will be understood to refer

¹⁰⁵ Recall chapter 2.1 on actuality, p. 122.

¹⁰⁶ Remember as well that not all atelic situations can be bounded with delimiting mechanisms. See Rule 2, page 29.

¹⁰⁷ Consider similar example (415) with additional interpretation on page 168.

to past time. On the other hand, it does not follow from this that past-time events must be perfective. (cf. L&T 1981: 213-215)

We cannot find a simple one-to-one correlation with perfectly presented situations and post-verbal *le* either.

(383) 记者在供需见面会上看见许多动人的情景。

Jìzhě zài gōngxū jiànmiàn huì-shàng kànjiàn xǔduō dòngrén de qíngjǐng.

On the demand and supply meeting, journalists saw many touching scenes. (SkE)

One might object that *kanjian* ‘to see’ is already a two-syllable verb, where the first part *kan* ‘look’ expresses activity, and the second part *jian* ‘see’ expresses the result of this activity, which inherently bounds the situation and *overrides* the function of *le*, i.e. ‘to look and see’. But I don’t think this is a convincing reason for omitting *le*, since there are many examples with and without verbal *le*. I rather follow Smith’s (2006) Temporal Schema Principle, saying that zero-marked sentences are interpreted according to the temporal features of the situation they express, i.e. intrinsically bounded events are taken as bounded; whereas states and other events are taken as unbounded. This principle is defined in the following way: “Interpret zero-marked sentences according to the temporal schema of the situation expressed in the sentence, unless there is explicit or contextual information to the contrary.” (Smith 2006: 6)

There are some other levels to discuss, like influence of foregrounding and backgrounding, peak information in a series of events etc, that will be discussed later on, but these factors do not contradict the statement above.

Synthesis 19: Default temporal interpretations (Chap. 6)

Default temporal interpretations:

Bounded situations → interpreted as past

Unbounded situations → interpreted as present

⇒ verbal *le* is often associated with past time

zero-marked sentences → consider situation aspect

6.2 Influencing temporal interpretations

In Chapter 4.1 (p.50) it was noted that aspect primarily introduces information about situation type and viewpoint, but as we saw in the previous section, aspect can also *subtly indicate* temporal interpretation in zero-marked clauses. Lexical forms are said to *suggest* temporal interpretation, whereas temporal adverbs *give direct* information about location in time.

These sub-chapters are devoted to lexical means that influence temporal interpretation of sentences.

6.2.1 Lexical means

Directional complements

Activity verbs have features [-bnd] and [+dur]. According to Temporal Schema Principle of zero-marked clauses, activities are understood as ongoing and located in the Present. This is also true in the following isolated example:

- (384) 我吃/跑。
Wǒ chī/pǎo.
I am eating/running.

I advocate that operator *le* contributes only to change in dynamics. I showed in the Chapter 1.5 (ff. 107) that operator *le* gives an one-to-zero impulse to dynamic situations. As such, situations become bounded. Consequently, this means that adding verbal *le* to the sentence can result in change of boundedness. Once unbounded situations become bounded, they get different, perfective interpretation.

- (385) 我吃了/跑了。
Wǒ chī le/pǎo le.
I ate/ran.

Smith and Erbaugh (2005) say that “there are several contexts in which *le* is obligatory if one wishes to convey the meaning of boundedness. For instance, a single syllable verb without a Resultative complement conveys an ongoing situation without *le*.” (S&E 2005: 752) Their statement express actually the same phenomenon, that is exemplified by the two paragraphs above. It implies as well, that resultative complements change the value of unbounded situations to bounded situations. This also coincides with Yang’s (2002:247) statement that “single-syllable verbs and main verbs without a verb complement are much more likely to include a *le*.”

Ma (2006) remarks that “the production data shows that the structure ‘**verb directional complement +*le***’ seems to be one of the most widely used structures by both learners and native speakers; therefore, knowing the uses of *le* in this structure should be given a high priority. The general rule is that *le* is used after the complement because the verb and complement work together as a unit. If there is a NP after the complement, depending on the context, speakers’ preferences and other possible factors, *le* may have one of two positions: before or after the NP. The following sentences are examples that illustrate the guidelines.” (Ma 2006: 158)

- (386) a. 今天的功课，他写完了。
 b. 他写完了今天的功课。
 c. 他写完今天的功课了。
 a. Jīntiān de gōngkè, tā xiěwán LE.
 b. Tā xiěwán LE jīntiān de gōngkè.
 c. Tā xiěwán jīntiān de gōngkè LE.
 a-c. He has finished writing today's homework. (Ma 2006: 158)

In short, resultative verb compounds and *le* allow the following two combinations: ‘RVC-*le*-O’ and ‘RVC-O-*le*’.

The position of *le* with **directional complement** is more diverse than with resultative complement. If there is no NP involved, *le* can be placed either before or after the directional complement. The situation becomes more complex when there is a NP because the nature of the NP affects the position of *le*. (cf. Ma 2006: 159) I will present all the combinations in the following table, on the basis of examples *pao (jin)lai* ‘run (in)here’, *pao jin wuzi lai* ‘run inhere to the room’ and *dai shuiguo (jin)lai* ‘bring fruits (in)here’.

	1	2	3
	Directional phrase without object	Directional phrase with physical object	Directional phrase with location
a	pao (jin) ¹⁰⁸ lai le	Dai (jin)lai le O	pao jin le Loc
b		Dai (jin)lai O le	pao jin Loc (lai) le
c	pao le (jin)lai	Dai le O (jin)lai	
d		Dai O (jin)lai le	
e		Dai jin O lai	pao jin Loc lai

Table 14: Directional verb compounds and operator *le*

Here are examples, one for each of these structures:¹⁰⁹

- (387) “老虎，老虎跑进来了！”女工李春娥叫了起来。
 “Lǎohǔ, lǎohǔ pǎo-jìn-lái le!” nǚgōng Lǐ Chūn’é jiào-le qǐlái.
 “Tiger, tiger has ran in!” worker Li Chun’e shouted. (pattern 1a) (web)

¹⁰⁸ Brackets mean that part inside them can be omitted. This holds for entire table.

¹⁰⁹ Data is showing that not all constructions are equally favored. While patterns 1a and 1c are frequently used, patterns 2a and 2b are in contrary not so popular, since many of utterances with directional complement and direct object rather take the form of ba-construction. I assume reasons are lying elsewhere, for example in the focus of such utterances. However, this is already the issue for another research. In my paper, I will focus just on operator *le*.

- (388) 一个战士跑了进来，单膝下跪道：
 Yī-gè zhànshì pǎo-le jìnlái, dānxī xià guì dào: ...
 A soldier ran in, went down on one knee and said: ... (pattern 1c) (web)
- (389) 一个月后的某天晚上，王明却带进来了另一位女孩，
 Yī-gè yuè hòu de mǒu-tiān wǎnshàng, Wáng Míng què dài-jìn-lái-le líng yī-wèi nǚhái,
 On one evening after a month, Wang Ming brought
 another girl in here. (pattern 2a) (web)
- (390) 我下载了！又让我粉碎了！因为带进来病毒了！
 Wǒ xiàzài le! Yòu ràng wǒ fěnsuì le! Yīnwei dài jìn lái bìng dú le!
 I've downloaded it! But my computer has collapsed again!
 Because I've got virus in there! (pattern 2b) (web)
- (391) 她们俩个人只带了必需品进来，其他的都没带。
 Tāmen liǎng-gè rén zhǐ dài-le bixūpǐn jìnlái, qítā de dōu méi dài.
 They two only brought personal necessities in here,
 and nothing else. (pattern 2c) (web)
- (392) “我忘带衣服进来了。”她的声音里有着少女的羞涩。
 “Wǒ wàng dài yīfú jìnlái le.” Tāde shēngyīn-lǐ yǒuzhe shǎonǚ de xiūsè.
 “I forgot to take clothes with me in here”,
 she said with shy voice. (pattern 2d) (web)
- (393) 妈妈买回一只大火鸡来。
 Māma mǎi huí yī-zhī dà huǒjī lái.
 Mum bought (and brought home) a big turkey. (Y&R 2004: 134)
- (394) 当你一打开信箱，木马已经跑进了你的电脑。
 Dāng nǐ yī dǎkāi xìnxiāng, mùmǎ yǐjīng pǎo-jìn-le nǐde diànnǎo
 As soon as you open your mailbox, Trojans will have already ran
 into your computer. (web)
- (395) 曹吉祥双手捧着一张墨迹未干的诏书，上气不接下气地跑进殿来了。
 Cáo Jíxiáng shuāngshǒu pěngzhe yī-zhāng mòjī wèi gān de zhàoshū, shàngqì bù jiē xiàqì de
 pǎo-jìn diàn lái le.
 Ink on the imperial edict hasn't dried up yet, as Cao Jixiang with it in his hands completely
 out of breath rushed into the palace. (web)
- (396) 儿子兴冲冲地跑进屋来，抖抖地给他递上了西北农业大学的入学通知书。
 Érzi xìngchōngchōng de pǎo-jìn wū lái, dǒudǒu de gěi tā dìshàng-le Xīběi nóngyè dàxué de
 rùxué tōngzhīshū.
 Son ran into the house, and shivering with excitement handed him the admission notice from
 Northwest Agricultural University. (web)

Example (387) refers to situation that is brought up to speech time, whereas sentence (388) is part of narrative passage. Therefore, in the first sentence operator *le* is expected at sentence-final position, and in the second sentence, operator *le* is used post-verbally. In my proposal, the scope of operator *le* differs according to its position, so verbal *le* focuses on event itself, and sentence-final *le* takes under its scope the whole utterance and relates it to Speech time.¹¹⁰ Yip and Rimmington (2004) make similar statement, saying: “If the sentence is a narrative rather than expository, the completed action aspect marker *le* comes after the verb and before the direction indicator.” (Y&R 2004: 132)

Chang (1986) noted that among the phrases with directional complements in which only¹¹¹ the suffix *le* is used, the verb is invariably monosyllabic. Among the phrases with directional complements which involve only the sentence-final *le*, both monosyllabic and bisyllabic verbs are used as the main verb. (Chang 1986: 234) I do not completely agree with this statement. Chang’s data included only 28 instances in which operator *le* is used with directional complements, 15 of them involved verbal *le* and the other 13 sentence-final *le*. However, if larger data is taken under consideration, we get different results, as presented in Table 15 below:

	All instances	Different ¹¹² instances	All 1-syllable verbs	Different 1- syllable verbs	All 2-syllable verbs	Different 2- syllable verbs
<i>V le shanglai</i> ‘come up V’	568 100,0%	54 100,0%	546 96,1%	47 87,0%	22 3,9%	7 13,0%
<i>V le xialai</i> ‘come down V’	1978 100,0%	264 100,0%	1608 81,3%	160 60,6%	370 18,7%	104 39,4%
<i>V le chulai</i> ‘come out V’	1544 100,0%	247 100,0%	1321 85,6%	170 68,8%	223 14,4%	77 31,2%
<i>V le jinlai</i> ‘come in V’	158 100,0%	58 100,0%	139 88,0%	48 82,8%	19 12,0%	10 17,2%
<i>V le guolai</i> ‘come over V’	545 100,0%	109 100,0%	490 89,9%	84 77,1%	55 10,1%	25 22,9%
<i>V le huilai</i> ‘come back V’	415 100,0%	101 100,0%	386 93,0%	81 80,2%	29 7,0%	20 19,8%
<i>V le qilai</i> ‘get V up; start V’	3401 100,0%	437 100,0%	2881 84,7%	227 51,9%	520 15,3%	210 48,1%

¹¹⁰ Note, however, that *le* operates on discourse level, as well, where it separates units of discourse. This reading is usually produced with *le* on sentence-final position, but sometimes also with verbal *le*. (I am grateful to Martia Ljungqvist, who drew my attention to diversity in examples (387)-(396))

¹¹¹ “Only” suffix *-le* is meant as the opposite to “double-*le*” constructions.

¹¹² Columns “All instances” give the absolute value and include all the results of the same query. Columns “Different instances” present relative values and indicate the number of different verbs in the selected pattern.

	All instances	Different ¹¹² instances	All 1-syllable verbs	Different 1- syllable verbs	All 2-syllable verbs	Different 2- syllable verbs
<i>V le kailai</i> 'start V'	28 100,0%	15 100,0%	25 89,3%	12 80,0%	3 10,7%	3 20,0%
Total	8637 100,0%	1285 100,0%	7396 85,6%	829 64,5%	1241 14,4%	456 35,5%

Table 15: Distribution of verbs within constructions with directional complement (SkE)

Data from Sketch Engine include 8637 instances of construction 'V + *le* + directional complement (with *lai*)'. I limited this test to combinations with *lai* 'come'. Results clearly show that Chang's (1986) observation is not completely right, and this fact would not change if another test with *qu* 'go' was made.

From a certain point of view, Chang's statement is statistically not so wrong. 85,6% of all instances actually have monosyllabic verb as the main verb. Only remaining 14,4% have bisyllabic verb. Chang's sample included just 28 instances, that were taken from popular Chinese readers for foreigners, i.e. *Jichu Hanyu Keben* 'Elementary Chinese Readers' and *Huangliang Meng* 'Golden millet dram'. In such material it is quite possible that only one-syllable verbs appeared.

On the other hand, proportion gets more balanced if we consider just different instances of directional verb phrases. Results are showing that 64,5% are monosyllabic verbs, whereas 35,5% are bisyllabic verbs. Among the most frequently used are for example 追赶上来 *zhuīgǎn shànglái* 'to pursue; quicken up', 坚持下来 *jiānchí xiàlái* 'to persist in', 解放出来 *jiěfàng chūlái* 'to liberate', 加入进来 *jiārù jìnlái* 'to join in', 吸引过来 *xīyǐn guòlái* 'to attract', 抢救回来 *qiǎngjiù huílái* 'to rescue back', 结合起来 *jiéhé qīlái* 'to join up' and 隔离开来 *gélí kāilái* 'to segregate'.

The results show that the pattern *V le qilai* 'get V up; start V' is the most balanced in this group. 51,9% of different verbs are monosyllabic, and 48,1% of different verbs are bisyllabic. I assume that such balanced proportion is related to the semantic scope of this pattern. Let me explain my idea with two patterns, which are the most diverse according to results.

The pattern *V le shanglai* expresses that some action/disposal is 'coming up'. The results show that 87% of the verbs are monosyllabic, whereas only 13% of the verbs are bisyllabic. Here is the list of the first 10 most frequently used verbs in the pattern *V le shanglai*: 追 *zhuī* 'chase after', 赶 *gǎn* 'catch up', 围 *wéi* 'enclose', 救 *jiù* 'rescue', 拉 *lā* 'pull', 冲 *chōng* 'rush', 端 *duān* 'bring', 爬 *pá* 'climb', 迎 *yíng* 'move towards' and 扑 *pū* 'pounce on'. As we see, all of these verbs express actions, which can be 'moved up'. Actually, there are a few bisyllabic verbs like 追赶 *zhuīgǎn* 'to pursue', but the majority is monosyllabic.

The pattern *V le qilai*, on the other hand, may express that some action/movement is 'getting up' or is 'starting'. The second meaning, i.e. to initiate an action, is widely applicable to different verbs, not just verbs of movement. Here is the list of the first 10 most frequently used verbs in the pattern

V le qilai: 多 *duō* ‘more/increase’, 站 *zhàn* ‘stand’, 哭 *kū* ‘cry’, 跳 *tiào* ‘jump’, 笑 *xiào* ‘laugh’, 聊 *liáo* ‘chat’, 动 *dòng* ‘move’, 富 *fù* ‘rich’, 干 *gān* ‘dry’ and 响 *xiǎng* ‘sound’. There are as well many bisyllabic verbs in this group: 结合 *jiéhé* ‘combine’, 热闹 *rènao* ‘lively’, 活跃 *huóyuè* ‘active’, 联系 *liánxi* ‘contact’, 连接 *liánjiē* ‘join’, 调动 *diàodòng* ‘transfer’, 发展 *fāzhǎn* ‘develop’, 开展 *kāizhǎn* ‘develop’, *xíngdòng* 行动 ‘act’ and 站立 *zhàn lì* ‘stand’.

However, a simple explanation like this does not cover all aspects of operator *le* and is not sufficient at all. One has to consider as well the ‘weight’ of information. All RVCs do not behave equally in relation to operator *le*. **Resultative Complement** strongly favors **inclusion** of *le* in **foregrounded clauses**, while a **directional complement** strongly favors **omitting** it. However, non-native speakers are often insensitive to the importance of RVCs. (Yang 2002:247 in Smith and Erbaugh 2005: 761)

My findings agree with what other authors (S&E 2005, Yang 2002, Christensen 1994, Hendriks et al 1998, among others) have argued that resultative complements and directional complements contribute to the notion of boundedness and telicity. Situations with such attributes are dynamic, and consequently, operator *le* is more likely to occur in their presence.

Future-oriented verbs

In the Chapter 4.1.2 (p. 55) I presented Smith and Erbaugh’s (2005) observation, that future-oriented verbs also convey temporal information. The default interpretation of a future-oriented verb complement is unrealized or future. In such environments, operator *le* is not expected to occur, regardless of whether we are speaking about future in past (RT < SitT < SpT; see also Chapter 2, ff. 41) or absolute future (SpT < SitT = RT).

This was also confirmed in the corpus of Sketch Engine. For example, word *zhunbei* can be used as verb ‘prepare (something)’, as verb ‘plan to (do something)’ or as noun ‘preparation’. In several random samples of 500 items, no instance of *zhunbei* in the sense of ‘to plan’ and *le* in the same sentence appeared. Therefore, I took in account the complete corpus.

Data included 189.208 instances of *zhunbei*, 64.996 of them were directly combined with another verb, e.g. *zhunbei jinxing* ‘prepare to carry through’, *zhunbei tuixiu* ‘plan to retire’, *zhunbei qude* ‘plan to get’ etc. But just 108 of them were found close to operator *le* (or other way round). Among 108 instances of *zhunbei - V- le* pattern, operator *le* was in 73 cases used also sentence-finally and in 35 cases only post-verbally. As we see, when *zhunbei* is used in the sense of ‘to plan’, operator *le* is not expected to occur. However, I am not saying that *zhunbei* and *le* are incompatible in all cases. When used as verb indicating the idea ‘to prepare’, it naturally does appear with operator *le*. Compare the following sentences:

- (397) 为了预防万一，中正机场当时还准备了应变措施。
 Wéile yùfáng wànyī, zhōngzhèng jīchǎng dāngshí hái zhǔnbèi le yìngbiàn cuòshī
 At that time, the Central airport had prepared contingency measures, in order to prevent the event. (SkE)
- (398) 当时，他们正准备乘飞机前往肯尼亚。
 Dāngshí, tāmen zhèng zhǔnbèi chéng fēijī qiánwǎng Kěnníyà.
 At that time, they were just preparing to get on the plane for Kenya. (SkE)
- (399) 美国“伽利略”号无人驾驶飞船正准备改变飞行轨道，
 Měiguó “Jiālilùè” hào wúrén jiàoshǐ fēichuán zhèng zhǔnbèi gǎibiàn fēixíng guǐdào
 America’s unmanned spacecraft “Galileo” is preparing to change the flight path. (SkE)

In the sentence (397) *zhunbei* is used as main verb with the meaning ‘to prepare’. Situation is placed in the past (SitT < SpT), with Reference Time *dangshi* ‘at that time’ (RT < SpT), and activity of ‘preparing means’ terminated (activity + verbal *le* → termination; cf. 86 or cf. 107).

