

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Motivation and Purpose

Mandarin causatives have attracted much attention in the linguistic field due to questions about their typology, semantics and diachronic development (Li and Thomson, 1976; Huang, 1982; Lien 1999, 2003; Tang 2002; Xu 1994). It is commonly acknowledged that Mandarin causatives can be divided into two categories: lexical causatives and periphrastic (or analytic) causatives. Moreover, both categories contain many sub-categories or sub-constructions. Specifically, lexical causatives comprise causative verbs, suffixation, resultative compounds. Periphrastic causatives, on the other hand, are mainly composed of *shi* (使), *rang* (讓) *jiao*₁ (叫) *jiao*₂¹ (教) *ling* (令) constructions. The detailed examples are illustrated as in (1).

(1) Lexical causatives

a. Causative verbs

讀書豐富了我們的人生。

Dushu fongfu le women de rensheng

Study books enrich ASP² our POSS³ life

‘Studying enriched our life.’

¹ *jiao*₁ indicates ‘叫’, and *jiao*₂ indicates ‘教’.

² ASP indicates the aspect marker and ‘le’ is a perfective marker.

³ POSS indicates the possessive morpheme.

b. Suffixation

種樹可以綠化環境。

Zhongshu keyi lühua huanjin

Planting can green environment

‘Planting trees can make the environment green.’

c. Resultative compounds

張三惹哭了妹妹。

Zhangsan reku le meimei

Zhangsan arose cry sister

‘*Zhangsan* made his younger sister cry.’

(2) Periphrastic causatives

張三使/ 令/ 讓/ 叫/ 教 妹妹哭泣。

Zhangsan shi/ ling/ rang/ jiao₁/ jiao₂ meimei kuqi.

Zhangsan made his younger sister cry.

(1c) and (2) have similar meanings; however, there is a question about how the causativity arises. Movement-based accounts (Huang 1988, Wang & He 2002) suggest that the causativity occurs when the causative light verb position is realized. Based on this account, no lexical causatives exist because their causativity is derived syntactically and there should be no differences with any other causative constructions. Lexicalist accounts (Cheng & Huang 1994, Li 1995, Her 2004, 2007), in contrast, suggest that causativity is a part of lexical formation and so causativity may vary with different lexical items or constructions. Thus more supportive evidence is needed to resolve the differences over this issue and the main focus of this study is to investigate the causativity of Mandarin causatives.

Three parameters are chosen to investigate the nature of the causativity of causation. They are directness, force-dynamics, and transitivity. Directness and force-dynamics are based on human cognition. Liang and Sun (2003) mention that the causative form can reflect directness, and that the shorter the form, the more direct force it has. For example, 'kill' is more direct than 'cause to die'.

Furthermore, the concept of force-dynamics is derived from the observation of natural causative motion. In addition, transitivity is also taken into account in order to provide a more complete aspect to the description. Thus, an analysis should be conducted at different levels, including cognition and also semantic and syntactic interference.

Therefore, this study adopts a combined framework of directness, force-dynamics and transitivity and has the following two research questions. First, do the results support the derivational view or lexicalist view of causativity? Next, how can the three models of different aspects function to help us to identify the degree of causativity? The two topics are notable because they not only provide new and different evidence for present debate but also reveal the nature or the universality of the language.

1.2 Definition of causation

Causation should be clearly defined. Throughout the decades, many sub-fields

have developed their own point of view toward causatives, such as in Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995), Argument structures (Alsina, 1992), and semantics (Comrie, 1976, 1981; Talmy 1976, 2000). Two important semantic definitions of causatives and causation are introduced here, that of Shibatani (1976) and of Talmy (2000).

Talmy (2000) proposes a definition of “semantically causatives” where he suggests that Event 2 cannot take place without Event 1. Moreover, according to Shibatani (1976), the semantic definition of causatives should contain causative situations which follow the two following conditions:

- a. The relation between the two events is such that the speaker believes that the occurrence of one event, the “caused event,” has been realized at t_2 , which is after t_1 , the time of the “causing event.”
- b. The relation between the causing and the caused event is such that the speaker believes that the occurrence of the caused event is wholly dependent on the occurrence of the causing event; the dependency of the two events here must be to the extent that it allows the speaker to entertain a counterfactual inference that the caused event would not have taken place at that particular time if the causing event had not taken place, provided that all else had remained the same.

(Shibatani 1976: 1-2)

1.3 Organization of the thesis

The thesis is sequenced in the following ways. Some notable research about

derivational and lexical account for Mandarin causativity will be reviewed in Chapter II, including the studies of Huang (1988), Wang and He (2002), Cheng and Huang (1994), Li (1995), and Her (2007). Chapter III presents the theoretical frameworks. Shibatani and Wolff's model of directness will be introduced in 3.1., Talmy's framework of force dynamics in 3.2, and Hopper and Thompson's transitivity theory in 3.3. Chapter IV presents the analysis. Examples of high causativity are presented in 4.1, intermediate causativity encompassing lexical and periphrastic causatives in 4.2 and examples of low causativity will be investigated in section 4.3. Chapter V discusses the results in relation to the purpose of this study. The results are looked at from a derivational and a lexicalist view in 5.1. Next, the results of the study are analyzed via the use of the iconicity principle in 5.2 and the connections between the three models are mentioned in section 5.3. Finally, Chapter VI concludes the study by summarizing the thesis and provides directions for further study.