

Research on Chinese Reduplicative Verbs in the Form of AABB

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Abstract: Verb reduplication is a common linguistic phenomenon widely existing in different languages. Reduplicative verbs in the form of AABB is basic one in Chinese. Its rich expressional function reflects the diversity and flexibility of Chinese. It is of great significance to study the grammatical phenomenon of reduplicative verbs to grasp the essential rules of Chinese grammar accurately. The Chinese linguistics has done a lot of related analysis on the reduplication of verbs, and has achieved many significant results in the field of researching on reduplicative verbs. However, the discussion of verb reduplication in grammar is limited to the reduplication of single syllable, while in the reduplication of double syllables is mainly on the ABAB type of research, the verb form of AABB reduplication has not been a more comprehensive system of research. The verb reduplication of AABB form can be generally summarized as an increase either in action duration or the times of repetition, which is distinct from the reduplication of single syllable verb of AA and double syllables verb of ABAB formally, semantically and syntactically, while is similar to the typical reduplication of double syllables adjective of AABB semantically and syntactically.

Keywords: reduplicative verbs, the form of AABB, type and meaning

1. Introduction

AABB reduplication of verbs is a kind of special reduplication, which takes verbs as reduplication materials and overlaps with common adjective reduplication. It is the main reduplication form of verbs in modern Chinese. Up to now, there are so many related studies of verb reduplication, and the contents of these studies include how reduplicative words are composed. There are so many Chinese scholars being interested in this special linguistic phenomenon. One thing found out by the author is that conclusions about Chinese verbs of AABB forms have been made plenteously, while the types, categories and the route of grammaticalization are not explained exactly. Therefore, it calls no delay in exploring how reduplicative words express meanings functionally and grammatically. Reduplicative words in the form of AABB appear in all word classes. However, the explanatory ability of a thesis is limited. It is impossible to give an overall and detailed interpretation of semantic meanings of reduplicative forms of all word classes. Under this situation, yet reduplication in verbal category is chosen to be the target of this study. Besides, the categories and the process of grammaticalization are the focuses of this study as well.

2. The connotation of verb reduplication of AABB form

Chinese scholars who studied grammar in the past have different views on whether AABB is a word or a phrase. Some believe that AABB is a phrase, others believe that AABB is all words, while more scholars believe that it should be treated differently according to the grammatical position of AABB in the sentence. AABB reduplication is usually a word, but sometimes the speaker will temporarily combine it according to the needs of the context and use AABB as a phrase. When AABB becomes a phrase, its components can be reversed freely, and the components can change with the meaning of the context. At this time, its syntactic meaning is simply added without semantic complexity. Semantically, the semantics of the phrase AABB is equal to the sum of the semantics of AA and BB, while the semantics of the word AABB is a combination of the semantics of AABB and additional semantics.

2.1 The grammatical component of AABB form of verb

Structurally, when AB is a word, AABB can be composed of morphemes with the same or similar meaning, or morphemes with opposite or relative meaning. Compound combined word AABB is mainly a combined compound word. Their characteristic is that the two morphemes constituting this kind of compound word are generally the same, similar, related or opposite in meaning. Moreover, this kind of secondary word meaning is not a simple addition of the two morpheme meanings, but an abstract generalization. For example, hit (Da) and measure(Liang) have their own verb semantics, but the combined word measurement is an abstract generalization completely different from the semantics of *Da* and *Liang*. Among the verbs that can overlap into AABB, the words with this structure account for the majority.

In additional compound words, the two morphemes consist of AABB additional compound verb are common in the type of verb reduplication. The former is root, which expresses the meaning of notional word, and the latter is affix showing the functional meaning of morpheme.

The constructions of verb reduplication in the form of AABB have three fields. Firstly, here the two syllable verb AB is a single-morpheme word. Most of these words are interlingual words. Before overlapping, there are interlingual words, and after overlapping, there are still interlingual words. Such verbs are common: muttering (muttering), shivering (shivering), etc., for example: “there are words on the table. Don't let things pass before you mutter and gossip behind your back. Secondly, the two morphemes A and B of disyllabic verbs such as combined compound words are mostly juxtaposed, and their meanings are similar and opposite. I. A and B have similar meanings, such as jumping, crowding, etc. II. A and B have opposite meanings, such as back and forth (back and forth), up and down (up, down), etc. Example: “Looking at the rise and fall of the yen exchange rate in the past decade, we can see that the concerns of these entrepreneurs are not superfluous”. III. Among the disyllabic verbs of additive compound words, A and B are root and affix. Such verbs are common: flutter (flutter), stroll (stroll), etc.

2.2 The reduplicative category of verb form of AABB

Verb reduplication is a unique grammatical phenomenon in Chinese, but in Chinese verbs, one part can overlap, while the other part cannot. There are fewer verbs that can overlap into AABB. Next, let's discuss which verbs can overlap into AABB and what are the characteristics of verbs that can't and can overlap into AABB.