Sentence (398) is also placed in the past (SitT < SpT) with the same Reference Time (RT < SpT). In terms of Smith and Erbaugh (2005), future-oriented verbs in the scope of a past adverb convey a future time from a past RT, a future-in-past. So, in relation to Reference Time, the situation of ‘getting on plane’ is posterior (RT < SitT). Recall that operator *le* cannot be used in such environments (X&McE 2004: 116; section 2.1 in this book)

Reference Time in sentence (399) is (by default) Speech Time (RT = SpT), and adverb *zheng* ‘just’ is further indicating notion of ‘present’. Sentence is expressing that ‘changing flight plan’ is posterior (RT < SitT) and consequently, the whole sentence is understood as happening in the future.

I propose that future-oriented verbs indicate relation RT<SitT, what is in conflict with aspectual reading of operator *le*. Therefore, situations with future-oriented verbs decrease the possibility of operator *le* to appear in the same environment.

Modal verbs

Smith and Erbaugh say that modal verbs indicate futurity and affect temporal interpretation. The modals have a clear temporal effect, locating the complement clause in the future. (cf. S&E 2005: 732) Observation that this kind of expressions are often used to mark futurity, is also part of Xiao and MxEnergy’s doctrine (X&McE 2004: 260) In terms of Reichenbach’s Three times, this means that Situation Time follows Speech Time (SpT < SitT), whereas Relevance time by default equals Speech Time (SpT = RT). To repeat again, what has been said in section above and in Chapter 2 (ff. 41): in such environment, operator *le* is not expected to occur.

Data in Sketch Engine is also confirming Smith and Erbaugh’s observation. Compare the following table:

	Acceptable items: ~ V ¹¹³	~ V (without <i>le</i>)	~ V <i>le</i>
<i>Hui</i> ‘can’	490 (100%)	488 (99,6%)	2 (0,4%)
<i>yao</i> ‘want’, ‘should’, ‘need’, ‘will’	497 (100%)	494 (99,4%)	3 (0,6%)
<i>jiang</i> ‘will’	493 (100%)	492 (99,8%)	1 (0,2%)
<i>ying(gai)</i> ‘should’, ‘must’	474 (100%)	469 (98,9%)	5 (1,1%)
<i>keneng</i> ‘possibly’, ‘may’	445 (100%)	442 (99,3%)	3 (0,7%)
<i>keyi</i> ‘may’	465 (100%)	461 (99,1%)	4 (0,9%)

Table 16: Modal verbs and operator *le*

Whenever modal verbs appear, indicating futurity, we understand such situations as not existing at the Relevance Time, yet. Therefore, operator *le* will normally not function on the scope of situation itself and is not expected to occur on post-verbal position. However, it can appear sentence-finally, if some modal readings are desired. Consider the following example:

(400) 李连杰自嘲说，现在他满脸沧桑，所以可以拍“英雄”了。

Lǐ Liánjié zìcháo shuō, xiànzài tā mǎnliǎn cāngsāng, suǒyǐ kěyǐ pāi “Yīngxióng” le.

Jet Li said in self-mockery tone, he now has a face of the vicissitudes in life,

therefore will shoot the “Hero”.

(SkE)

Jet Li did not fulfill the conditions for acting in ‘Hero’ before, but now he does, and starring in the movie will be possible. The change is positioned at higher level, not just on the action of ‘shooting film’. Operator *le* gives a zero-to-one impulse to the whole stative situation, i.e. change in fulfilling the conditions.

I am not saying that operator *le* can never appear post-verbally. It normally does not, but if it does, it certainly carries some marked information, e.g. speaker wants to stress that situation *will certainly* be realized, is counter to some expectations or something similar. This is the case in the following example:

(401) a.[会议]就“八五”计划的必要调整交换意见。

b. 与以往计划会不同的是，

c. 今年计划会改变了过去偏重于定指标、分投资、分物资的作法，

d. 重点放在正确分析当前经济形势与明年发展趋势。

a.[Huìyì] jiù “Bā Wǔ” jìhuà de bìyào tiáozhěng jiāohuàn yìjiàn.

b. yǔ yǐwǎng jìhuà huì bùtóng de shì,

¹¹³ Sample of 500 instances can also include examples, which are not relevant here, for example instances that are part of noun phrases.

- c. jīnnián jìhuà huì gǎibiàn le guòqù piānzhòng yú dìng zhǐbiāo, fēn tóuzī, fēn wùzī de zuòfǎ,
 d. zhòngdiǎn fàng zài zhèngquè fēnxī dāngqián jīngjì xíngshì yǔ míngnián fāzhǎn qūshì.
 a. The Congress exchanged views on necessary adjustments of The Eighth Five-year plan.
 b. Comparing to the previous scheme,
 c. this year's scheme will change the previous practice, in which particular emphasis was put on setting guidelines, dividing investments and materials.
 d. This year's focus will be on the correct analysis of the current economic situation and development trend next year. (SkE)

What has been actualized till 'now' (SitT < RT = SpT), is the meeting of the Congress and some previous schemes of Five-years plan. The new scheme is placed in the future (SpT < SitT), is not embedded in larger context indicating anteriority (SitT < RT), however operator *le* appears post-verbally. Normally, one would not expect *le* to be there. I suggest, operator *le* is stressing the situation *gaibian (zuofa)* 'to change (practice)' and with its presence it marks the sentence and specially indicates that the 'present Five-year plan' will certainly be realized, i.e. 'is as good as realized'.

I propose that modal verbs also indicate futurity and uncertainty and consequently reduce the possibility of operator *le* to appear in their neighborhood.

Other perfectivizing means

It was noted by Li and Thompson (1981: 206-207) that verbal *le* does not appear in sentences with directional phrases, locative phrases, indirect object phrases and complex stative phrases with *de*. According to their explanation these are "another elements that do the job of 'perfectivizing' the verb". (L&T 1981: 206)

Here are four of their examples, mentioned already on page 57 as (156)-(159), and repeated here for convenience:

- (402) 他从房子里走（到张三那儿）。
 Tā cóng fángzi-lǐ zǒu (dào Zhāngsān nàr).
 He walked from his house over to Zhangsan's place. (L&T 1981: 206)
- (403) 我把手表放（在抽屉里）。
 Wǒ bǎ shǒubiǎo fàng (zài chōutì lǐ).
 I put the watch in the drawer. (L&T 1981: 206)
- (404) 我寄（给他）一封信。
 Wǒ jì (gěi tā) yī fēng xìn.
 I sent him a letter. (L&T 1981: 206)

(405) 我笑得（站不起来）。

Wǒ xiàode zhàn-bù-qǐlái.

I laughed so hard I couldn't stand up.

(L&T 1981: 206)

Data in Sketch Engine is showing that these kind of patterns truly don't favor inclusion of operator *le*. Results are gathered in the following table:

	All items	Without <i>le</i>	verbal <i>le</i>	Sentential <i>le</i>
Directional phrases with <i>dao</i>	500 (100%)	471 (94,2%)	27 (5,4%)	2 (0,4%)
→ modal V, future oriented V		68 (13,6%)	/	/
Locative phrases with <i>zai</i>	500 (100%)	486 (97,2%)	13 (2,6%)	1 (0,2%)
→ modal V, future oriented V		112 (22,4%)	/	/
→ stative expressions		20 (4,0%)	/	/
Indirect object phrases with <i>gei</i>	500 (100%)	475 (95,0%)	23 (4,6%)	2 (0,4%)
→ modal V, future oriented V		112 (22,4%)	/	/
Complex stative phrases with <i>de</i>	500 (100%)	491 (98,2%)	X	9 (1,8%)
→ modal V, future oriented V		69 (13,8%)	/	/
→ stative expressions		3 (0,6%)	/	/

Table 17: Operator *le* in relation to directional phrases, locative phrases etc.

It is not particular strange, if operator *le* appears on sentence-final position, since it can evoke dynamics on modal layer. As we shall see in Chapter 7.1.5 (p. 181), practically any statement can be given sentence-final *le*, say Yip and Rimmington (2004). However, these kind of sentences are not very likely to carry modal meanings, because the focus is on the perfectivizing expressions.

What is more interesting, is position of operator *le* after *zai*, *dao* and *gei*. This characteristics is rarely mentioned in the literature, and not at all in Chinese textbooks. Let us look at some examples:

(406) 他在 2 日的比赛中把所有的对手都远远地甩在了后面、率先冲过终点，比第二名快出近 1 秒。

Tā zài 2 rì de bǐsài zhōng bǎ suǒyǒu de duìshǒu dōu yuǎnyuǎn-de shuǎi zài le hòumiàn, shuàixiān chōng-guò zhōngdiǎn, bǐ dì'èr míng kuài chūjìn 1 miǎo.

In the competition on the 2nd (of March), he left all his rivals far behind, darted into the lead and won by almost 1 second before the second-placed. (SkE)

- (407) 任大惠说他把这笔巨款主要花在了土建上，剧组在涿州盖了两个全国最大的摄影棚。
 Rèn Dàhuì shuō, tā bǎ zhè-bǐ jùkuǎn zhǔyào huā zài-le tǔjiàn shàng, jùzǔ zài Zhuōzhōu gài-le liǎng-gè quánguó zuì dà de shèyǐngpéng
 Ren Dahui said that he spent the major of this huge sum of money for civil engineering, and in Zhuozhou covered two of the country's largest casting studios. (SkE)
- (408) 21日下午3点，他们把电话拨到了大连血液中心，正在值班的姜主任、丛主任和刘书记毫不犹豫地答道：“我们马上给你们采血。”
 21 rì xiàwǔ 3 diǎn, tāmen bǎ diànhuà bō dào le Dàlián xiěyè zhōngxīn, zhèng zài zhíbān de Jiāng zhǔrèn, Cóng zhǔrèn hé Liú shūjì háobù yóuyù-de dádao: “Wǒmen mǎshàng gěi nǐmen cǎi xiě.”
 On the 21st at 3 pm, they called a blood center in Dalian, director Jiang, director Cong and secretary Liu, who were on duty that time, replied without hesitation: “We will immediately send you blood.” (SkE)
- (409) 我觉得他想成功地离开拉齐奥，因此他把球队失败的责任都揽到了自己的身上。
 Wǒ juéde tā xiǎng chénggōng-de líkāi Lāqí'ào, yīncǐ tā bǎ qiúduì shībài de zérèn dōu lǎndào le zìjǐ de shēn shàng.
 I think he wants to successfully leave Lazio, therefore he took all the responsibility for the failure of his team on himself. (SkE)

Operator *le* does not come directly after verb to produce, for example, a pattern “V-*le-zai*-locative phrase”, but is placed after *zai* ‘at’. The same is true for directional phrases and also for sentences with indirect object phrases. This indicates that the ties among verb, coverb and its corresponding phrase are not equally strong. I would have expected morphemes *zai/dao/gei* ‘at/to/to’ to have stronger ties with the following phrases, but they seem to have closer relation to the preceding verb. I cannot explain the nature of this phenomenon yet, but I assume reasons lie in their historical origin, since they were verbs, as well.

However, at this point I find it more important to suggest the reasons, why sentences with directional phrases, locative phrases, indirect object phrases and complex stative phrases with *de* do not favor inclusion of operator *le*. According to my understanding, directional phrases with *dao* put emphases on the direction; locative phrases with *zai* stress information about location; indirect object phrases with *gei* focus on recipient of action; and complex stative phrases with *de* stress the extent, manner or result of action. Non of these constructions focus on the event itself. As such, they decrease the possibility of operator *le* to appear in the same sentence. I suggest, the notion of focus in the utterance is of great importance. This will be shown in chapter 8.

There are some additional rows in Table 17, i.e. *modal verbs*, *future-oriented verbs* and *stative expressions*. In the two previous sections of this chapter I mentioned that future-oriented lexical means are not very likely to occur with *le*. If focus is placed on location, direction or recipient of the action, sentence also doesn't carry ‘dynamic’ information. As such, it is not overlapping with the dynamic nature or operator *le*. This is even more obvious with *stative expressions*, e.g. *zongshi*

‘always’, *shizhong* ‘all along, always’, *yixiang* ‘all along’ etc, which explicitly indicate that situation is homogeneous, without general changes.

Complex stative phrases with de also belong to the stative expressions. Focus is on the extension or state of situation, and not on the dynamic part of it. Therefore, complex stative phrases with *de* and operator *le* are not expected to occur together. I propose, this tendency arises because of stative or dynamic nature of utterances.

If several factors are simultaneously speaking in favor of stative interpretation, operator *le* is much less likely to occur, since it is invariably associated with dynamics. I will also show right away, that dynamic environment increases the possibility of *le* to occur.

6.2.2 Adverbial expressions

Temporal phrases

Li and Thompson (1981) also noted that sometimes, in the right context, an adverbial expression can serve the function of bounding the event. For example, in a situation in which the issue is *when*, temporal adverbial could be used; similarly, if the issue is *where*, spatial adverbial would be appropriate. (cf. L&T 1981: 201)

(410) 他早上理了发。

Tā zǎoshàng lǐ-le fā.

He got a haircut in the morning.

(L&T 1981: 201)

(411) 他在加州发了个财。

Tā zài Jiāzhōu fā-le gè cái.

He got rich in California.

(L&T 1981: 201)

In this sense, the presence of adverbial expression really can influence acceptability of sentences. I agree that in such way, some utterances become more acceptable. Recall examples (280) and (281) on page 120. It is usually noted that sentences like *Wo li-le fa* ‘I had a haircut’ and *Wo he-le cha* ‘I drank tea’ sound strange and unfinished, and with spatial and temporal adverbial, such sentences sound better.

However, I do not think such utterances become acceptable because of boundedness provided by temporal or spatial adverbial, but because *focus* is on *when* and *where*. They are also acceptable without temporal and spatial adverbial, asserting whether event has realized or not. Look at the following examples:

- (412) “妳喝了酒嗎？”他的唇離開了她，淺喘着，
一瞬也不瞬地直盯着她，他從她的唇中嘗到酒味。
“Nǐ hē-le jiǔ ma?” tāde chún líkāi-le tā, qiǎn chuǎn-zhe,
yī-shùn yě bù-shùn de zhídīng-zhe tā, tā cóng tāde chún-zhōng chángdào jiǔwèi.
“Did you drink?” he moved his lips away from her, took a shallow breath,
and immovably stared at her. Her lips tasted of wine. (web)
- (413) 他一再拒絕酒精測試，房間里也是酒氣熏天，
督察組判斷，這個主任中午喝了酒。
Tā yīzài jùjué jiǔjīng cèshì, fángjiān-lǐ yě shì jiǔqì xūntiān,
dūcházhǔ pànduàn, zhè-gè zhǔrèn zhōngwǔ hē-le jiǔ.
He was repeatedly refusing to take alcotest, room was also reeking of alcohol,
and therefore inspectors concluded that this director had been drinking at midday. (web)
- (414) 老板說，感覺你的頭髮好像是剛理的，
我當然承認了我理了髮，說我比較看重這次機會。
Lǎobǎn shuō, gǎnjué nǐde tóufà hǎoxiàng shì gāng lǐ de,
wǒ dāngrán chéngrèn-le wǒ lǐ-le fà, shuō wǒ bǐjiào kànzhòng zhè-cì jīhuì.
My boss noted, it looks like you’ve just had a haircut,
of course I admitted I did have a haircut,
and said I pay pretty much attention to this opportunity. (web)
- (415) 我跟他過了一年，除去他三天兩頭去你那里，
就算剩下半年幾個月吧，我認認真真地愛了他，
我們也過得很平靜，甚至很普通。
Wǒ gēn tā guò-le yī-nián, chúqù tā sān-tiān liǎng-tóu qù nǐ nàlǐ,
jiù suàn shèngxià bàn-nián jǐ-gè yuè ba, wǒ rènren zhēnzhēn de ài-le tā,
wǒmen yě guò-de hěn píngjìng, shènzhì hěn pǔtōng.
We spent one year together. If we count down the every second day he ran over to you,
there is still a half year or several months left. I seriously loved him,
our life was calm or actually very common. (web)

Sentences (412) and (413) are focusing on the issue whether ‘she’ and ‘director’ did or did not drink. Givón (1993: 170) calls this *realis assertion*, i.e. “the proposition [being] strongly asserted as true”. The main question in the sentence (414) is on having or not-having a haircut. Sentence (415) is an example for why speaking about acceptability in isolated sentences is not sufficient. Recall example (377) on page 154, as we said that *Xiao Li ai-le Xiao Zhao* ‘Xiao Li loved Xiao Zhao’ is not acceptable. While such sentences are unacceptable in narrating environments, they can be used for stressing the actual existence of particular situation.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Note as well that some native speakers find sentence (415) perfectly acceptable, whereas other claim it would sound better with *guo*: *wo renren-zhenzhen de ai-guo ta* ‘I seriously loved him’.

Operator *le* is still contributing to the same thing, i.e. change in dynamics. One-to-zero dynamics is added to the actual event of loving, therefore on aspectual level we understand it as terminated. We are focusing on the situation itself, so operator *le* is expected on the post-verbal position. However, it should not be neglected, that such sentences are highlighted or somehow stressed, and can be regarded as ‘peak’ information of that passage.

Note that also sentences with adverbial expressions are not always acceptable, if there is conflict among elements. Recall Figure 14, page 139. Therefore, it is important to choose the appropriate temporal phrase. As Ljungqvist Arin is saying, the implicit temporal expression *jintian* ‘today’ as well as the expression *wo zhe beizi* ‘in my lifetime’ differ from adverbs like *qunian lai* ‘from last year on’, *dao xianzai wei zhi* ‘up to now’ and *yijing* ‘already’. The former expressions present time as a space, without direction, whereas later present time as a stretch, running from some specified or unspecified point in the past up to RT. Ljungqvist Arin (cf. 2003: 97)

Temporal adverbs

On page 45, I briefly mentioned Smith’s (2006) and Smith and Erbaugh’s (2005) observation that certain adverbs code the relation between RT and SitT. Adverbs such as *yijing* ‘already’ and *cai* ‘have just’ convey that an event or state precedes Reference Time.

(416) 他已经走了。

Tā yǐjīng zǒu le.

He has already left.

On the other hand, according to Xiao and McEnery (2004: 262), *yi/yijing* ‘already’ in Chinese can signal the current relevance of a situation. Similar notions were described by Li and Thompson who remarked that “we could make *le* have only the CRS function by adding the word *yijing* ‘already’, which is typically used in the description of states”. (L&T 1981: 299).

(417) 炸弹已经爆了。

Zhádàn yǐjīng bào le.

The bomb has already exploded.

(L&T 1981: 299).

Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 53) added that *yijing* does also occur in imperfective sentences.

(418) 我已经在作这道数学题了。

Wǒ yǐjīng zài zuò zhè-dào shùxué tí le.

