Introduction

Two interpretations of durative phrases:

(1) Women zou-le liang-ge xiaoshi
    we walk-ASP two-CL hour
    'We walked for two hours.'

   - when the situation described involves no change of state
     or non-completion of the event.
   → The durative phrases measure the duration of an event.

Two remarks

+ First, it is very natural for Chinese durative phrases to
  occur with such verbs without meaning coercion.(vs. for-
  phrase)

+ Second, this reading involves measuring the duration of the
  consequent state resulting from an event.(vs. SCE-reading)
Three readings of durative phrases

- SCE-reading (Ernst(1987), Li(1987)): as the duration since completion of an event
- Process-related reading: wie (1)
- Result-related reading: wie (2)

Goals

- To clarify the interpretation of durative phrases which occur with a change of state verbs (R-related vs. SCE-reading)
- To show that durative phrases in Chinese are not lexically ambiguous (vs. Ernst and Li (1987): ‘since completion’ and ‘event duration’) → semantically

To explain why R-related duratives behave differently from P-related duratives with respect to the word order problem. → syntactically

(3) (a) Wo (yijing) kai jichengche ershi nian le
I already drive taxi twenty year PAR
,'I have (already) driven a taxi for twenty years.'

(b) Wo yijing kai ershi nian jichengche le
I already drive twenty year taxi PAR
,'I have already driven a taxi for twenty years.'

(4) (a) Women yijing dida zhongdian shi fenzhong le
We already reach destination ten minute PAR
,'It's already been ten minutes since we reached the destination.'

(b) *Women yijing dida shi fenzhong zhongdian le
We already reach ten minute destination PAR
,'It's already been ten minutes since we reached the destination.'
Dowty (1991) proposes a class of incremental themes for the THEME/PATIENT roles of achievement and accomplishment verbs, e.g.
mow the lawn, eat an egg, build a house, demolish a building.

The durative phrases in an Incremental Theme sentence should elicit an R-related reading

To explore how the ambiguity of the durative phrase in (5) arises and discuss the implications of such constructions for the semantic representation of Incremental Theme verbs.

Previous analyses

Tang (1990, 1994)

Direct objects are projected in the specifier position of VP and the verb is moved to a higher functional head. (Duration-Object)

\[ (6) \quad [FP \quad F [VP \quad Duration [VP \quad Object \quad [V \quad V \quad Duration]]]] \]

Sybesma (1999)

The durative phrase function as massifiers in a nominal structure. (Duration-Object)

...  

Problem with Tang’s und Sybesma’s solutions

Both analyses fail to distinguish P-related duratives from R-related duratives. As noted, while P-related duratives may precede or follow the direct object, R-related duratives only follow the object.

(5) Zhe-dong fangzi wo gai-le san nian le
this-CL house I build-PAR three year PAR
(i) I have been building this house for three years.
(ii) It’s three years since I built the house. /?? I built this house and the result state has existed for three years.

10 Previous analyses

11

12
Huang (1991, 1997)

* ta kan-le san tian shu
He read-ASP three day book

Problem
- It is not clear how the object-durative word order is derived.
- Nor is it clear how his analysis prevents R-related duratives from appearing before the object NP.

Teng (1975)

* an R-related durative is not a constituent within the VP but the main predicate of the sentence.
  Ta lai meiguo you liang nian le.
  He come America have two year PAR
  'It has been two years since he came to America.'

Li (1987)

* in addition to functioning as the main predicate of a sentence, R-related duratives (and P-related duratives) can also be VP constituents.

Li (1987)

* When a durative phrase occurs before the object NP, it forms a constituent with the object NP and is the specifier of the NP.
  ⇒ the durative phrase is interpreted as quantifying over the verb, i.e., 'the quantity or extent of certain activity'.

* Ta lai san-ge yue (de) meiguo.
  He come three-CL month MOD America
  'It's been three months since he came to America.'
Why a [duration+NP] phrase quantifies over events rather than result states?

→ for atelic activity situations: states/activities
  ta du-le san-ge xiaoshi de shu.
  He read-ASP three-CL hour MOD book
→ for telic situations: accomplishments/achievements??
  *ta dida san-ge xiaoshi de zhongdian.
  He reach three-CL hour MOD destination

**Problem**

→ What is the semantic rule?
→ Why this rule has the property it has?

Ernst (1987)

→ The semantic rule interpreting this marked reading restricts it to VP-final position.

**An alternative account**


→ a rather abstract syntax which decomposes telic verbs into their subcomponents (CAUSE+BECOME+STATE)

(7)

(a) Ali Baba Sesam **wieder** öffnete (restitutive/repetive)
  Subj. Obj. again opened

(b) Ali Baba **wieder** Sesam öffnete (only repetitive)
  Subj. again Obj. opened

(8)                                                FP
  REPETITIVE MODIFIER again
  RESTITUTIVE MODIFIER again
  INTERNAL MODIFIER again
  XP
  V
  NP SUBJ
  λx:Voice
  λx:Voice'
  λp:VoiceP
  xp
  BECOME
  RESULT
  x:Voice
  active
  agent(λp)e
  Voicen
  active
  agent(λp)e
  active
  agent(λp)e
  active
  agent(λp)e

- **three sub-event projections** for a lexical expression that entails a result state:
  - ‘\(vP\)' introduces the causation event and licenses different types of external argument.
  - ‘\(VP\)' specifies the nature of the change or process and licenses the entity undergoing change or process.
  - ‘\(RP\)' gives the ‘telos’ or ‘result state’ of the event and licenses the entity that comes to hold the result state.

Lin (2007)

- **Syntactic assumption:** Each verb carries some semantic features that need to be checked by a head in the syntax. And in Chinese, AgroP is located below VoiceP and above VP.

- **Semantic assumption:** durative phrases impose an aspectual homogeneity requirement on the constituent that they modify (Moltmann 1991, Dini and Bertinetto 1995), hence that, durative phrases in Chinese have this homogeneity requirement as part of their selectional restriction.

The distribution of durative phrases

- **DP with a state/activity verb (P-related)**

Ramchand’s (2003) feature checking system

The verb has to check all relevant eventuality features. When the durative phrase is adjoined to VP, the **object-durative** is derived; when the durative phrase is adjoined to AgroP, the **durative-object** is derived.
DP with an achievement/accomplishment verb (R-related)

(12) \[ \text{AgroP} \{ \text{VoiceP} \{ \text{Voice} \{ \text{did} \} \} \} \{ \text{AgroP} \{ \text{reach} \{ \text{destination} \} \} \} \{ \text{AgroP} \{ \text{reach} \{ \text{destination} \} \} \} \]

- In (12), among the five projections, RP, VP, AgroP, VoiceP and AgrsP, only the most deeply embedded projection RP represents a homogeneous eventuality.
- The durative NP must follow the direct object.

References


THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!