1) From the perspective of structure, structural factors can not only determine whether the verb overlaps or not, but also determine how it overlaps. The combination form of two morphemes of disyllabic verbs is the same as that of other notional compounds. There are also five kinds of compound words: associative, verb object, subject predicate, partial formal and supplementary. a) As long as the combined compound verbs have semantic conditions, they can generally overlap. The overlapping form is mainly ABAB, while the combined compound verbs that can form the overlapping form of AABB, such as “shaking, picky, repetition, pointing and mending”. Their morpheme meanings are basically the same or similar, and only the morpheme meanings of “communication” are opposite. However, each of their morphemes is generally a morpheme and can form words independently, but the action of words is not possible. At the meanwhile, each of their morphemes is generally a morpheme and can form words independently, but the action of words is not as strong as that part of words that can form ABAB type. Their overlapping type is morpheme reduplication, while ABAB overlapping type is word reduplication. b) Verb-object compound verbs are much less than combined compound verbs. Generally speaking, they do not overlap in AABB form. c) Subject-predicate compound verbs cannot overlap because their first morpheme is nominal; the second morpheme is a verbal or adjective morpheme. Adjective morphemes have no action. Even verb morphemes are morphemes of non-action or weak action, so they can't have the function of forming reduplication. d) Partial-formal compound verbs generally cannot overlap. e) Supplementary compound verbs generally cannot overlap, such as surpassing, reaching, expanding, sensational, etc. f) Adjunctive verbs can be reduplicated into AABB with flicker, sway, bustle, etc.

In addition, there are a few monosyllabic words with two syllables, i.e. continuous words, such as staggering, staggering, nagging, trembling, etc., which can also overlap to form AABB type, and the overlapping indicates a certain state.

2) Semantically, semantics can be divided into lexical meaning and grammatical meaning. Lexical meaning consists of rational meaning and color. Grammatical meaning is reflected from the change and combination of words, which represents the abstract meaning of action, modality, appearance and various

relations. The influence of semantics on verb reduplication should also be analyzed from two aspects: lexical meaning and grammatical meaning. a) The influence of lexical meaning. Verbs can be divided into monosemy and polysemy. Some senses of polysemy verbs can overlap, and some cannot overlap; Some senses can overlap, while others cannot. If the verb “pendulum” has three meanings: display, show off and shake back and forth. Only “pendulum” represents the third meaning, it can be overlapped into AABB form, because only the third meaning has continuous semantic characteristics. b) Influence of grammatical meaning. The grammatical meaning of verb reduplication is to express the time and momentum of action. The main verbs that can overlap into AABB are action verbs; most of these verbs have the characteristics of persistence or repetition. Verbs indicating continuous actions can generally be overlapped, and verbs indicating no continuous actions can generally not be overlapped. Generally, there are the following different situations: a. Verbs that mean one-time or unresponsive have no stages, so they can't overlap. For example, verbs such as birth, sacrifice, end and death cannot happen overlapping. b. Verbs indicating mental activity or perception generally cannot overlap either. Such as recognition, feeling, seeing, delusion, etc. The activities they represent are either instantaneous or lasting. They are not phased and have no room for reply, so they cannot have the form of reduplication. c. Verbs indicating existence, emergence and disappearance generally cannot overlap into the form of AABB. For example, emergence, disappearance, discovery, extinction, etc. they all represent persistence, mutation or transience, and do not have the characteristics of persistence or repetition, so they cannot overlap. d. Verbs that themselves represent a certain limit, such as satisfaction, fullness, growth, determination, etc. their limits are foot, fullness, determination and success, that is, they are closed words and do not have the characteristics of continuity or repetition, so they cannot overlap. e. Classical Chinese has a strong color and verbs that express solemn and elegant style. Generally, they can't overlap. For example, birthday, cherishing, ending, promulgation, etc. they often appear on more solemn occasions and do not have the characteristics of continuity or repetition, so they cannot overlap. f. From the relationship between the sender of the action and the action, most of the narrator verbs can overlap.

To sum up, we can conclude: a. If AB has the semantic feature of [+ continuous ten repetition + weak state], there can be AABB overlap. Such as: shouting, humming, nagging, busy, muttering, hugging. b. If AB has the semantic feature of [+ persistence + repetition + strong state], it can also have AABB overlapping forms, such as wandering, coma and doubt. c. If AB has the semantic feature of [+ continuous + repeat status], there can also be AABB overlap. Give advice, make do with, deal with, draw, piece together.