I have already started working on this math problem.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 53)

I agree with all of these statements and propose the following graphic presentation (Figure 19):

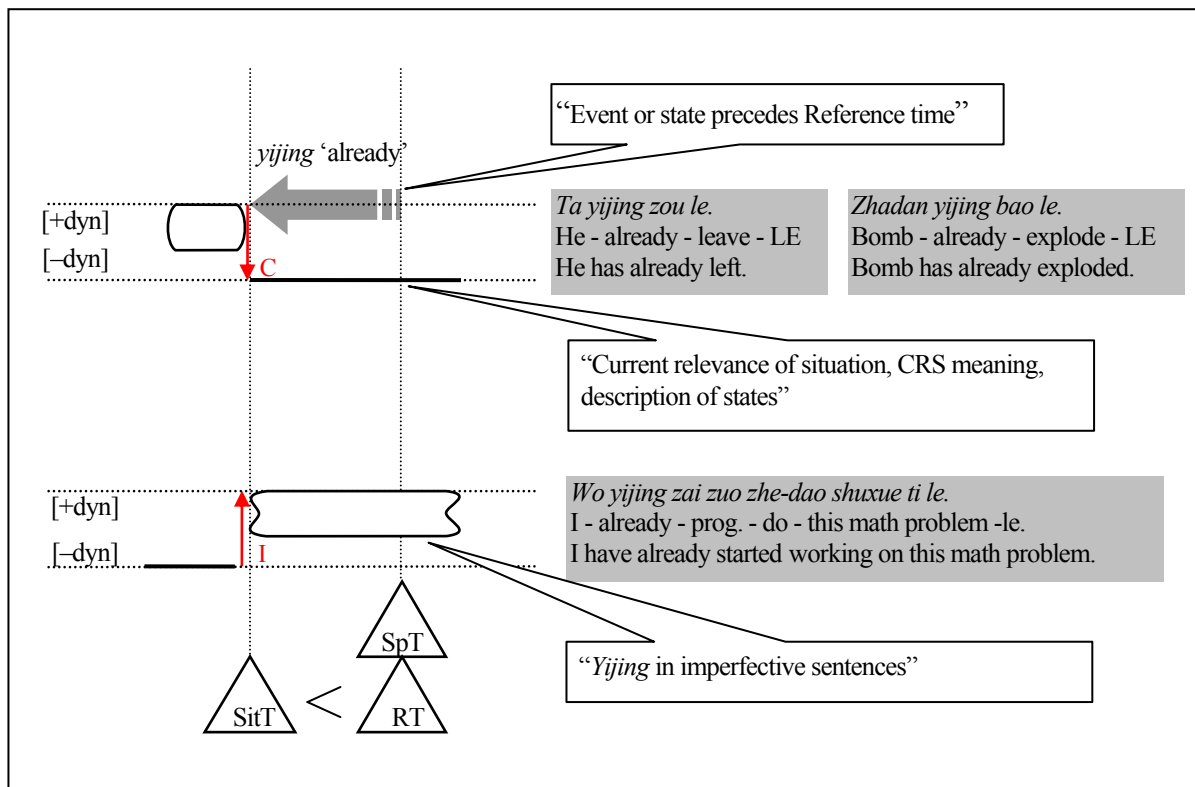


Figure 19: Contribution of *yijing* in the sentence

It is widely agreed that *yijing* ‘already’ and operator *le* are frequently used together. Ma (2006), complementing Ke (2005), summarized several patterns with operator *le*, and one of them was also ‘*yijing* ... *le*’. She observed that a general guideline for these structures is that the likelihood of using *le* is fairly high. (Ma 2006: 156)¹¹⁵

I suggest the tendency of *yijing* ‘already’ and *le* to co-occur in the same sentence is reasonable, since they contribute to readings, which are partly overlapping. *Yijing* ‘already’ is implying that situation happens prior to a specified or implied reference time, i.e. SitT < RT. Recall Chapter 2, page 44, that relation SitT < RT also expresses actuality. On the other hand, operator *le* is on the aspectual level associated with actuality as well, as presented in Chapter 2.1 (cf. 122 ff.). In other words, their general meanings are overlapping, i.e. are in harmony, so they are expected to occur together.¹¹⁶

Modal adverbs *hai* ‘still’, *you* ‘again’ and *zai* ‘again’ are used for expressing the continuation or repetition of situations. Chu noted that in quite similar environments these expressions are not freely interchangeable. There are some restrictions. Let us look at the following pairs of examples: (Chu 1998: 107-8)

¹¹⁵ The complete list of patterns will be presented later, in the chapter 2, p. 210

¹¹⁶ However, this does not mean that one of these elements is superfluous or redundant. Consider Figure 19, which clearly demonstrates that their function is not the same.

- (419) 我刚才喝了三瓶啤酒了，现在（还 / 又 / *再）想喝。
 Wǒ gāngcái hē-le sān-píng píjiǔ le, xiànzài (hái / yòu / * zài) xiǎng hē.
 I just had three beers a while ago and now feel like to drink more/again. (I shouldn't)
- (420) 我刚才喝了三瓶啤酒了，现在（*还 / 又 / *再）想喝了。
 Wǒ gāngcái hē-le sān-píng píjiǔ le, xiànzài (hái / yòu / * zài) xiǎng hē le.
 I just had three beers a while ago and now feel like to drink, again. (I've changed mind)
- (421) 你已经喝了三瓶啤酒了，怎么（还 / 又 / *再）想喝？
 Nǐ yǐjīng hē-le sān-píng píjiǔ le, zěnmē (hái / yòu / *zài) xiǎng hē?
 You have already had three beers and you want to drink more/again? (Probably, you shouldn't)
- (422) 你已经喝了三瓶啤酒了，怎么（*还 / 又 / *再）想喝了？
 Nǐ yǐjīng hē-le sān-píng píjiǔ le, zěnmē (hái / yòu / *zài) xiǎng hē le?
 You have already had three beers and you want to drink more/again? (How come you changed your mind?)

These pairs of sentences are showing that elements have to express ideas which are not conflicting with each other but are mutually strengthening. My argumentation can be best seen from the graphic presentation in Figure 20.

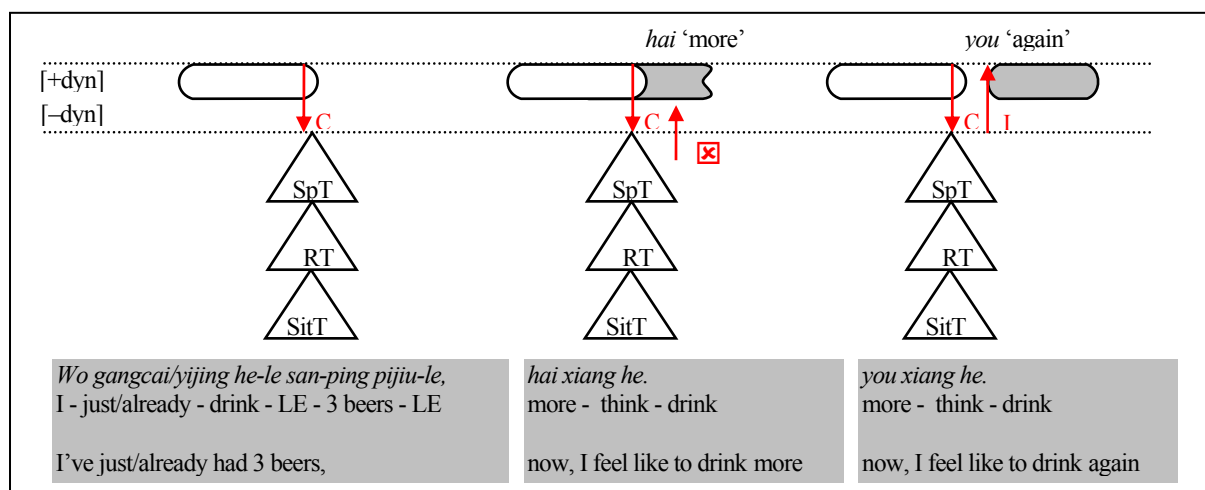


Figure 20: Conflicting or strengthening in minimal pairs (*hai*, *you*, *le*)

Situation *Wo gangcai/yijing he-le san-ping piju-le* 'I've just/already had 3 beers' is brought up to the Speech Time (recall also Figure 8, p. 105). In relation to the moment of speech, it is completed, however, whether the situation is going to continue in the future or not, cannot be concluded from this statement.

Hai indicates continuation of the same situation, whereas *you* indicates a reoccurrence of situation. (cf. Chu 1988: 116) Therefore, *hai* actually expands situation and gives it the [-bnd] value. The

complete situation is unbounded, placed at Speech Time and seizing into future, and such meaning is not appropriate for using *le* at the same time.

On the other hand, *you* indicates reoccurrence of situation, what means that situation first ends and then starts again. Changes are very obvious, and this feature is speaking in favor of the presence of operator *le*, which is - as proposed in present work - marker of change in dynamics. Li and Thompson also noted that sentences with *you* ‘again’ typically occur with *le*. (L&T 1981: 272)

(423) 他又抽烟了。

Tā yòu chōuyān le.

He has started to smoke again.

(you know he has been trying to quit smoking)

(L&T 1981: 272)

(424) 今天又该你洗衣服了。

Jīntiān yòu gāi nǐ xǐ yīfú le.

Today it’s your turn again to do the laundry.

(L&T 1981: 272)

As we saw from examples (419) to (422), for the meaning of ‘again’ only *you* was appropriate. One might assume *zai* would be more suitable, because situations are seizing in the future. However, situations (419) to (422) are still closely related to the Speech time, what explains the choice of *you*.

6.3 Perfect interpretations

I mentioned several times above that bounded situations are by default located in the past, and unbounded situations in the present. Consequently, *le* appears most often in (completely) past situations. However, there are still sentences with verbal *le* that have perfect interpretations.¹¹⁷ In Ljungqvist Arin’s thesis, three types of perfect are discussed: (1) The *perfect of persistent situation* indicates that a situation started in the past and continues up to the present; (2) The *perfect of result* describes a situation as a present state that is the result of a previous situation; (3) The *experiential perfect* indicates that the event is located in a temporal frame that leads up to the present. (cf. Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 93)

Whether distinguishing different perfect-types is useful or not, is not the issue here. It certainly helps understand the nuances in interpretations. But in general, I agree with Elsness (1991: 87) that the perfect should best be seen as one unitary semantic category.

¹¹⁷ Issue of perfect interpretations and operator *le* is well described in Ljungqvist Arin (2003). For all details, reader should refer to her work. I will present the main ideas and categorization of perfect types.

The perfect of persistent situation

Perfect of persistent situation shows that “a situation started in the past and continues up to the present.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 93) Lexical means that are leading to this interpretation, are for example *yijing* ‘already’, *dao ... weizhi* ‘up to’, *zhi ... weizhi* ‘up to’, *zi ... qi* ‘since’, (*qunian*) *lai* ‘from (last year) on’ etc.

For this reading, situations should constitute a path reading, says Ljungqvist Arin. Action verbs or stative verbs can be used, the only condition is the capability of situation to represent a string of entities. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 96)

(425) 到现在为止我一共写了五篇文章。

Dào xiànzài wéi zhǐ wǒ yīgòng xiě-le wǔ-piān wénzhāng.

Up to now I have written altogether five articles.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 95)

(426) 她已经有了三个月的身孕。

Tā yǐjīng yǒu-le sān-gè yuè de shēnyùn.

She is already three months pregnant.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 96)

The perfect of result

“The perfect of result describes a situation as a present state that is the result of a previous situation.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 93) This interpretation is very similar to the former one, with one major difference - above the situation itself was going on, whereas here it is the result of the anterior situation that holds at the reference time. Again, states and events can produce this reading.

(427) 人家已经受了罪，你还要欺负他？

Rénjiā yǐjīng shòu-le zuì, nǐ hái yào qīfù tā?

He has already been punished, why are you still bullying him?

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 99)

(428) 这夥计还想问：“感激我什么？”郭大陆却已走下了楼。

Zhè huǒjì hái xiǎng wèn: “Gǎnjī wǒ shénme?” Guō Dàlù què yǐ zǒuxià le lóu.

That guy still wanted to ask: “Thank me for what?”

but Guo Dalu had already gone downstairs.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 99)

(429) 樵樵已经迷上了你。

Qiáoqiáo yǐjīng míshàng-le nǐ.

[B]ut Qiaoqiao has already fallen for you

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 102)

The experiential perfect

The experiential perfect indicates that the event is located in a temporal frame that leads up to the present. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 93, following Comrie) Examples of such temporal frames are *jintian* ‘today’, *zhe beizi* ‘this life’, *jinnian* ‘this year’ etc., which clearly indicate that time is stretching up to speech time.

(430) 你今天干什么了? —— 我写了一封信。
 Nǐ jīntiān gàn shénme le? ... Wǒ xiě-le yī-fēng xìn.
 What have you done today? ... *I have written a letter.* (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 98)

(431) 我这辈子见了很多新鲜事。
 Wǒ zhè bèizi jiàn-le hěn duō xīnxiān shì.
 I have seen many weird things *in my life.* (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 98)

If we present these concepts graphically, we see that operator *le* in all perfect types still contributes to the same thing – it gives situations one-to-zero or zero-to-one dynamics. Examples demonstrate one-to-zero dynamics.

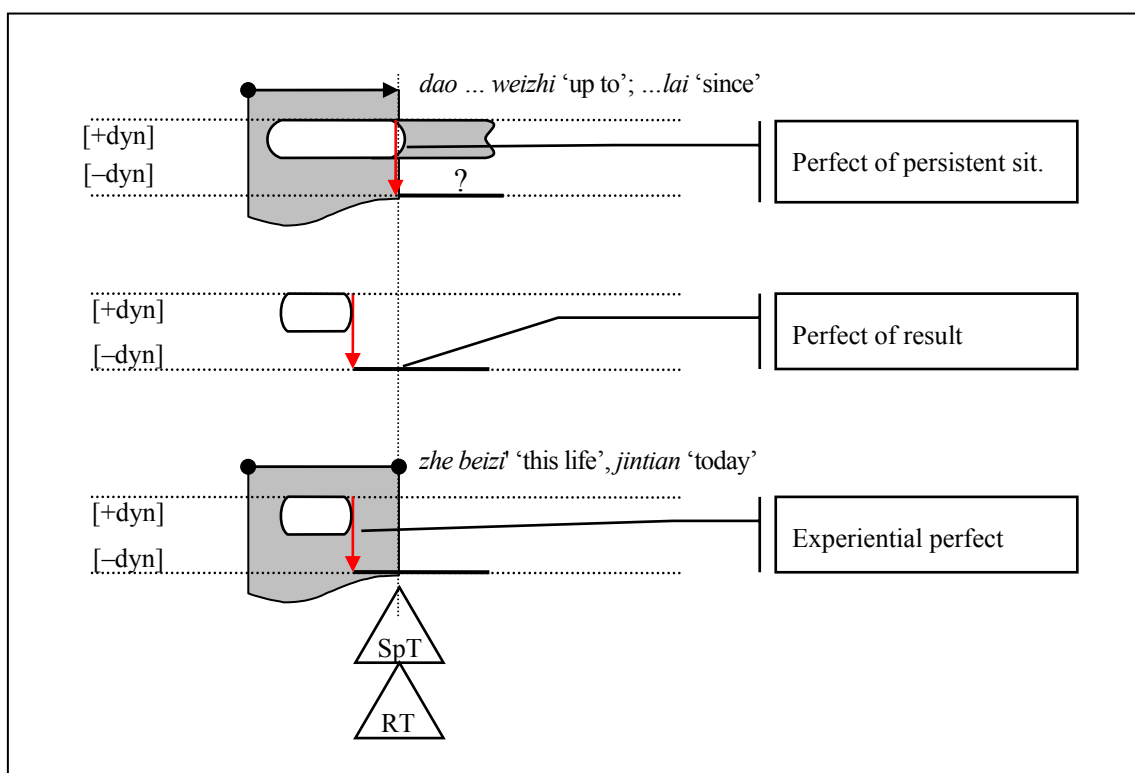


Figure 21: Perfect types

Sentences with abstract verbs

Recall Chapter Abstract entities (cf. 68 ff.) that situations with abstract verbs are located spatially and temporally in the world, but the time element is irrelevant. Therefore, such utterances are understood as stative, although they have dynamic constellations. Basically, on the aspectual level, operator *le* contributes to one-to-zero dynamic, but eventually, they should be understood as stative utterances. As Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 84-86) says, these verbs all describe situations that are at the same time dynamic and stative. Therefore, it is normally to expect that sentences with abstract verbs will get perfect interpretations, and the presence of operator *le* does not result in perfective reading.

Such verbs are for example *tixian* ‘embody’, *chaoguo* ‘surpass’, *fanying* ‘reflect’ and *biaoxian* ‘show’. I will repeat sentences (168)-(170) (page 68) for convenience.

(432) 这次成功体现了新经济政策的正确性。

Zhè cì chénggōng tǐxiàn le xīn jīngjì zhèngcè de zhèngquèxìng.

The success shows/has shown the correctness
of the new economic policy.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 85)

(433) 他过于依赖儿子了，甚至超过了儿子对他的依赖。

Tā guòyú yīlài érzi le, shènzhì chāoguò-le érzi duì tā de yīlài.

He was too dependent on his son, so much that it surpassed (had surpassed) his son’s
dependence on him.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 85)

(434) 自己也不明白为什么要这样回答，

这使我的话里包含了一点儿讽刺和自我安慰的味道。

Zìjǐ yě bù míngbái wèishénme yào zhèyàng huídá,

zhè shǐ wǒde huà-lǐ bāohán-le yīdiǎnr fēngcǐ hé zìwǒ ānwèi de wèidào.

I did not know why I responded the way I did, it made my answer contain
a slight tinge of sarcasm and self-satisfaction

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 85)

Graphically, such sentences correspond to perfect of result in Figure 21.

7. SENTENCE TYPES

This chapter is a brief presentation of the correlation between sentence types and operator *le*. From this point of view, it is quite clear that operator *le* requires dynamic environments. If we take a look at sentence types, we see that *le* tends to occur in narrative sentences, because they belong to the dynamic sentence type (section 7.1.1), what is in most cases the manifestation of one-to-zero dynamics. The other types of declarative sentences are basically stative, which results in the omission of *le*. Descriptions present situations without advancing in time (section 7.1.2), the content of factual statements is not supposed to change (section 7.1.3), and the evaluative sentences convey

observations, which is also not compatible with the dynamic nature of *le* (section 7.1.4). However, all these sentences may sometimes carry the idea, that the present state is different from the previous one, and such instances are just the so-called *le*-expository sentences (section 7.1.5), which is a manifestation of zero-to-one dynamics.

From the other sentence types, I will just mention imperatives. Operator *le* is expected to occur in those contexts, where the desired result is stressed. In such cases *le* is adding the one-to-zero impulse to the utterance.

Chinese syntax follows the universal differentiation of sentences along the line of function into four major types: declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamatory. Declarative sentences are further differentiated into the following four subtypes: narrative, descriptive, expository and evaluative. (Y&R 2004: 296) In the following subchapters I will show the function of operator *le* in each of them.¹¹⁸ I will show that operator *le* is expected to occur in narrative, some descriptive, *le*-expository sentences and in some imperatives, but not in the other sentence types.

7.1 Declarative sentences

7.1.1 Narrative sentences

“A narrative sentence sets out to recount an incident or tell a story, and it therefore follows a ‘subject + predicate’ format, where the subject is the initiator or recipient of the action specified in the predicate. A narrative sentence is thus a stage in a sequence, encoding one action in a chain of actions, which comprise an overall event.” (Y&R 2004: 296) “A narrative sentence reports an event or incident that has already taken place, and it generally recounts that somebody (or something) carried out (or caused) an action or that something happened to someone (or something) on some past occasion.” (Y&R 2004: 297)

As a form of recounting incidents or telling a story, narrative sentences are dynamic and refer mainly to past situations. Consequently, operator *le* is expected to occur in narrative environments quite frequently. This tendency can also be indirectly observed from the scope of numerous researches. Several papers on *le* focus on narrative or conversational texts. Namely, these are the two text types, where operator *le* appears most frequently. Recall that operator *le* on post-verbal position focuses on situations themselves and indicates one-to-zero or zero-to-one dynamics mainly on aspectual level, i.e. indicates that situations terminated, completed or started.

According to Yip and Rimmington (2004: 297), narrative sentences in Chinese have two prominent features. First, all nouns in a pre-verbal position take definite reference; and second, the verb is generally marked by *le*. Yip and Rimmington’s sentence, exemplifying this statement, is:

¹¹⁸ I will leave out interrogative sentences, because they are stretching on the field of negation, which can be another, independent researching issue. I will also neglect exclamatory sentences, since operator *le* does not play any significant role there.

(435) 孩子从屋子里跑了出来。

Háizi cóng wūzi lǐ pǎo-le chūlái.

The child came out of the room.

(Y&R 2004: 297)

Yip and Rimmington also remark that post-verbal nouns are liable to be of indefinite reference and are generally marked by a ‘numeral + measure’ phrase. They may be given definite reference by either (a) introducing the ‘demonstrative + measure’ phrase before noun, or (b) leaving the noun unmarked and adding a new clause begun with *jiu* ‘then’ or *cai* ‘only then’. (cf. Y&R 2004: 297, 299) This also corresponds to the observation that operator *le* is very likely to appear in ‘quantified events’ or in events which are ‘bounded by being a first event in a sequence’ in Li and Thompson’s (1981: 185) terms.

7.1.2 Descriptive sentences

“A descriptive sentence is an objective depiction of an action that is ongoing at a particular time, and follows a ‘subject + predicate’ format like a narrative. The focus is on the continuous action.” (Y&R 2004: 296) Rather than recounting what has already happened, descriptive sentences describe either (a) what is going on through the action of the verb at the moment of speaking; or (b) a state that has resulted from the action of the verb. The time reference depends on the context, but it is mostly the present. (Y&R 2004: 303)

The (a) group of sentences tends to be marked with the ongoing aspect marker *zai* ‘right now’ or its emphatic alternative *zhengzai* ‘right now’. The (b) group of sentences is marked with the persistent manner indicator *zhe* ‘-ing’. (Y&R 2004: 303)

As we see, these characteristics are not overlapping with the notion of ‘change in dynamics’, so the likelihood of operator *le* to appear is small. The first group of descriptive sentences are describing ongoing actions, whereas operator *le* marks change in dynamics. These two concepts are contradictive and cannot exist simultaneously. Slightly different is the second group, which is expressing resulting states. Recall previous figures on stative parts of situations, e.g. perfect of result reading in Figure 21, p. 174. Examples of descriptive sentence of this kind are:

(436) 大门上贴着一幅对联。

Dàmén-shàng tiē-zhe yī-fú duìlián.

On the door was (posted) a couplet.

(437) 屋檐下挂着两个灯笼。

Wūyán-xià guà-zhe liǎng-gè dēnglóng.

Under the eaves were hanging two lanterns.

Yip and Rimmington are further also saying that a variant of this descriptive format makes use of the aspect marker *le* instead of *zhe*. These sentences are still regarded as descriptive rather than

narrative because the verb with *le* calls attention to the resultant state and not the action. (cf. Y&R 2004: 305)

(438) 大门上贴了一幅对联。

Dàmén-shàng tiē-le yī-fú duìlián.

On the door was (posted) a couplet.

(Y&R 2004: 305)

(439) 屋檐下挂了两个灯笼。

Wūyán-xià guà-le liǎng-gè dēnglóng.

Under the eaves were hanging two lanterns.

(Y&R 2004: 305)

According to Li and Thompson, a sentence that contains a verb of posture, such as *zuo* ‘sit’, *tang* ‘lie’ or *piao* ‘float’, describing where something has been put or placed, is an existential presentative sentence.¹¹⁹ (cf. L&T 1981: 510, 512) I agree with Ljungqvist Arin that “the focus is not on the dynamic part of the situation but on the present position of the object entity as a result of an anterior event.” Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 79) Therefore, markers *le* and *zhe* reflect the same idea. My paper will not go into details on relation among markers *le*, *zhe* and/or *guo*. This is just a brief guideline for interchangeability and incompatibility of *le* and *zhe*.¹²⁰

7.1.3 Expository sentences

Expository sentences are factual statements that offer some form of explanation relating to actual situations or experiences. Their range of meanings covers: (a) definition and identification, and possession and existence; and (b) experience, objective potential, the factual and the habitual, cognition and intention. An expository sentence states either a fact or an intention.

Expository sentence may adopt either a ‘subject + predicate’ or ‘topic + comment’ format. In its ‘subject + predicate’ form, it makes a statement of what somebody does or can do out of habit, experience or nature, and so on, or intends to do in the future. In a ‘topic + comment’, the comment consists of either the verb *shi* ‘to be’ or *you* ‘to have’ or an unmodified verb or adjective.

The categories of meaning under (a) are generally topic-comment in format, and those under (b) are generally subject-predicate in format. The aspect marker *le* does not occur in them, and there are no rules or restrictions for the pre-verbal and post-verbal positioning of nouns for definite and indefinite reference.¹²¹

Let us look at Yip and Rimmington’s categorization a bit closer. We will see, that we have mentioned these groups before. Expository sentences include:

¹¹⁹ Other existential sentences have include existential verb *you* ‘have/to be’.

¹²⁰ If interested in these relationships, the reader should refer to Ljungqvist (2007), who presented a relevance-theoretic account for these three particles.

¹²¹ These three paragraphs are summarized from Y&R 2004: 296, 306-307

- ‘To be’ and ‘to have’ sentences (*shi* ‘to be’, *you* ‘to have’, *xiang* ‘to resemble’, *xing* ‘to be called’)
- Adjectival predicates and complements
- Statements of past actions (*guo* ‘past experience’)
- Potential complements (V-*de*-Res, V-*bu*-Res)
- Factual statements and habitual actions)
- Cognition and preference (*zhidao* ‘know’, *mingbai* ‘understand’, *xihuan* ‘like’, *ai* ‘love’)
- Intentions and plans (*dasuan* ‘intend’, *mai* ‘buy’, *qu (zuo)* ‘go to do’)

Observe some examples: (Y&R 2004: 306-308)

(440) 她像她妈妈。

Tā xiàng tā māmā.

She looks like her mother.

(Y&R 2004: 306)

(441) 昆虫有六只脚。

Kūnchóng yǒu liù-zhī jiǎo.

Insects have six legs.

(Y&R 2004: 306)

(442) 昨天冷，今天也冷。

Zuótiān lěng, jīntiān yě lěng.

It was cold yesterday and it’s cold today as well.

(Y&R 2004: 307)

(443) 我明白你的意思。

Wǒ míngbái nǐde yìsī.

I understand what you mean.

(Y&R 2004: 309)

Expository sentences are due to their ‘factual’ nature explicitly stative. Here are gathered several notions from the chapters above. Recall *individual level states* (chapter 1.1.3, p. 26), adjectival predicates with *hen* (chapter 1.3.1, p. 38’), *complex stative phrases with de* (chapter 6.2.1, p. 164), *general statives* (chapter 9.1.2, p. 67), *abstract entities* (chapter 9.1.3, p. 68) and *future oriented verbs* (chapter 6.2.1, p. 161)

In such stative environments, the presence of an operator, which contributes to change in dynamics, would be inappropriate. Nevertheless, in the right context also expository sentences can be interacted with operator *le*. For further discussion see subchapter on *le*-expository sentences, p. 181.

7.1.4 Evaluative sentences

Evaluative sentences are in fact expository, but they present a judgmental stance on the part of speaker, so that they are not necessarily factual. Evaluative sentences convey an observation, an opinion, a subjective criticism or assessment. They always take a ‘topic + comment’ format. Like expository sentences, they never include an aspect marker at their core. They take two forms, one

focusing on a modal verb, and the other on a modified adjective or complement. (cf. Y&R 2004: 296-297, 310)

Let us look at two examples:

- (444) 他应该马上开始工作。
Tā yīnggāi mǎshàng kāishǐ gōngzuò.
He must start work immediately.
(= Evaluative sentence with modal and action verb) (Y&R 2004: 310)
- (445) 这件事他处理得好得很。
Zhè-jìan shì tā chǔlǐ de hǎo de hěn.
He handled this matter very well. (Y&R 2004: 311)

As an extension of expository sentences, operator *le* is not very favored in evaluative sentences. Since they carry some subjective load, operator *le* in the sentence-final position might be expected to indicate a potential discrepancy between standard or norm on one side, and subjective opinion on the other side. Such usage would be traditionally regarded as the modal function of *le*.

Yip and Rimmington also very systematically presented pairs of similar sentences to illustrate the distinctions between sentence types. (Y&R 2004: 311-314) Dynamic vs. stative nature of the sentences below is obvious.

- (446) 我们去了上海。
Wǒmen qù-le Shànghǎi.
We went to Shanghai. (narrative; recounting an event) (Y&R 2004: 311)
- (447) 我们去过上海。
Wǒmen qù-guo Shànghǎi.
We've been to Shanghai. (expository; factual statement, experience) (Y&R 2004: 311)
- (448) 他在墙上挂了一幅画儿。
Tā zài qiáng shàng guà-le yī-fú huàr.
He hung a picture on the wall. (narrative; recounting an event) (Y&R 2004: 312)
- (449) 墙上挂了一幅画儿。
Qiáng shàng guà-le yī-fú huàr.
On the wall hangs a picture. (descriptive; an objective depiction of state) (Y&R 2004: 312)
- (450) 爸爸在花园里看我给他买的报纸。
Bàbà zài huāyuán-lǐ kàn wǒ gěi tā mǎi de bàozhǐ.
Father is in the garden reading the newspaper I bought for him.
(descriptive) (Y&R 2004: 312)

- (451) 爸爸在花园里看了我给他买的报纸。
 Bàbà zài huāyuán-lǐ kàn-le wǒ gěi tā mǎi de bàozhǐ.
 Father read the newspaper I bought for him in the garden. (narrative) (Y&R 2004: 312)
- (452) 他昨天到了北京。
 Tā zuótiān dào-le Běijīng.
 He arrived in Beijing yesterday. (narrative) (Y&R 2004: 313)
- (453) 他是昨天到的北京。
 Tā shì zuótiān dào de Běijīng.
 He arrived in Beijing **yesterday**. (expository) (Y&R 2004: 313)

7.1.5 Le-expository sentences

“*Le*-expository sentences are formed by putting the particle *le* at the end of virtually any statement. Like expository sentences they offer an explanation, but they add to this explanation the implication of some form of change or a reversal of a previous situation. They suggest that what is stated represents a change from what existed or what was happening before. The speaker is giving updated information and does often back it with some degree of personal endorsement. Much of the time the change asserted in *le*-expository sentences is simply factual, but it also regularly counters an assumption or expectation in the mind of the person addressed. The context, in which the statement is made, is extremely important, and the implications of a particular sentence can vary significantly depending on the situation in which it is used. The construction is very much a feature of spoken language and the social interaction among Chinese people.” (Y&R 2004: 315)

“*Le*-expository sentences are conversions from corresponding narrative sentences, topicalising the original object, dismantling the straight-forward ‘initiator + action + target’ narrative format of its *ba* or *bei* derivatives, and shifting the perspective from recounting a past action to explaining a present situation with the addition of an end-of-sentence *le* or other relevant particles.” (Y&R 2004: 292-293)

- (454) 那封信我早就寄走了。
 Nà-fēng xìn wǒ zǎo jiù jìzǒu-le.
 I had long since sent that letter.
- (455) 我的论文导师已经看过了。
 Wǒde lùnwén dǎoshī yǐjīng kàn-guò-le.
 The supervisor had already read through my thesis.

“*Le*-expository sentences are easily re-convertible to their narrative originals, with end-of-sentence *le* as an expository indicator changing to aspect indicator *le* to mark that the actions have been completed.” (Y&R 2004: 292)

- (456) 我早就寄走了那封信。
 Wǒ zǎo jiù jìzǒu-le nà-fēng xìn.
 I had long since sent that letter. (Y&R 2004: 292)
- (457) 导师已经看过了我的论文。
 Dǎoshī yǐjīng kàn-guò-le wǒde lùnwén.
 The supervisor had already read through my thesis. (Y&R 2004: 292)

Le-expository sentences are just another proof for my hypothesis about one single *le* with very abstract function, i.e. change in dynamics. Recall Figure 6 (cf. 90 ff.), Chart A. For convenience, I will repeat just the relevant part of this Figure.

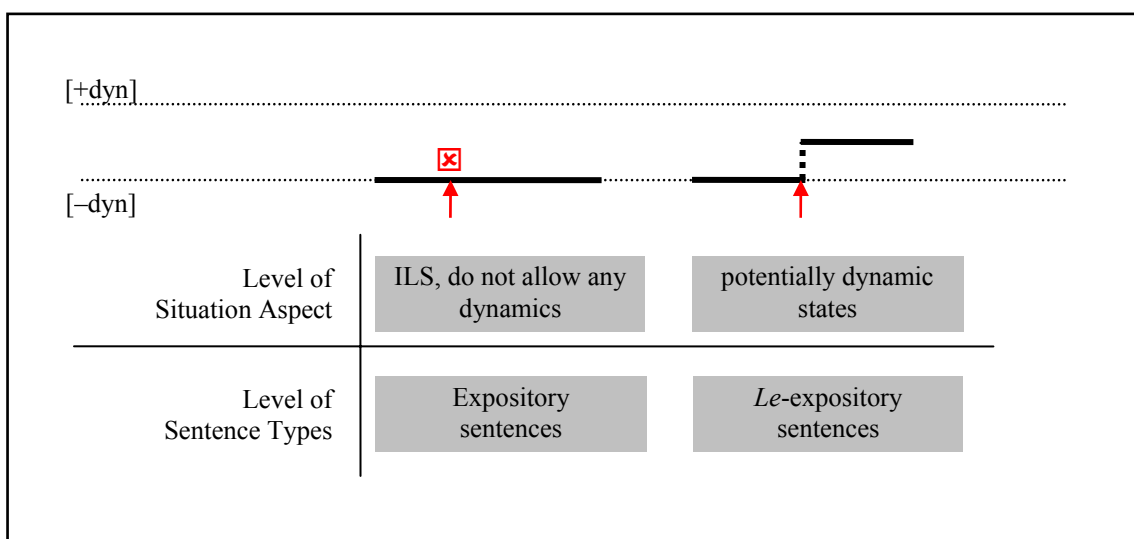


Figure 22: Zero-to-one dynamics on two levels

Level of situation aspect was in detailed discussed in Chapter 0 (cf. 79 ff.) above, so I will apply the contribution of operator *le* just on the level of sentence types. Expository sentences are factual statements which are strictly static. They express that some situation exists without changes, is a ‘fact’. This notion prevents operator *le* to perform zero-to-one dynamics. Therefore, there is no place for operator *le* in expository sentences.

On the other hand, *le*-expository sentences carry the idea of some form of change or reversal. In other words, operator *le* gives an initial impulse to a at least potentially dynamic situation. One might ask, how come expository sentences were considered strictly stative, but *le*-expository sentences are potentially dynamic. I argue that this difference arises because of the feature [\pm factual]. If a sentence expresses a state, which can differ from the current one, i.e. it can get a ‘change-of-state’ reading, then such sentences have the feature [-factual]. However, if a sentence expresses facts, i.e. a piece of information that is believed to be true and unchangeable, then the notion of change would not correspond to the notion of [+factual].

From the Chapter on modality we know that zero-to-one dynamics can refer to actual changes or discrepancy on attitudinal, modal level. As mentioned in Yip and Rimmington, also on this level operator *le* can lead to both interpretations, depending on context and most relevant reading.

7.2 Imperative sentences

In this chapter, I will briefly focus on operator *le* in imperatives. As mentioned already by Li and Thompson (1981: 207), most of the time, imperatives do not have *le*. This is reasonable, because they focus on situations which are about to happen, or should be prevented, i.e. RT<SitT, what is not compatible with *le*.

However, *le* can be used in imperatives when “there is some urgency about the action taking place, especially when something is to be disposed of or gotten rid of.” (L&T 1981: 207) This statement is indicating that speaker wants to stress the desired completion of the action, what means that operator *le* contributes to one-to-zero dynamics, which can be manifested as potential/desired completive reading.

(458) 咽了那个药丸子!

Yàn-le nà-gè yàowánzi!

Swallow that pill!

(L&T 1981: 207)

(459) 喝了那杯药!

Hē-le nà-bēi yào!

Drink that cup of medicine!

(L&T 1981: 207)

In terms from Yip and Rimmington, this holds for “gentle imperatives or urgent requests where some form of immediate reversal of the existing situation is being urged or cautioned against”, too. (Y&R 2004: 319) Yip and Rimmington are providing another useful term - ‘immediate reversal’¹²². This means operator *le* is clearly indicating ‘change/reversal’ in dynamics.

¹²² The word ‘reversal’ in English has several meanings, and for the present discussion two of them are relevant:

(1) ‘a change from one state to the opposite state’ (Dictionary.com); and

(2) ‘returning to a former state’ (TheFreeDictionary)

According to my understanding, Y&R’s term ‘reversal’ corresponds to the first definition, as the following passages indicate: “... the person referred to has now changed or reversed his former attitude: he is now doing what he would not do before.” (Y&R 2004: 316); another statement is “[adjectives are] core elements in *le*-expository sentences indicating reversals” (Y&R 2004: 316) with an example *Dongxi gui le*. ‘Things have become expensive/gone up’. (I am grateful to Marita Ljungqvist, who drew my attention to this ambiguity.)

(460) 走了，走了，时间不早了！
Zǒu-le, zǒu-le, shíjiān bù zǎo le!
Let's go, let's go, time's getting on. (Y&R 2004: 319)

(461) 请别谈话了，会议开始了。
Qǐng bié tánhuà le, huìyì kāishǐ le.
Please stop talking. The meeting is starting. (Y&R 2004: 319)

Sometimes *le* contrasts with the resultative verb ending *-diao* 'off' in an imperative, where *-le* expresses more urgency. The *le* in these examples always correlates with a message in which it is 'the end point of an action' that is important. (L&T 1981: 208-9; similar Y&R 2004: 363) This is nothing but to say that the same idea of one-to-zero dynamics is present again.

(462) 关掉他！关了他！
Guān-diào tā! Guān-le tā!
Turn radio off. (neutral)..... Get rid of that noise! (very irritated) (L&T 1981: 208)

(463) 擦掉他！擦了他！
Cā-diào tā! Cā-le tā!
Erase it. (neutral) Get rid of it! (with urgency) (L&T 1981: 208)

Or even more explicitly: "*le* imperatives urge an immediate stop or change". (Y&R 2004: 363)

(464) 不要哭了！
Bú yào kū le!
Stop crying. (Y&R 2004: 363)

(465) 吃饭了！
Chīfàn le!
Food's up. (Y&R 2004: 363)

Let me sum up again all the 'keywords' about *le* in imperatives: 'urgent disposal', 'immediate reversal', 'the end point of an action', 'immediate stop or change'. Everything indicated the desired one-to-zero change. According to Li and Thompson, these sentences "must be understood in terms of a following clause, giving the adverse consequences if the warning is not heeded." They say, "in many cases, the negative consequences are obvious enough that they don't need to be mentioned." (L&T 1981: 212) To my understanding, just an explicit final point is stressed.

(466) 别碰了炉子。
Bié pèng-le lúzi!
Don't touch the stove! (L&T 1981: 212)

(467) 别吞了骨头。

Bié tūn-le gútóu!

Don't swallow the bone!

(L&T 1981: 211)

Synthesis 20: Sentence types and operator *le* (Chap. 7)

Sentences:	Operator <i>le</i> is (☑) or is not (☒) used:	
	<i>Normally</i>	<i>Special cases</i>
– Declarative		
▪ Narrative	☑	
▪ Descriptive	☒	☑ special pattern (Loc+V+ <i>le</i> +NP)
▪ Expository	☒	
▪ Evaluative	☒	
▪ (Le-expository)	☑	
– Imperative	☒ normal tone	☑ urgent tone, inclusion of result
– Interrogative	?	
– Exclamatory	(☑)	

	Content	Structure	Patterns
Narrative sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to recount an incident, to tell a story 	Subject + predicate	→ definite preverbal NP → indefinite postverbal NP (Num+Cl)
Descriptive sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing action continuous action 	Subject + predicate	
Expository sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> factual statements explanation, experience, objective potential, habitual, cognition, intention 	Subject + predicate	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a fact or an intention definition and identification possession and existence 	Topic + comment	→ <i>shi/you</i> + N → unmodified verb/adjective
Evaluative sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observation, assessment opinion, subjective criticism 	Topic + comment	→ modal + V → V + de-construction → degree adverb + A → A + degree complement

8. OPERATOR *LE* AND FOCUS

I have shown several times that many interpretations and even acceptability of sentences depend on speaker's focus. Last example mentioned were constructions with verbal *le* and unspecified objects, like *li-le fa* 'had a haircut' in (414) or *ai-le ta* 'loved him' in (415). There are several other constructions where operator *le* is not favored, and I suggest reasons lie in focus.

In the following sections I will briefly present causative constructions and verbs of saying with direct and indirect quotations, which do not favor the inclusion of operator *le*. I claim that *le* in these contexts is omitted, because its presence would otherwise undesirably break up the semantic units that these patterns are expressing. For example, the information load in causative constructions is on the 'content of causing', whereas in quotations it is on the 'content of quoting'. However, if the focus is on the action of saying itself, operator *le* is expected to be used. It seems that for the same reason, operator *le* is favored in the foregrounded sentences, but not in the backgrounded sentences.

Causative constructions

In the literature it is frequently mentioned that operator *le* cannot be placed after causative markers. Chinese has just a few of them, i.e. *shi*, *jiao*, and *rang* 'cause', listed in Li and Thompson (1981: 602).

(468) 这件事（使/让/叫）（*了）我很难过。

Zhè-jìan shì (shǐ/ràng/jiào) (*le) wǒ hěn nánɡuò.

This matter makes me very sad.

(L&T 1981: 602)

Yip and Rimmington (2004: 96) also noted that "despite the fact that causative verbs help to narrate events, they do not usually incorporate the particle *le*." Data in the corpus is confirming this observation, showing that operator *le* is almost never used in causative environments. But whenever it is used, it is definitely placed in the clausal object, and not after these verbs meaning 'to cause'. Let us look at the following table.

	<i>shi</i> 'let/may/cause'	<i>rang</i> 'let/permit'	<i>jiao</i> 'order'
Without <i>le</i> in the rest of the sentence	473	492	488
With <i>le</i> in the rest of the sentence	27	8	1¹²³
Thereof, in the clausal object following ~	27	8	1
Thereof, directly after ~	0	0	0

Table 18: Sentences with *shi*, *rang* or *jiao* (each sample: 500 items, source: SkE)

¹²³ There were actually altogether 12 instances with *le* in the rest of the same sentence, but in ten cases *jiao* was used as full verb meaning 'to call' and in one case it was used to indicate passive voice 'by'.

In three random samples of 500 items, operator *le* was never used directly after *shi*, *rang* and *jiao*, indicating causative relations. However, in 36 cases it was used in the following part of the same sentence, indicating that situation was not only intended to happen, but has actually realized. As Yip (2004: 98) are stating ‘the second verb in the chain may, of course, take *le* to emphasize that the desired action has already been carried out’.

Causative constructions are basically providing only information that some situation is intended or caused, but there is no guarantee that situation was (or will be) actually carried out. Therefore, operator *le* contributes to aspectual reading SitT < RT of the referred situation, emphasizing the ‘actualized’ reading.

On the other hand, results of the last row should not be interpreted as *shi*, *rang* and *jiao* being absolutely incompatible with *le*. In the cases, where these expressions are used as full verbs, they can take *le*. Consider the following examples:

(469) 一会儿，高个儿向矮个儿使了个眼色，
矮个儿似乎心领神会，便在高个儿掩护下，
将一妇女的钱包掏出。
Yīhuìr, gāo gèr xiàng āi gèr shǐ-le gè yǎnsè,
āi gèr sìhū xīnlǐng-shénhuì, biàn zài gāo gèr yǎnhù xià,
jiāng yī fùnǚ de qiánbāo tāochū.
In a moment, the tall one tipped the short one the wink,
the short one seemed to understand that hint, and under cover of the tall one
she fished out that woman’s purse. (SkE)

(470) 在讨论中，大家发言十分踊跃。
郑义正代表三次准备发言，
却一连三次被抢去发言的机会，
急得赶紧声明，“我已经让了三次了，这次可不能再让了。”
Zài tāolùn zhōng, dàjiā fāyán shífēn yǒngyuè.
Zhèng Yìzhèng dài biǎo sān-cì zhǔnbèi fāyán,
què yīlián-sāncì bèi qiǎngqù fāyán de jīhuì,
jí de gǎnjǐn shēngmíng, ‘Wǒ yǐjīng ràng-le sān-cì le, zhè-cì kě bù néng zài ràng le.’
During the discussion, everyone was speaking very enthusiastically.
Delegate Zheng Yizheng wanted to present his opinion three times,
but every time someone else grabbed the opportunity to speak.
Then he rapidly stepped in, ‘I have already let (others speak) for three times, this time I
cannot let (them speak) any more. (It’s my turn)’ (SkE)

(471) 我们叫了半天，它却不赏光露面。
Wǒmen jiào-le bàn-tiān, tā què bù shǎngguāng-lùmiàn.
We were calling it (i.e. a special fish) for ages, but it was not graciously pleased to show up. (SkE)

In other words, when *shi*, *jiao*, and *rang* are used in causative patterns, operator *le* never occurs as their suffix. However, if these words are used as independent verbs, operator *le* is used in some occasions.

The same principle can be observed for other constructions that express causative relations. Yip and Rimmington (2004: 104) mentioned that causative verbs cannot be encoded in the completion aspect. Consequently this means that operator *le* cannot be used after causative verbs.

(472) * 他逼了我撒谎。

* Tā bī-le wǒ sāhuǎng.

* He forced me to lie.

(Y&R 2004: 104)

This example actually belongs to pivotal constructions, i.e. “sentences whose predicates consist of two verb phrases with the object of the first verb functioning at the same time as the subject of the second verb. In such a sentence, the first verb often has a causative meaning”, say Xiao and McEnery (2004: 119)

Focus of these sentences is not on causative verbs themselves, but on the content following causative part. Both parts form a semantic unit and it would be inappropriate to apply an operator which contributes to change in dynamics in between to split them apart. Beside of that, as we will see in the next chapter, operator *le* tends to occur where information is foregrounded or highlighted. If one wants to stress the actuality or realization of such causative situation, operator *le* should be placed after the main verb.

(473) 上个月他们请总工程师讲了两次学。

Shàng-gè yuè tāmen qǐng zǒng gōngchéngshī jiǎng-le liǎng-cì xué.

Last month they invited the chief engineer to give two lectures.

(X&McE 2004: 119)

Verbs of saying

It has been also remarked that verbal *le* does not occur “with verbs of saying when a quote follows”. (Chu 1998: 74) Since the message is contained in a quotation, direct or indirect, the quotation carries more important information than the verb of saying does.¹²⁴ As a result, the quotation rather than the ‘main’ verb of saying is interpreted as the peak or culminating clause in Mandarin. (cf. Chang 1986: 101, 117-118) I completely agree with this argumentation. As we see, focus is placed on the second part again, and it is the situation in the quote that can be marked by operator *le*.

¹²⁴ Both direct and indirect speech in Chinese carry equal prominence in terms of information content, compared with the verb that introduces them. (Chang 1986: 117)

(474) 他说：“我已经毕业三年了。”

Tā shuō: “Wǒ yǐjīng bìyè sān-nián le.”

He said, “It’s been three years since I graduated.”

(MEG)

(475) 他说他已经毕业三年了。

Tā shuō tā yǐjīng bìyè sān-nián le.

He said that it had been three years since he graduated.

(MEG)

Omitting *le* after verbs of saying is very strong tendency, however, the notion of focus in the utterance is far more important. Usually, main information are concentrated in the quote, but sometimes event of saying is what the speaker wants to stress. Consider the following pair of examples:

(476) a. 第二天复诊，医生问回去了后的详细情况，

b. 还是告诉我没问题，不用治疗，

c. 要相信宝宝自己的康复能力，

d. 况且没有真正有效的治疗药物。

e. 我告诉他昨晚发烧吃了退烧药，

f. 他问我是什么，把药给他看，上面有英文名称“布洛芬”，

g. 他很惊讶，说这是你们的儿科用药吗？

h. 我说，还是大公司产的（美国强生），难道有问题吗？

a. Dì-èr tiān fùzhěn, yīshēng wèn-le huíqù hòu de xiángxì qíngkuàng,

b. hái shì gàosù wǒ méi wèntí, bù yòng zhìliáo,

c. yào xiāngxìn bǎobǎo zìjǐ de kāngfù nénglì,

d. kuàngqiě méiyǒu zhēnzhèng yǒuxiào de zhìliáo yàowù.

e. Wǒ gàosù tā zuó wǎn fāshāo chī-le tuìshāoyào,

f. tā wèn wǒ shì shénme, bǎ yào gěi tā kàn, shàngmiàn yǒu Yīngwén míngchēng “Bùluòfēn”,

g. tā hěn jīngyà, shuō zhè shì nǐmen de ér kē yòng yào ma?

h. Wǒ shuō shì, hái shì dà gōngsī chǎn de (Měiguó qiángshēng), nándào yǒu wèntí ma?

a. On the next day, doctor *asked* me for details how it was after we went home.

b. He also *told* me that everything is ok, there is no need for medical treatment,

c. and I should trust the self-healing capacity of my baby,

d. moreover, there are no truly effective medications for that.

e. I *told* him that baby had a fever last night and I gave him anti-fever medicine.

f. He *asked* me what it was, I showed him the medicine, called “Ibuprofen”.

g. He was very surprised, and *asked* me if our pediatric department uses this medicine.

h. I *told* him they do, it is made by a big company (Johnson, US), what could be wrong? (web)

- (477) a. “有保罗·德雷克的消息吗？”
 b. “没有。”
 c. “你把我的话转告给他了吗？”
 d. “是的，我告诉了了他，你要他跟踪奥尔古德侦探事务所的那个姑娘，
 e. 你想尽可能详细地了解罗兰·伯尔在我们到的那天，
 f. 以及前一天所做的一切。”
- a. “Yǒu Bǎoluó Délèikè de xiāoxī ma?”
 b. “Méi yǒu.”
 c. “Nǐ bǎ wǒde huà zhuǎn gào gěi tā le ma?”
 d. “Shìde, wǒ gào sù-le tā, nǐ yào tā gēnzōng Àoěrgǔdé zhēntàn shìwùsuǒ de nà-gè gūniáng,
 e. nǐ xiǎng jìn kěnéng xiángxì-de liǎojiě Luólán Bóěr zài wǒmen dào de nà tiān,
 f. yǐjǐ qián yītiān suǒ zuò de yīqiē.”
- a. “Is there any news from Paul Drake?”
 b. “No.”
 c. “Did you convey my words to him?”
 d. “Yes, I *told* him that you want him to track that girl from detective Allgood’s office,
 e. that you want to know as many details as possible from the day Ronald Piper came to us,
 f. and everything he did the day before.” (web)

Example (476) has many ‘main’ verbs of saying, however the focus is on the content of indirect quotes. It is not the question ‘whether someone said something or not’ but ‘what did someone say’. Situation is right opposite in example (477), where the content of saying is known to both sides, and the important information is confirmation or denial of ‘saying’ itself.

I propose, the value of focus can override/change features on minor levels, e.g. situational aspect. Therefore, it is impossible to provide sufficient explanation of phenomena just on one isolated level.

Back- and fore-grounding

Chu (1998) presented the characteristics of aspect markers *le*, *qilai*, *guo*, *zai* and *zhe* in the scope of grounding. He discussed some of the ten features of transitivity proposed by Hopper and Thompson (1980), which he considers relevant to the evaluation of the aspect markers. (Chu 1998: 78-79) His findings are summarized in Table 19.

- (v) **-zhe**: (a) marks an event with a focus on its duration and is viewed as a state; (b) is dependent on the occurrence of another event; (c) thus, indicates subordination and often serves as a manner adverbial; and (d) appears in background.

These results tally with observations that the perfective viewpoints (not only the actual viewpoint) normally appear in foregrounded clauses to carry the narration forward, while imperfective viewpoints often show up in backgrounded clauses to provide background information. (cf. Hopper 1979:221; Christensen 1994)

Similar ideas are also found in Andreasen (1981) who claims that the perfective aspect in Mandarin has the additional function of marking foreground in narrative discourse. Therefore, the suffix *le* typically occurs in foregrounded clauses of the narrative. However, as Chang (1986: 91, 110) is adding, although *le* occurs in foregrounded clauses of a Chinese narrative, not all foregrounded events are marked by *le*. The suffix is reserved for marking only the most prominent event (i.e. the ‘peak’) in a discourse segment. Namely, as Chu says, at least as many, if not more, foregrounded clauses occur without *le*. (Chu 1998: 66) This fact should be further discussed on the discourse level, taking into account larger passages of text. I will return to this point again later, in chapter 10.1, p. 197.

After comparing these levels, we see that facts about operator *le* are overlapping with each other. On the aspectual level, operator *le* is associated with the perfective aspect. As we see, perfective aspects are further associated with foregrounded clauses, which help to advance the narration. Logically enough, operator *le* tends to appear the most frequently in narrative sentences and further narrative passages.

When operator *le* is used post-verbally, it scopes over situations, where it contributes to change in dynamics of events and states. Recall that operator *le* tends to appear in dynamic environments, and situations, which are important for the promotion of narration, and are therefore part of foreground, are also dynamic. To strengthen this point, consider Andreasen’s (1981) observation that “a great variety of linguistic means serve as background devices: equational verbs (e.g. *shi* ‘be’), existential verbs (e.g. *you* ‘have’), mental process verbs (e.g. *xiang* ‘think’), preverbal imperfective aspect markers (e.g. *zai* ‘at’) and postverbal imperfective aspect markers (e.g. *zhe*).”¹²⁸ These are exactly the means that are stative in nature and operator *le* is not expected to occur with.

¹²⁸ Here are two examples to refresh this principle: (1) ‘He is/was a student’ is always expressed without verbal-*le*, just with equational verb *shi*, even if it is a part of information in foreground, i.e. *Ta shi (*le) xuesheng*. (2) ‘There is/was a lot of books on the shelf’ comes with only existential verb *you*, i.e. *Shujia-shang you (*le) hen duo shu*. Recall that *le* on the sentence-final position is another matter, because its scope differs, and it can be applied, if the situation allows the required ‘potential dynamics’, i.e. it allows the possibility to be changed. In that case, sentence *Ta shi xuesheng le* means that ‘he is student now’ (in contrast to before). In this case, operator *le* indicates ‘zero-to-one change’. The same consideration is needed in verb-final constructions, because in these cases, *le* occurs sentence-finally.

9. LE IN SUBCLAUSES

Up to this chapter, *le* was discussed in main clauses. However, it can appear in subclauses of complex sentences, as well. On this level, operator *le* is supposed to express anteriority. According to my understanding, *le* just scopes over the event of the subclause itself, it is therefore always realized post-verbally, and this holistically presented unit then serves as an anchor for the main clause. The temporal interpretation of the whole sentence depends, naturally, on the value of the main clause.

Complex sentences were discussed in Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 103-113), so I will briefly present her description, expanded by statements from other authors. Complex sentences are sentences that consist of a subclause and a main clause. The situation described by the main clause is in one way or the other dependent on the realization of the situation specified in the subclause. In her work, Ljungqvist Arin (2003) is presenting two types of complex sentences with *le*. One is the *sequential sentence type*, and the other is *conditional sentence type*.

9.1 Sequential and conditional sentences

In sequential sentence, “the subclause describes a situation that will be or was realized before the main clause situation will be or was realized. That is, not only are the situations temporally subsequent but the realization of one of them is in some way related to the realization of the other.” Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 103) This relation is in Chang’s (1986) terms called anteriority. Chang doesn’t understand the notion ‘anteriority’ just as one event preceding the other but also that the first one holds a cause-effect to the one that follows. The definition of ‘anteriority’ should be broadened to include both temporal and logical relations. (Chang 1986: 110)

(478) 他明天晚上吃了饭就去看电影。

Tā míngtiān wǎnshàng chī-le fàn jiù qù kàn diànyǐng.

Tomorrow, when he has eaten, he will go to the movies.

(Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 104)

It is frequently noted that *le* and *jiu* often appear together. In textbooks, there are several instructions like this one: “When the sentence pattern ‘S V *le* O’ appears, it generally means that the sentence is unfinished. In this case there must follow a subsequent statement serving as the main clause that completes the sentence. Such a main clause is usually introduced by the fixed adverb *jiu*.” (PAVC1 1999: 195) Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 106) is further showing that “*le* is almost obligatory in the subclause of most sequential sentences unless there is a RVC complement.”

One of Chang’s examples for sequential sentences is:

(479) 当我侥幸考上了北市一所市里高中，
家里燃放了一串鞭炮，
足足高兴了好几天。

Dāng wǒ jiǎoxìng kǎoshàng-le Běi shì yī-suǒ shìlǐ gāozhōng,
jiā-lǐ ránfàng-le yī-chuàn biānpào,
zú zú gāoxìng-le hǎo jǐ-tiān.

When I was, luckily, admitted into a Taipei municipal high school,
my folks set off a string of firecrackers

and we were completely immersed in happiness for several days. (Chang 1986: 110)

Chang explains that the first two *les* are for marking anteriority, i.e. *kaoshang* ‘be admitted into’ and *ranfang* ‘set off’ are explicitly marked as temporally and logically preceding the third verb *gaoxing* ‘happy’.

Chu (1998: 72) is also adding that “the *le* after *kaoshang* ‘to be admitted into’ is more likely to be left out than the other two because the conjunction *dang* ‘when’ indicates that the clause is in some sense a subordinate one and is thus more of a background than the other two clauses. Use of *le* in this case is optional.” Recall that operator *le* is not very likely to appear in backgrounded sentences (p. 190). I suggest that this is the case where two contradictive tendencies meet, one promoting the inclusion of *le* and the other promoting omission of *le*.

Operator *le* can also be omitted in the presence of explicit temporal markers such as *yihou* ‘after’. (Chang 1986: 62) Data is actually showing, that clauses without *le* are far more frequent. In a random sample of 500 instances of subordinate clauses with *yihou* ‘after’, only 31 instances included *le*. Consider the following table:

	Sample	(V-Ø ... ~), (main clause)	(V- <i>le</i> ... ~), (main clause)
<i>Yihou</i> ‘after’	500 (100%)	469 (93,8%)	31 (6,2%)
<i>Zhihou</i> ‘after’	500 (100%)	480 (96,0%)	20 (4,0%)

Table 20: Subordinate sentences with explicit temporal markers

Here are two examples of sequential sentences with *yihou* ‘after’, the first one including *le* and the second one omitting it. For better comparison, I have selected sentences with similar contexts.

(480) 去年嫩江、松花江流域发生了特大洪涝灾害以后，
 省委、省政府更加认识到水利设施在农业生产中的作用。
 Qùnián Nèn jiāng, Sōnghuā jiāng liúyù fāshēng-le tè dà hóngláo zāihài yǐhòu,
 shěng wěi, shěng zhèngfǔ gèng jiā rènshí-dào shuǐlì shèshī zài nóngyè shēngchǎn-zhōng de
 zuòyòng.
 Last year, after the enormous flood disaster in the Nen and Songhua River basin occurred,
 the provincial party committee and government became even more aware of how important
 water conservancy facilities are for the agricultural production. (SkE)

(481) 广东、广西、湖南发生洪涝灾害以后，
 广州军区先后派出数万名官兵抗洪抢险。
 Guǎngdōng, Guǎngxī, Húnán fāshēng hóngláo zāihài yǐhòu,
 Guǎngzhōu jūnqū xiānhòu pàichū shù wàn míng guānbīng kànghóng qiǎngxiǎn.
 After the flood disaster in Guangdong, Guangxi and Hunan, the Guangzhou military region
 has sent tens of thousands of officers and men to fight against this danger. (SkE)

The second sentence-type is the conditional sentence type. “This sentence-type is similar to the former in that it, too, describes a sequence of events in which the realization of the first situation is related to the realization of the second. The difference lies in this relationship. For the temporal sequential sentences, it is simply a temporal relationship, while for the conditional sentences, the temporal relationship follows from the fact that the subclause describes a condition under which the main clause situation can be fulfilled. The temporal relationship between the clauses in the conditional sentences is therefore hypothetical.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 103)

The following example is taken from Li and Thompson, and can be interpreted temporally or conditionally:

(482) 他开了门，你就进去。
 Tā kāi-le mén, nǐ jiù jìnqù.
 When/if he opens the door, you go in. (L&T 1981: 199)

Le can occur in a protasis that describes a counterfactual situation, a hypothetical future situation or even a generic statement. “In conditional sentences, as in sequential sentences, *le* marks the initiation or termination (in non-factual time) of the first event and that point in time also marks the beginning of a reference time during which the second event can be realized.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 110)

9.2 Operator *le* in subclauses

Speaking about operator *le*, it can appear freely in subclauses of complex sentences. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 104)

(483) 他明天晚上吃了饭就去看电影。

Tā míngtiān wǎnshàng chī-le fàn jiù qù kàn diànyǐng.

Tomorrow, when he has eaten, he will go to the movies. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 104)

If we look on this issue from the other way, i.e. from the perspective of main clauses, Yip and Rimmington's statement should be mentioned: "*Le* can only be used with future time in incomplete clauses." (Y&R 2004: 104)

Presence of *le* in complex sentences was also mentioned by Chappell (1988) or Li and Thompson (1981: 186) saying that verbal *le* is used with events, which are bounded by being the first event in a sequence.¹²⁹ They say that "after one event has taken place, another one happens or a new state materializes. In such cases, the first event is of interest as an unanalyzed whole; the speaker signals that its occurrence is bounded by the subsequent event. In these instances *le* is used, and the sentence can often be translated with 'after', 'when', or 'now that' in English." (L&T 1981: 198) Here are some of their examples.

(484) 我吃完了你吃。

Wǒ chīwán-le nǐ chī.

After I have finished eating, then you eat. (L&T 1981: 198)

(485) 我看完了报，就睡。

Wǒ kànwán-le bào, jiù shuì.

When I finish reading the paper, I will go to sleep. (L&T 1981: 198)

(486) 有了那个日光灯，厨房就亮多了。

Yǒu-le nà-gè rìguāngdēng, chúfáng jiù liàng duō le.

Now that (they) have that fluorescent light, the kitchen is much brighter. (L&T 1981: 199)

Sentence-final *le* in subclauses of complex clauses is normally not found. First of all, sentence final *le* is scoping over the whole sentence, not just one clause; and second, when speaking about sequencing, we are focusing on situations themselves, and not the whole sentences or utterances. On the level of situations, operator *le* is used post-verbally.

Chinese "favors a linear sequencing that follows the temporal and logical order of events". (Chang 1986: 106) Chu says that Tai (1985) convincingly argues that Chinese utilizes word order to express

¹²⁹ Chang says himself, that the category 'First event in a sequence' by Li and Thompson is comparable to his analysis of *le* as a marker of anteriority. (Chang 1986: 71)

temporal/logical sequence extensively. In other words, “juxtaposition of phrases or clauses almost always means temporal sequencing, if not otherwise indicated.” (Chu 1998: 71) This can be also one of the reasons, why sometimes operator *le* is not needed for sentences to express anteriority. And on the other hand, “this extensive use of word order for temporal and logical sequencing makes it necessary for Chinese to employ an overt peak-marking device. The selection of *le* for this use is perhaps because of its foregrounding function as a perfective aspect marker.” (Chu 1998: 71)

10. DISCOURSE LEVEL

10.1 Discourse functions of operator *le*

From the perspective of discourse, operator *le* is said to mark end of discourse units, episodic boundaries, peak events, culmination points etc, which is just a manifestation of one-to-zero dynamics on the discourse level. I will present these ideas in the following pages.

The discourse function of the sentence-final *le* is “to mark the end of a discourse unit”. (cf. Chang 1986: 122, Chu 1998: 157) A discourse unit, however, is a relative term. It may be as large as a complete story, a chapter, a paragraph, a conversation; or as small as a group of clauses or sentences which make up a topical unit. The division of a discourse unit is subject to each person’s perception of the real world. (cf. Chang 1986: 125, 131) This function is similar to what Chappell (1988:123) is naming marking episodic boundary, i.e. “bounds segments¹³⁰ or chunks of discourse within the narrative which corresponds to the end of a particular scene”.

The function of marking the end of a discourse unit may subsume what Li and Thompson (1981: 283-290) call ‘closing a statement’ function. This function also agrees with what Huang and Davis (1989) advocate as the ‘interruption’ function of *le* at the discourse level. (Chu 1998: 158)

“Furthermore, this use can even overrule the presence or absence of the change-of-state function. That is, the need for marking the end of a discourse calls for the use of a *le* where no changed state may exist. Conversely, the end for marking the non-end of a discourse may result in the omission of an otherwise necessary change-of-state *le*.” (Chu 1998: 155) In the following examples, a change-of-state reading is impossible for the sentence-final *le*.

¹³⁰ How to recognize segments of discourse, is another big issue, therefore I will not go into details. Chappell (1988) presented some ‘hints’ for judgement whether a discourse unit has reached its boundary or not. She says that other discourse studies have shown that episodic boundaries tend to coincide with change in either setting, topic or characters. Chu (1998: 158) is suggesting that the break between discourse units may be marked by other formal signals such as the presence of a pronoun instead of a zero.

(487) 当演员一行到达摩洛哥的时候温度高达华氏一百三十三度，且看两位名影星这次如何再度共同发挥他们的长才了。

Dāng yǎnyuán yīxíng dàodá Mólùogē de shíhòu wēndù gāodá huáshì yībǎi sānshísān dù, qiě kàn liǎng-wèi míng yǐngxīng zhè-cì rúhé zàidù gòngtóng fāhuī tāmen de chángcái le.

When his team of actors and actresses arrived in Morocco, the temperature reached 133°F.

Let's wait and see how the two famous movie stars would again pull together their talents for another big hit. (Chu 1998: 155)

(488) 有钱的时候，常想着没钱的时候，不要乱花钱，这算是我数十年艰苦工读生活的最大心得了。

Yǒu qián de shíhòu, cháng xiǎng-zhe méi qián de shíhòu, búyào luàn huā qián, zhè suànshì wǒ shùshínián jiānkǔ gōngdú shēnghuó de zuìdà xīnde le.

When one has money, one must often think of days when one hasn't. This is the biggest

lesson that I have learned in the past few decades in which I work-studied hard (to obtain my degrees). (Chu 1998: 156)

From Chang (1986) on, it is widely agreed that the verbal suffix *le* tends to occur toward the end of a major break in the event line. This is because one of the discourse functions of *le* is said to be marking the peak clause of a discourse segment. Chang defines a *peak* as “a sentence of a particular semantic importance within a segment. Within each segment there is typically one sentence that is functionally more prominent.” (Chang 1986: 105)

This function is also ascribed to sentence-final *le*, which is said to mark “the peak in a progress, or the culmination of a larger project. The events in these sentences are not currently relevant. The speaker looks upon the event as isolated from the present and included in a past reference time, but wants to highlight it, as the end of a progress described or implied in the discourse.” (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 129) According to her, this reading arises because *le*'s core feature ‘boundary’ “works both on the sentence level (perfective aspect) and on the discourse-level (peak in a larger project).”

(489) 段太太眨了眨眼睛，那泪珠就再也无法在眼眶中停留，终于落在旗袍上了。

Duàn tàitài zhǎ-le zhǎ yǎnjīng, nà lèizhū jiù zài yě wúfǎ zài yǎnkuàng-zhōng tíngliú, zhōngyú luò zài qípáo shàng le.

Mrs Duan blinked. The teardrop could no longer remain on the rim of her eye and finally fell on her dress. (Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 130)

Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 130) explains, that the sentence (489) “illustrates the culmination of a chain of events that happened within a specific past reference time. What differentiates this sentence from perfective sentences without sentence-final *le* is that it constitutes a culmination. Culmination can also be described as the reaching of a peak or a boundary.”

The operator *le* can be used in the narration of a past situation to mark the end of a series of actions before going on to a new one. In order to maintain the continuity of the narration, it is used at the

end of each series of actions, not after each action within the series. The following example shows how the operator *le* marks the end of each series of actions within the bigger picture of what happened after the woman made the phone call. (MEG, Chap III.h.)

(490) 她打完电话，留下钱，拿起书包，就出去了。

走到学校大门口儿，她碰见张美英了。

跟小张说了一会儿话，她就去公共汽车站了。

走到车站，车还没有来，她就到旁边儿的小书店去买报。

买了报，车也来了，她就上车回家了。

Tā dǎwán diànhuà, liúxià qián, náqǐ shūbāo, jiù chūqu le.

Zǒudào xuéxiào dàménkǒur, tā pèngjiàn Zhāng Měiyīng le.

Gēn Xiǎo Zhāng shuō-le yíhuǐ huà, tā jiù qù gōnggòngqìchē-zhàn le.

Zǒudào chēzhàn, chē hái méi yǒu lái, tā jiù dào pángbiānr de xiǎo shūdiàn qù mǎi bào.

Mǎi-le bào, chē yě lái le, tā jiù shàng chē huí jiā le.

When she finished the phone call, she left the money, picked up her bag and left.

When she got to the school gate, she ran into Meiying Zhang.

After talking with her for a little while, she went to the bus stop.

When she got to the bus stop, the bus had not arrived,

so she went to the little bookstore nearby to buy a newspaper.

After she got the paper, the bus came.

She got on the bus and went home.

(MEG, Chap III.h.)

When verbal *le* is used, it is usually the termination of a single event that is focused on, while in the sentences with sentence-final *le* it is rather the termination of a progress consisting of several events. Sentence-final *le* thus contributes to temporal modifications on the sentence level but also on the discourse level, sometimes simultaneously. In addition, sentence-final *le* has a range of modal uses. (cf. Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 135)

I follow Ljungqvist Arin's idea, that one core feature can lead to several interpretations. According to my approach, all interpretations derive from the feature 'change-in-dynamics'. I will summarize the major meanings of operator *le* on the discourse level in Synthesis 21 on page 201.

10.2 Features, decreasing the likelihood of *le*

Also on the discourse level there are some features, that decrease the likelihood of operator *le*. I am speaking mainly about passages in classical flavor and factual assertions. These seem to be two of the main exceptions where this *le* is excluded (Chang 1968: 145-6; Chu 1998: 158)

In general, *le* is not used in cases "where factual statements are asserted, specifically when its presence would result in an undesirable "change of state" reading." (Chang 1986: 146) This is also true when these statements occur at the end of a discourse unit. (Chang 1986: 216) This

characteristics is further strengthening my assumption that operator *le* contributes to change in dynamics. If operator *le* appears in a stative passage, it can result in the zero-to-one impulse of that passage, and it can also contribute to one-to-zero impulse if the focus is on ending the discourse unit. When such conflicting tendencies arise, the stronger one overrules the weaker one.

“Lesser degree of compatibility of the suffix *le* with expressions having a classical flavor is a natural consequence of the late emergence of the suffix in the history of Chinese language.” (Chang 1986: 118) For example, A classical verb *ru* ‘to enter’ is not compatible with the perfective *le*. This constraint is very reasonable owing to the late emergence of the affix. Classical flavor of a verb can also be seen in its object, i.e. whether the longer or the shorter form is used. (Chu 1998: 76)

(491) 几个月后，我随三叔全家自海南岛入（*了）台。

Jǐ-gè yuè hòu, wǒ suí Sān Shū quánjiā zì Hǎinándǎo rù (*-le) Tái.

A few months later, I went to Taiwan from Hainan Island
with (my) Third Uncle’s family.

(Chang 1986: 104)

I mentioned in the Chapter 8 on focus, that verbs of saying and operator *le* are not expected to occur together, because the focus is on the content of saying, and not on the action of saying itself. This tendency seems to overrule also the effects on discourse level, namely, as Chang says, “the suffix *le* is rarely used with verbs of saying, regardless of whether the verb occurs in a peak or non-peak clause of a discourse segment.” (Chang 1986: 244, 247)

Basically, conversations are very suitable environments for operator *le*, because they are very dynamic. However, not all utterances in dialogues are expected to occur with *le*. Li and Thompson are asserting the following types of situations within conversational language, in which *le* is not used. First, when the speaker is simply asserting a general truth in an ordinary conversation where no change is involved; second, when general states or ongoing situations involving no change are described; third, with a simple assertion of an event that happened in the past; fourth, sentences expressing an event or situation in the future, requests, suggestions, and commands normally occur without *le* (cf. L&T 1981: 291-294).

If we look at them from the point of dynamics, we see that all these types of situations are relatively stative. Asserting general truths, states and ongoing situations does not allow the notion of dynamics, nor does asserting of events as simple facts. The fact that requests and commands do not favor *le*, was already discussed in Chapter 7.2, p. 183.

Synthesis 21: Interpretations of operator *le* on the discourse level (Chap. 10.1)

	verbal <i>le</i>	sentence-final <i>le</i>
DYNAMIC SEQUENCES		
Anteriority Temporal/logical relating clauses (cause-effect)	☑ • unnecessary in the presence of explicit temporal markers • meaning of anteriority is particularly clear where adverb <i>yijing</i> ‘already’ is used.	☑ (<i>reason</i> : sentence-final <i>le</i> takes in account the whole sentence, not just the anterior event)
Marking the peak event or culmination point	☑ • occurs toward the end of a major break in the event line • importance of a specific event	☑ • occurs toward the end of a major break in the event line • importance of a whole series of events
Marking the end of a discourse unit	☑ • bounding segments or chunks of discourse within one unit	☑ • stresses the end of discourse unit • Note: before applying, consider (un)desired change-of-state meaning
STATIC SEQUENCES		
Commentary and summary clauses, backtracking	☒ (<i>reason</i> : stative situations, which do not contribute to time advancing)	☒ (<i>reason</i> : stative situations, which do not contribute to time advancing)
Factual statements	☒ (<i>reason</i> : general statives are not compatible with verbal <i>le</i>)	☒ (<i>reason</i> : presence would result in undesired change-of-state reading)
Classical flavor	☒ (<i>reason</i> : has appeared quite late in the history)	☒ (<i>reason</i> : stronger principle than marking end of discourse unit)

10.3 *Le* in different discourse passages

It was shown in the chapter 7.1.1 (p. 176), that operator *le* tends to occur the most frequently in narrative sentences, but not in the other sentence-types, with exception of *le*-expository sentences, which are by default produced by adding *le* to virtually any statement. The same tendency remains for larger units, as whole passages of texts. Let us look at some details.

Chu is marking that “discourse-final *le* occurs most frequently in narrative discourse, and only rarely in the other genres of the language.” (Chu 1998: 158) Another environment, which favors *le*,

but is not mentioned here, are conversations. This fact might explain, why researches on *le* are mainly focusing on narrative and conversational discourse.¹³¹

“Sentence-final *le* in general does not occur in summary clauses that serve to comment on the main events in the text.” (Chang 1986: 226) In other words, “sentence-final *le* is not favored in commentary or summary clauses at the end of a narrative.” (Chang 1986: 227) This fact provides a more principled account for its non-occurrence in clauses involving factual statements or future expectations.¹³² These clauses are not part of the main event line of a narrative. They serve to comment and amplify on the main events but are not directly relevant to these events. (cf. Chang 1986: 230) Actually, commentary clauses are in fact stative in nature, and operator *le* is not very compatible with stative units.

Li and Thompson (1981: 290) did also say, that “*le* is generally not used in written expository or descriptive prose, and it is rare in formal spoken-language situations such as news reports, speeches, lectures, and proclamations.”

These findings are also overlapping with the results of my test, in which I was comparing the frequency of operator *le* in post-verbal and sentence-final position in different text types. I took in account UCLA corpus, with pre-defined text types. Results can be seen from the following Figure:

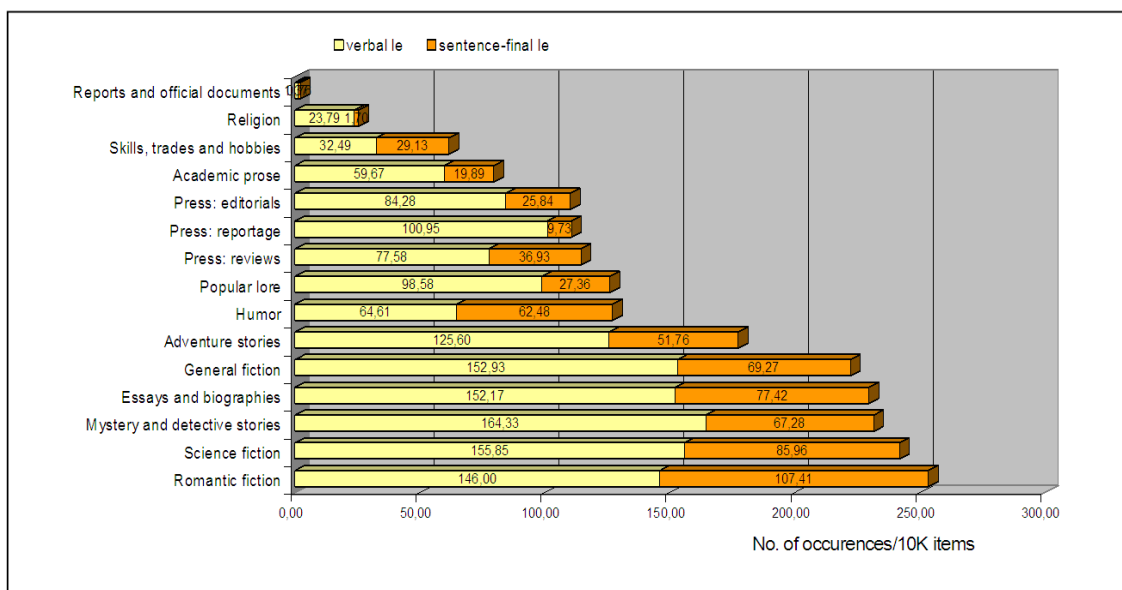


Figure 23: Distribution of operator *le* in different text types (n-times/10K items)

¹³¹ Of course, not all utterances in conversations tend to be combined with operator *le*. Recall the last part of Chapter 10.2, p. 199

¹³² However, some lexical means may increase the likelihood of sentence-final *le* to appear, for example *mashang* ‘immediately’, indicating the immediate future, or the pattern *kuaiyao* ‘soon will’. See Figure 16.

Figure 23 is showing that operator *le* almost never occurs in reports and official documents, texts about religion, and is also rarely used in texts about skills, hobbies, trades, academic prose and press. These are extremely stative text genres with factual statements, written in rather condensed and classical style, without specially desired changes. I suggest operator *le* is not expected in them just because of its nature, which contributes to dynamics and also requires dynamics. On the other hand, text types like fiction, mystery and detective stories or adventure stories include a lot of dynamics, advancing in time, narrating, changes etc. This is just the right environment for operator *le* to appear.

Results are showing that verbal *le* is more frequently used than sentence-final *le*. Among all text types, the most balanced genre is humor¹³³. According to my understanding, these results were also expected. Namely, operator *le* on the post-verbal position is scoping over situations, and exactly situations are the ones which contribute to advancement in storyline. As we saw, verbal *le* can function on the discourse level, as well, therefore it can also contribute to dynamics on the discourse level.

Sentence-final *le* scopes over whole sentences and larger units, in general contributes to change-of-state meanings and marks boundaries on the discourse level. It has as well several modal interpretations. If we take in account all these functions, it is logical that in Xiao's corpus, which consists of written materials, verbal *le* is used more frequently.

I assume that these proportions would change if one took under consideration conversations, which are the far most dynamic text type, with a great variety of modal meanings, including different perceptual deviations and the communicative needs for coordination of common-ground in Wu's (2006) terms. However, due to limited time and resources, spoken materials had to be neglected.

¹³³ The humor genre is probably quite conversation-like in its character; therefore, the proportion of sentence-final *le* is higher, compared to other genres. (Thanks to Marita Ljungqvist for reminding me on that)

PART III:

TREATMENT OF LE ACROSS VARIOUS DOMAINS

In my research, I examined and compiled different levels where operator *le* appears, in order to show that a great variety of meanings, which are assigned to this puzzling element, are the resulting forms of one single characteristics, i.e. ‘**change in dynamics**’.

First, I presented the contribution of operator *le* at the aspectual level, consisting of situational aspect and viewpoint aspect. On this level, operator *le* is said to produce *inchoative*, *terminative* or *completive* readings, and is related with the notions of *perfective aspect*, *actual aspect*, *realization* and *holisticity*. When relating situations to time-line, operator *le* gets by default *past tense* interpretation, but can also produce *perfect* readings. Linguists generally agree, that operator *le* does not express past tense, but I suggest this relation is very reasonable and natural, since dynamic events to which operator *le* is attached, are by default located in the past.

Then I touched the modal meanings of operator *le*, which are always related to some kind of discrepancy, either in real world or in perceptual world. Therefore, notions like *attitudinal boundary*, *perceptual differences*, *correcting wrong assumptions* etc. are assigned to operator *le*, specially if *le* is placed sentence-finally.

At the level of different sentence-types and text passages, operator *le* is still reflecting its basic contribution, although it is harder to isolate the influence of *le*, because the complexity of phenomena increases. Here, operator *le* is associated with the notions of *anteriority*, *peak events*, *culmination points*, *reporting the progress* etc.

After presenting these ‘horizontal’ layers, I will sum up my standpoints with ‘vertical’ overview of dynamism in relation to *le*. In the following subchapter, I will first focus on stative environments and show that the dynamic nature of *le* and stative features on different levels are not compatible with each other. Namely, as I claim, operator *le* requires at least potentially dynamic environments. Then, I will briefly describe these semi-dynamic situations, and in the last part dynamic situations, which are the most compatible with operator *le*. Finally, I will conclude this book with reconsideration of minimal pairs, presented in Part III, Chapter 3.

1. VERTICAL OVERVIEW OF LE IN RELATION TO DYNAMISM

In general, I suggest that all interacting features must be compatible with each other to produce acceptable utterance. I claim, that operator *le* has only one, highly grammaticalized feature, i.e. it contributes to change in dynamics. So, in order to be acceptable, environment to which *le* is attached, must be at least potentially dynamic.

1.1 Absolutely stative environments

Absolutely stative environments are graphically presented as follows¹³⁴:

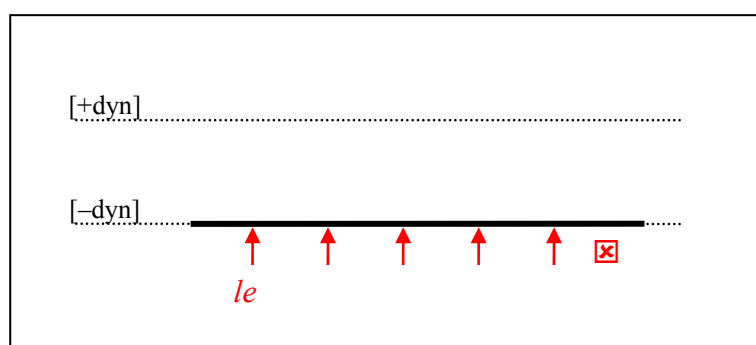


Figure 24: *Le* in absolutely stative environments

Figure 24 is showing that absolutely stative environments have feature [–dynamic], therefore the dynamic *le* is not compatible with them.

On the aspectual level, precisely, if taking into account situation aspect, we see that **individual-level states** are not compatible with *le*. (cf. 79.; examples (179), (180)) They express that a state is holding over unspecified time, and even if we want to say that this state is over before Reference Time and/or Speech Time, we cannot apply *le*. The same is true for **repeating events** (example (256), p. 110), which are dynamic, but do not allow changes. Namely, lexical means like *changchang* ‘often’, *yizhi* ‘always’, *bu duan de* ‘continuously’ etc. can influence the nature of situations. Compare the following figure:

¹³⁴ These figures were together presented in Figure 6, p. 90 (with some exceptions, which will be additionally added here)

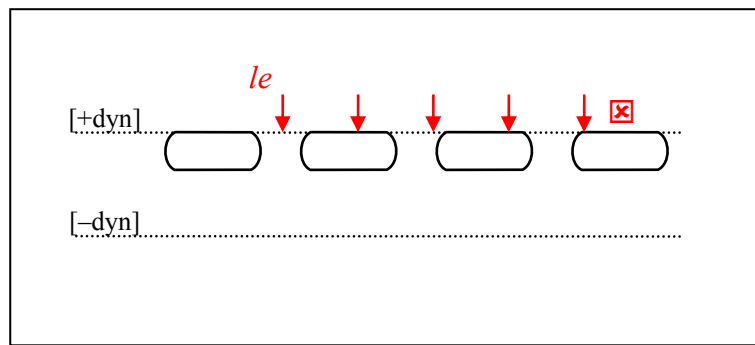


Figure 25: *Le* in events as absolutely stative environment

As we see, what is stative and therefore going on, is similar to **imperfective aspect**, which is - predictably - incompatible with *le*. On the other hand, operator *le* is found with perfective viewpoint, which presents situations as whole, visible as including endpoints or bounded.

Stative environments are also **generalizing and generic sentences** (cf. 67), since they express general patterns, which are not meant to change. Further on, no changes are part of **descriptive sentences** (cf. 177) Recall that descriptive sentences are objective depictions of actions that are ongoing at a particular time. The focus is on the continuous action. These characteristics are exactly the same as mentioned above. The next type of sentences, which are also inherently stative, are **expository sentences** (cf. 178). Semantically, they express factual statements, and these are not supposed to indicate changes, but present facts as they are. Recall that their range of meanings covers definitions, identifications, possession, existence, experience, objective potential etc.

Finally, it has been shown that operator *le* appears in different text genres with different frequency (cf. Figure 23, p. 202). It is at least favored in **official documents**, also in religious texts, academic prose and texts about skills, hobbies or trade. These text genres have a lot of factual statements, which are - as just mentioned - very stative, and do not presuppose any changes.

1.2 Stative, but potentially dynamic environments

Stative, but potentially dynamic environments are graphically presented in the figure below:

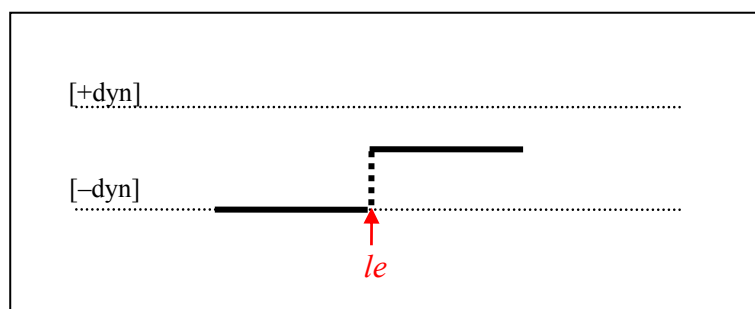


Figure 26: *Le* in stative, but potentially dynamic environments

Figure 26 is showing that ‘a stative, but potentially dynamic environment’ means that a particular situation is stative, however it can change. Operator *le* contributes to zero-to-one dynamics, and gives to the situation an initial impulse. After this impulse, stative environment remains stative, but with a new value.

On the level of situation aspect, **stage-level states** correspond to this characteristics (p. 79 ff.; p. 138 ff.). By themselves, stage-level states express a transient or episodic stages of an individual. When occurring with the operator *le*, a state eventuality is conceived of as having dynamic semantics, thus, involving an initial point. It is then the question of our focus, how we perceive such utterances. Speaker/reader might be focused on the change itself, or might be rather interested in resulting state. I presented this difference in Figure 10 (p. 111). Recall as well, that lexical means can lead us to the desired interpretation, e.g. *turan* ‘suddenly’ is stressing the change itself, but *yijing* ‘already’ is concentrated on the resulting state. The same is true for sentences with abstract verbs, which by default stress the resulting state, but can focus on change, as well.

Operator *le* is also said to express **modal meanings** (cf. Chapter 4, 140 ff.). I argue, that modal interpretations perfectly correspond to the situation in Figure 26. Namely, changes can be temporal, as well as atemporal. When speaking about atemporal reading, the two levels in our figures ([+dyn] and [-dyn]) represent two non-temporal domains that have to do with the speaker’s attitude towards what is expressed in the sentence. This might be a contrast between for example the norm and the deviation from the norm or between expectation and reality. Therefore, operator *le* contributes to a zero-to-one impulse, which creates two layers of the same situation. This ‘gap’ then represents a discrepancy between norm/standard or expectation/reality.

In the chapter about sentence types, I presented ***le*-expository sentences** (Chap. 7.1.5, 181 ff.). It was noted that operator *le* can be placed at the end of virtually any statement. Such sentences implicate some form of change or a reversal of a previous situation. They suggest that what is stated represents a change from what existed or what was happening before. *Le*-expository sentences are in fact a very nice example, that operator *le* just changes dynamics. Much of the time the change asserted in *le*-expository sentences is simply factual, but it also regularly counters an assumption or expectation in the mind of the person addressed. The construction is very much a feature of spoken language and the social interaction among Chinese people. Because of this huge scope of application, operator *le* is often defined as change-of-state marker.

At the beginning of this chapter, in Figure 25, I presented that operator *le* is not compatible with repeating, ongoing events. Recall example (256), that *Ta changchang kan-le dianying* ‘he often watched movies’ is unacceptable. However, *Ta changchang kan dianying le* ‘he often watches movies now’ is perfectly right. ‘Watching movies’ in the example (257) is considered state, which means that the state of ‘not-watching’ got an impulse that changed its value to the state of ‘having the habit of watching’.

So, wherever we are dealing with stative environments, which allow to be changed, operator *le* clearly demonstrates a zero-to-one impulse.

1.3 Dynamic environments

We haven't mentioned any one-to-zero changes, yet. This is because operator *le* gives zero-to-one impulse to stative environments and one-to-zero to dynamic environments. Consider the following figure:

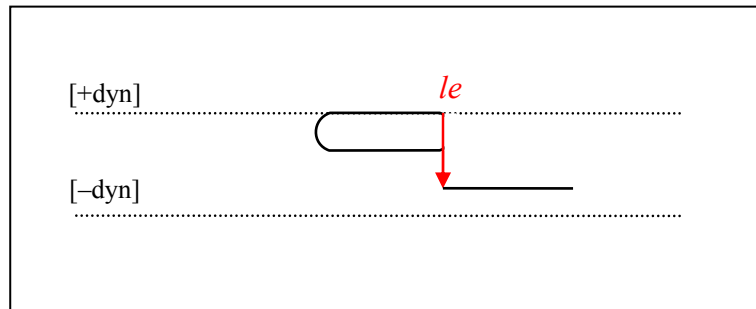


Figure 27: *Le* in dynamic environments

Figure 27 is the most universal representation of what operator *le* does to dynamic environments. All further interpretations are related to the closure type of environment. Recall Chapter 0 (79 ff.) on situation aspect, that telic situations are **completed** whereas atelic situations are **terminated** (p. 88). I will present this difference again in the following figure:

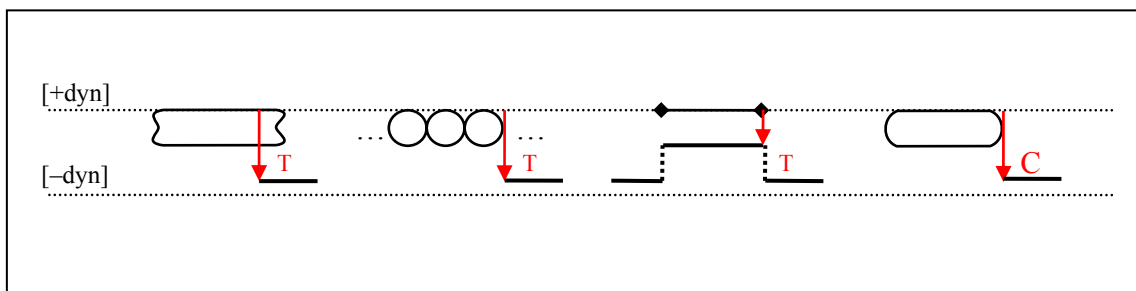


Figure 28: Manifestation of *le* in dynamic environments

We can see from Figure 28, that terminative reading arises, when one-to-zero impulse is applied on atelic situations, and completive reading is the outcome of one-to-zero impulse and telic situation.

The notion of dynamics and boundedness is very strong. Recall as well that dynamic, bounded situations are due to the Bounded Event Constraint (cf. 60) placed in the past. Consequently, dynamic events with *le* are by default considered as **past** situations, and these are mainly found in **narrative** sentences (cf. 176). As the events of the narrative unfold in sequence, we understand that narrative time advances. Therefore it is reasonable, that operator *le* appears in those text types, which are rich on narrating.

It also makes sense, that the notion of **anteriority** is related to the ending of some situations, which serve as signals that the next situation started or can/will start. Whether these relations are just temporal or conditional, is the question of semantics and relevance.

Further on, operator *le* is said to express **the peak event** in a series of events, which is actually giving an one-to-zero impulse to several events in a line. From this point of view, compare the fourth chart in Figure 28. On the other hand, operator *le* is also said to be used for reporting about **progress so far**. This description equals to the second chart in the same figure.

When the passage of a text or a text itself is over, *le* is supposed to express an **end of discourse unit** or **speaker's contribution so far**. As we see again, this meaning is just another reflection of the same basic principle 'giving an one-to-zero' impulse to dynamic situations.

What kind of dynamics operator *le* will evoke, also depends on the other **linguistic means**, **pragmatic principles** and **focus**. As we saw, some utterances might be or might be not acceptable, depending on the 'context', i.e. focus.

The issue of focus can also explain, why operator *le* is not compatible with some structures, e.g. serial construction, verbs of speaking with quotations, potential constructions etc. Simply, these constructions do not focus on zero-to-one or one-to-zero changes, but are stressing other properties of utterances.

2. CONGRUENCE BETWEEN ELEMENTS

In the present work, I have been trying to present two major ideas. First, operator *le* has just one function, i.e. change in dynamics. Second, in order to be acceptable, an utterance should avoid conflicting elements. If there are several factors 'pulling' in the same way, i.e. speaking in favor of dynamics, then the possibility of operator *le* increases. Consequently, if several elements tend to express related meanings, they appear frequently together, and seem to form patterns or constructions.

Ke (2005) did a survey of acquisition patterns of 19 Chinese grammatical features, in which *le* was included. He compiled all the patterns in association with *le* that exist in the commonly used textbooks in the United States and grammar books, which came up to a total of 10 patterns. (Ma 2006: 6)

	Pattern ¹³⁵	Meaning/Function
1	<i>le</i>	New situation
2	<i>Tai/zui...le</i>	Emphasizing subjective opinion
3	<i>kuai/jiu yao...le</i>	Imminent situation
4a	verb + <i>le</i> +time-span +(noun)	Indicating that time duration for certain activities occurring in the past
4b	verb + <i>le</i> +numeral +(noun)	Indicating the number of occurrence for certain activities occurring in the past
5a	verb + <i>le</i> + time-span +(noun) + <i>le</i>	Indicating that the action has been continuing and will most likely go on
5b	verb + <i>le</i> + numeral + (noun) + <i>le</i>	Indicating the number of times or occurrences for an activity taking place in the past which may have present significance
6	<i>mei(you) +verb + le</i>	Indicating a certain activity has not taken place for a certain period of time
7	verb +(<i>le</i>) +object + <i>le</i>	Indicating that the action has been completed and that it may have present significance
8	verb +resultative complement + <i>le</i>	Used with resultative compound to indicate completion of action
9	<i>bei</i> +subject + verb +resultative	Used with passive voice ‘BEI’ and complement + <i>le</i> resultative compound to indicate completion of action
10	<i>ba</i> +object +verb + <i>le</i>	Used with BA construction to indicate completion of action

Table 21: Ke’s (2005) top 10 patterns with *le*

These are exactly the forms, which contribute to boundedness/telicity of situations, and are therefore very suitable environment for *le* to appear. Among the most frequently used combinations is also pattern *tai ... le* ‘too’, which often provides modal readings.

Beside of that, Ma (2006) found many other patterns with *le* in Chinese. They are presented in the following table:

¹³⁵ Source: Ke, Chuanren (2005). Acquisition patterns of Chinese linguistics features for CFL learners. Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association 40,1: 1-24.

Pattern	Meaning
<i>Tai/zui...le</i>	too/most...
<i>Kuai/jiu yao ...le</i>	soon/is going to...
<i>Dou ...le</i>	all...
<i>Yijing ... le</i>	already...
<i>Ye...le</i>	also...
<i>Huran...le</i>	suddenly...
<i>You...le</i>	again...
<i>Jieguo/zuihou/zhongyu/yushi...le</i>	in the end...

Table 22: Ma's (2006) additional patterns with *le*

Some of these patterns are already listed in grammar books or textbooks as a fixed expression, such as *tai/zui...le* 'too/most ... (emphasizing subjective opinion)', and *kuai/jiu yao...le* 'is going to... (imminent situation)'. There are more such patterns with an adverb involved, and they should be summarized under the same category. A general guideline for the above structures is that the likelihood of using *le* when those adverbs appear in the discourse is fairly high, and the deciding factor is certainly the consideration of the perfective meaning denoted by the verb or adjective. (Ma 2006: 156)

These patterns are a very nice example, how operator *le* functions on several layers. *Tai/zui* 'too/most' produce mainly modal readings, *kuai/jiu yao* indicate near future, which can be still regarded as currently relevant, *yijing* 'already' places SitT before RT, *zhongyu* 'finally' reveals its full function on the discourse level etc.

On the other hand, if several factors speak in favor of stative interpretations, then such environment decreases the possibility of *le* to appear. Beside of all lexical means, mentioned here, there is still a great influence of notions like back-grounding, classical, formal style, non-peak position etc. However, such 'pure' situations are idealizations. Sentences from the database reveal much more diverse environment, with different kind of elements. Nevertheless, the tendencies, mentioned in this research, remain unchanged. Let me present just one simple test:

	<i>hen A le</i>	%	<i>tai A le</i>	%
All instances of ~	1578	15,27%	8754	84,73%
Thereof <i>yijing</i> on the -1 position ¹³⁶	481	30,48%	62	0,71%
Thereof <i>yijing</i> on the -2 position	85	5,39%	15	0,17%
Thereof <i>yijing</i> on the -3 position	72	4,56%	13	0,15%
Thereof <i>yijing</i> on the -4 position	9	0,57%	0	0,00%
Only ~, without influence of <i>yijing</i>	931	9,70%	8664	90,30%

Table 23: Mutual influence on the example of *hen*, *tai* and *yijing*

Adverb *hen* ‘very’ is used for stative purposes, whereas *tai* ‘too’ is used for dynamic needs. *Tai* might indicate discrepancy in levels of real world or perceptual world. Since operator *le* is also dynamic, it is expected to occur more frequently with *tai*, but not with *hen*. Results are showing very similar results. From all instances of *hen/tai ... le*, only 15,27% were combined with *hen*, but 84,73% with *tai*. After filtering out all the sentences, that were combined with *yijing* ‘already’, proportions got even clearer, i.e. 9,7% instances of *hen...le* and 90,3% instances of *tai...le*.

Let us look at the distribution of *yijing* ‘already’, as well. While not even 1% of pattern *tai...le* included *yijing*, the numbers were much higher at *hen...le*. Namely, if a stative sentence can be understood in some form of change, it would be understood much better and easier if some dynamic elements were added. Proportions are confirming this assumption. On the other hand, pattern with *tai* ‘too’ is very likely to be understood atemporally. *Yijing* ‘already’ mainly contributes to ‘SitT<RT’ reading, which is basically temporal, so these two elements are not very compatible with each other.

Pragmatic principles

It was briefly presented in Chapter 4.2 (p. 59), that pragmatic principles often serve as a way for explaining certain situations. I also noted that there is no unified understanding of what pragmatic principles are. This field should be further discussed, but for the time being I will present main ideas from Spanos.

In the late 70s, Spanos made the first systematic study of *-le* for its pragmatic functions. (Chu 1998: 66) The particular framework he espouses derives from the principles of conversation proposed by Grice.¹³⁷ Spanos (1979) found that extra-grammatical features played an important role for the

¹³⁶ ‘*Yijing* on the -1 position’ means that *yijing* is located as the 1st element on the left from the node, which is ‘*hen A le*’. In other words, the results show us the number of occurrences of the pattern ‘... *yijing hen A le*’. Consequently, ‘-2 position’ means that *yijing* is the 2nd element on the left from the node, which is realized as pattern ‘... *yijing* (one word) *hen A le*’, for example *ta yijing hui hen kaixin le* ‘she would already be happy’.

¹³⁷ Grice (1975) formulates several principles or maxims of conversation which he claims govern rational speech exchanges. The most general of these principles is the Cooperative Principle, which requires a

subjects' use of *le*. For example, though it is often stated that when a transitive verb takes a simple unquantified object, the double *le* construction is used, he found that only two subjects out of 39 claimed that two mandatory *le* should be inserted while all subjects opted for the presence of a mandatory or optional sentence-final marker in the same sentence. (Spanos 1979 in Ljungqvist Arin 2003: 51)

Spanos (1979) first studied the **pragmatic functions of *le* in speech acts**. He surveyed native speakers of Chinese to see the actual usage of *le*. He deleted *le* from sentences and paragraphs and asked the participants to insert *le* where they thought it was either necessary or optional and then the native speakers translated the sentence into English. His major findings are summarized as the follows:

- (a) Principle of Non-Redundancy is saying that *le* tends to be omitted in contexts where the time, aspect, phrase, or modality of an action, process, or state of affairs is already specified. (Ma 2006: 26) This can be considered as Gricean Maxim of manner, i.e. *avoiding unnecessary prolixity*.
- (b) Principle of **Caution** is saying that where the context is insufficient to determine the time, aspect, or phrase of modality, *le* is more likely to appear. (Ma 2006: 26) This would also be part of Gricean Maxim of manner, i.e. *avoiding ambiguity*.
- (c) Principle of **Consistency** is saying, if *le* is used in a specific structure, it will always be used in that structure regardless of redundancy. (Ma 2006: 26) Similar observations were made by Chang (1986).
- (d) **Rethorical Reasons**: *le* can be used for special rhetorical purposes. (Chang 1986: 55)

Chang (1986) also came to similar observations, and one of them is corresponding to the Principle of Consistency, mentioned above. He found out, that **individual narrators** vary in their use of perfectivizing strategies. In investigating the narrative use of *-le*, we need to take into account the **stylistic preferences** of individual authors. (Chang 1986: 87) Further on, if someone used operator *le* in one way, he did it in all similar cases.

One of the possible explanations for this phenomenon would be as follows. The same sequence of events in a discourse segment can allow for different interpretations, with the use of *le* in different positions of the segment. (Chang 1986: 228)

participant in a cooperative speech exchange to make an appropriate contribution to the speech exchange in which he is engaged. From this, four maxims are derived. Of particular relevance here is the Maxim of Manner since it is used by Spanos to account for the use of *LE*. This maxim includes four sub-maxims: (i) avoid obscurity of expression, (ii) avoid ambiguity, (iii) be brief, and (iv) be orderly. (Chang 1986: 59-60)

- (492) a. 运动场从前很难看,
b. 可是学校花了五十万块钱修理,
c. 现在很漂亮。

- a. Yùndòngchǎng cóngqián hěn nánkàn,
b. kěshì xuéxiào huā-le wǔshíwàn kuài qián xiūlǐ
c. xiànzài hěn piàoliàng.

The athletic field used to look very shabby, but the university spent a half million dollars to repair it and now it looks pretty. (Chang 1986: 228)

If the sentence-final *le* is placed at the end of the clause (c), the three events are treated as belonging to the same discourse unit. In this case, operator *le* contributes to one-to-zero dynamics of the series of three events (a-c). This is realized as discourse function of ending a discourse unit. At the same time, clause (c) is expressing a stative situation, which allows potential dynamics. On the aspectual level, *hen piaoliang* ‘very beautiful’ is unbounded state, which might be given zero-to-one dynamics, i.e. inchoative reading of the ‘new’ state. We will get the reading ‘not looking pretty → looking pretty’. On this level, operator *le* could also be realized as marker for change-of-state.

On the other hand, if the sentence-final *le* is placed at the end of the clause (b), part (c) then serves as a commentary clause. First two parts then narrate the events, and the third one is adding some stative, commentary information about that. Sequencing and ordering chunks of information, and therefore the appropriate usage of operator *le*, might also be an issue for the cognitive level. Reasons for why individuals use operator *le* in different manners, might be explained best from that level.

I also strongly agree with Ljungqvist Arin (2003: 66), that “the audience chooses the interpretation that demands the least effort and produces the largest cognitive effects, i. e. the most relevant interpretation.” For detailed discussion, reader should refer to her thesis and explanation of operator *le* in a relevance-theoretic approach. At this point, I just want to stress that for final picture on operator *le*, we should not avoid pragmatic principles.

3. RE-CONSIDERING MINIMAL PAIRS

At the beginning I said I will reconsider some minimal pairs of examples at the end. Here are some explanations.

Example 1.

- (493) * 老人笑着抖了 * (抖) ¹³⁸手。
 * Lǎorén xiào-zhe dǒu-le *(dǒu) shǒu
 Smiling, the old man shook his hand.

As Xiao and McEnery (2004) explain (and is also presented on page 29), verbs with the features [+dynamic] and [-result] can be reduplicated to denote a delimitative meaning. Verb reduplication provides a temporal boundary to the situation denoted by a reduplicated verb and changes its boundedness value from minus to plus. Therefore, the semelfactive *dou* ‘shake’ has to be reduplicated in order to be bounded.

The resulting situation is dynamic with ‘shaking hands’ as atelic event, so this utterance is understood as terminated.

Example 2.

- (494) 那汉子左右巡视了* (一番), 低声说.....
 Nà hànzi zuǒyòu xúnshì-le*(yī-fān), dīshēng shuō ...
 That man looked around, and said in a low voice ...

In Chinese, the structure *verb+bare noun* (*xunshi* “look see”) has two possibilities: the object may denote a specific individual, or alternatively it can be considered as part of the verb phrase. The (non-)specificity of a bare noun depends on the additional information provided by its context. (X&McE 2004: 69) Recall as well, that telic situations are much more prone to be combined with *le*. In this case, sentence with verbal classifier phrase sounds much better.

The resulting situation is dynamic with ‘having a one look’ as telic event, so this utterance is understood as completed.

Example 3.

- (495) 我担心了你* (两天) 。
 Wǒ dānxīn-le nǐ * (liǎng-tiān).
 I worried about you (for two days).

Situation *danxin* ‘to worry’ is stative and cannot be combined with verbal *le*, unless we ‘shift’ this state to activities by denoting for how long a situation lasted. In this way, sentence can be combined with *le*. The resulting situation is state, which has been bounded and shifted by a durational phrase. On general, it is still atelic, so it produces terminative reading.

¹³⁸ Recall that the form *(x) means ‘to be acceptable, the example must include x’.

Example 4.

(496) 张三* (砍) 倒了一棵树。

Zhāngsān *(kǎn) dǎo-le yī-kē shù.

Intended meaning: Zhangsan chopped the tree down.

Although a quantified noun phrase is supposed to bound the event, this situation is still atelic, therefore *dao* ‘chop’ cannot express the intended, completive reading ‘chop down’. For this purpose, verb has to be expanded to *kandao* ‘chop’.¹³⁹

Example 5.

(497) 他在一年内高了三公分。

Tā zài yī-nián nèi gāo-le sān-gōngfēn

He grew three centimeters in a year.

Sentence ‘He grew three centimeters in a year’ is only acceptable if operator *le* is used. Without it, sentence would be ungrammatical. *Gao* ‘tall’ is a stage-level state, which gets a dynamic impulse just with *le*. Without it, *gao* remains stative, which is not compatible with the rest of the sentence.

Example 6.

(498) 我昨天画了一张画，可是没画完。

Wǒ zuótiān huà-le yī-zhāng huà, kěshì méi huà-wán.

I painted a picture yesterday, but I didn’t finish it.

(499) * 我吃了一条鱼，可是没有吃完。

Wǒ chī-le yī-tiáo yú, kěshì méiyǒu chī-wán.

I ate a fish but I didn’t finish it.

These two accomplishments differ in the semantic properties. The first sentence includes verb of creation, whereas the other a verb of consumption. Normally, sentences of the same structure are understood as the second one. However, some verbs of creation have objects, which allow them to be partial, which is consequently leading to atelic reading.

Regarding operator *le*: It gives a one-to-zero impulse to the dynamic situation. Terminative vs. completive reading is the result of semantic properties of these two situations.

¹³⁹ Note that this belongs to the structure ‘agent - predicate - patient’, i.e. *somebody chopped down something*, and is firrerent from the structure ‘location - predicate - agent’, i.e. *something fell to somewhere*.

Example 7.

(500) 星期六我们去我很喜欢的中国饭馆吃饭了。

Xīngqīliù wǒmen qù wǒ hěn xǐhuān de Zhōngguó fànguǎn chīfàn-le.

On Saturday we went to my favorite Chinese restaurant to eat dinner.

(501) 上个周末我回家看我妈妈和妹妹，

星期六我们去我很喜欢的中国饭馆吃饭（*了），

在饭馆我们吃了很多很多好吃的菜。

Shàng-ge zhōumò wǒ huíjiā kàn wǒ māma hé mèimei,

xīngqīliù wǒmen qù wǒ hěn xǐhuān de Zhōngguó fànguǎn chīfàn (*-le),

zài fànguǎn wǒmen chī-le hěnduō hěnduō hǎochī-de cài.

Last weekend I went home to see my mom and sister;

On Saturday we went to my favorite Chinese restaurant to eat dinner;

In the restaurant we ate lots of delicious food.

Operator *le* in the first sentence is positioned at the end of a discourse unit, what is not the case in the second sentence. If we look at both utterances closely, we see that in both cases, operator *le* is placed toward the end of discourse unit. It marks one-to-zero dynamics on the discourse level.

Note as well, that for some native speakers, only the example (500) is acceptable, whereas some other native speakers consider both examples acceptable. The difference lies in whether the speakers understand example (501) as one or a set of two discourse units. Nevertheless, operator *le* is still used at the end of discourse.

Example 8.

(502) 我们为他付出的代价(太大)/(太大了)/(很大)/ *(很大了)。

Wǒmen wèi tā fùchū de dàijià (tài dà) / (tài dà le) / (hěn dà) / (hěn dà le)

The price we paid for it was (to high) / (very high) / (very high) / (very high)

Tai 'too' is expressing a difference in values, either in the real or perceptual world. Because of its meaning, it is in congruence with the nature of operator *le*, therefore they tend to occur together. Some native speakers say, if *tai* is used, then *le* should be used to. On the other hand, *hen* 'very' is stative and is rather not used close to operator *le*, although it is possible in the right contexts. Therefore, the last version is not acceptable.

Operator *le* contributes to zero-to-one impulse, since this sentences is expressing a stative situation. This is an example of potential dynamics.

Example 9.

- (503) * 明天就下雨了。
* Míngtiān jiù xià yǔ le.
It will rain tomorrow
- (504) 明天我就开除了他。
Míngtiān wǒ jiù kāichú le tā.
I'll expel him tomorrow!

Operator *le* cannot be used in simple future sentences, because SitT is placed after RT. The second sentence differs from the first one, in that it **stresses** the final boundary, i.e. one-to-zero dynamics in the near future. If the speaker's emphasis is not on the final boundary, the sentence sounds more natural without operator *le*.

Example 10.

- (505) * 他常常看了电影。
* Tā chángcháng kàn-le diànyǐng.
a. He often watches movies /
b. He often watched movies.¹⁴⁰
- (506) 他常常看电影了。
Tā chángcháng kàn diànyǐng le.
a. He often watches movies now /
b. He has started to go to the movies often

Operator *le* on the post-verbal position has a narrower scope than sentence-final *le*. If focusing on situations themselves, dynamics of operator *le* is in conflict with the stative meaning of repeating situation. However, if the whole sentence is taken into account, we are dealing with the potentially dynamic situation, which results in inchoative reading.

Example 11.

- (507) 他累了。
*他好客了。
Tā lèi le.
* Tā hàokè le.
He got tired.
Not acceptable, but intended meaning is: He became hospitable.

¹⁴⁰ The optional variation b. was added by me.

Individual-level states are strictly stative, therefore they do not allow and changes in dynamics and are not compatible with *le*. This is the case of ‘being hospitable’. On the other hand, stage-level states do allow potential dynamics, which is then evoked by operator *le*.

4. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

4.1 Findings

I have shown that Standard Chinese has only one *le* with one meaning and function. Operator *le* provides an impulse for change in dynamics, but because it is operating on different levels and is interacting with other lexical means, it manifests itself in a variety of different readings. Despite of the apparent polysemy, operator *le* always gives zero-to-one impulse to stative environments, and one-to-zero impulse to dynamic environments.

According to the principle of compatibility, operator *le* is expected in only those environments that are *at least potentially dynamic*. Namely, stative environments which do not allow to undergo changes are not compatible with operator *le*.

Moreover, the presence of some lexical means may increase the likelihood of *le* to appear. Consequently, it seems like there are some patterns with *le*. The reason for this tendency is the overlapping of similar features in selected lexical forms. On the other hand, elements with contradictive features are not expected to occur in the same environment, or at least, they decrease the likelihood of another element. My work has just pointed to the issue of mutual influence, however, more research is needed in this area in order for us to find out the exact nature of these complex tendencies.

4.2 Open questions for further research

So far, I have tried to discuss as many levels as possible, in order to demonstrate the uniform feature of operator *le*. However, my work is far from exhaustive. One of the very interesting fields of work, which remain open, is the correlation of operator *le* and **negation**. If we agree that operator *le* is actually providing impulses between two values, this approach could be useful in explaining the usage of *le* in negation. Negation is also a ‘bipolar’ notion with two opposite values. Further more, negation can scope over different elements, so it would be interesting to investigate the co-existence and cooperation of two similar linguistic features.

The nature of **interrogative** sentences is also closely related to the notion of negation. If I wanted to discuss them, I should first examine the notion of negation. As we know, many questions are formed by the principle A-not-A, which includes negation.

As mentioned in the Introduction section, I did not take into consideration how the question of the usage of *le* can be related to different Chinese **dialects**. I think it would be interesting to examine, whether my proposal about operator *le* can be validated in other dialects.

Last but not least, all of these small pieces in this large mosaic should be researched in detail. In the future, I will try to take a closer look at some of the more specific questions and answers, proposed here.

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