2.3 Grammatical function of verb AABB

- 1) Subject. AABB reduplication as subject is rare, and it must appear with a few verbs and adjectives as predicates. Example: entanglement (AABB) is so complex and tangled.
- 2) Predicate. The basic syntactic function of verb is the same as that of verb, and the AABB reduplication of verb can also be used as predicate. But as a predicate, it usually doesn't take an object. AABB reduplication as predicate not only expresses the specific behavior of action, but also has the function of describing, mostly describing the state of the subject.
- 3) Object. AABB reduplication as object has the function of description, indicating that the action is repeated. Example: How do you expend your holiday? Is it eating, drinking, playing cards, or carrying out healthy cultural activities?
- 4) Attributive. AABB reduplication as attributive has the function of description, indicating that the action is repeated. For example: Mom always speak the nagging word.
- 5) Adverbial. AABB reduplication can be used as adverbial freely, which is one of its main syntactic functions. As an adverbial, it can be used to describe the state of action and behavior, or to indicate that action and behavior are repeated.
- 6) Complement. AABB reduplication as complement is mainly used to describe the state of action and behavior. When it acts as a complement, it should be expressed by adding the auxiliary word “de” and the predicate headword.
- 7) Description. AABB can be regarded as description, which not used with dynamic auxiliary words such as Chinese “zhuo”, “liao” and “guo”, nor does it appear in the context of the past.

2.4 The grammatical meaning of verb AABB

This is an approach from the perspective of the relation between form and meaning in language. One of the most widely-accepted concepts is iconicity. Wan Zhiyong (2007) summarizes that language is a special system of icons and symbols, in which there is a certain connection between its form and content. The relation of form and content are demonstrable and motivated, which is the basic concept of linguistic iconicity. From this point of view, scholars start relating iconicity to discuss the semantic meanings of reduplicative words. According to Zhang Min (1997), almost all structures of Chinese reduplicative words can be found in other languages, the key semantic meanings of them are overlapped to some degree as well, which proves the semantic meanings of reduplication are universal and non-arbitrary. Zeng Xiaopeng, Wu Xiaoli (2013) also start from the observation to different languages to prove iconicity in language. They reference the research statistics of Sapir that based on the observation to languages in American Indian, Africa and Oceania, which have no connections historically or geographically whatsoever, reduplication phenomena in these languages usually include thorough referring, repetition, high frequency, increased intensity and continuity. Dai Haoyi (1990) clarifies that reduplication of linguistic expressions maps onto a reduplication in conceptual domain. Yan Xia (2009) analyzes reduplication from the perspective of quantity iconicity, Yan thinks that language richer in form can modify more things. Li Renjian (1964) considers that reduplicative verbs indicate added amounts or an uncertain amount. In other words, there exists an uncertainty of an amount described in AABB verbs. Based on iconicity, many scholars believe that Chinese AABB verbs express a meaning of “added amounts”.

1) Basic meaning of AABB verb. The increasing of momentum is the basic meaning of AABB reduplication. Here, it can refer to the number of times the action occurs increases, the time the action takes extends, or the state of the result caused by the action strengthens. a) When AABB reduplication is used as subject and predicate, it can refer to the number of actions. For example: what's the use of nagging? You might as well act now. “Nagging” is used as the subject in the example sentence, which means that the action of “nagging” occurs many times. b) When AABB reduplication is used as attribute, adverbial and complement, it can refer to the strengthening of the result caused by the action. For example: “He always speaks something slowly even it is a urgent matter.” In this sentence, slowly is the state of speaking.

2) Extended meaning. a) The extended meaning of AABB indicates the frequency and repetition of actions. This is extended from its basic meaning “several times of action”. Frequency means many times, and repetition means that the action is repeated at least once. For example: chattering, coming and going, stumble, etc. For example: the man knew better and said, “don't push and pull, I'll show you the way”. b). Representing abstract action behavior. After many disyllabic verbs are overlapped as AABB, the grammatical meaning is not the superposition of their structural components, which no longer refers to specific actions, but represents an abstract action. The AABB reduplication here has a certain referential nature. For example, “bouncing”, although the morphemes “bouncing” and “jumping” still retain the original action meaning, the overall meaning is not simple bouncing and jumping, but there can also be other actions, which generally means energetic and vibrant. In addition, after some disyllabic verbs are overlapped as AABB, their morphemes A and B have lost their original action meaning and represent an overall abstract meaning. For example: the “stumbling” in the example sentence of *everyone has the stumbling* has no specific action behavior of “stumbling”, but has an abstract meaning, indicating that there will be many setbacks in life. c). AABB reduplication has casual, non solemn and disgusting emotional color.

3. The effect of grammatical context on verb reduplication

The main function of verbs is to act as predicate or predicate head. Most of verbs can be followed by objects. The overlapping form of verbs can also be used as predicate or predicate head. But when AABB is used as predicate, it can't take object. After these words that cannot be used as predicates are overlapped into AABB, even if they are still used as the center of the predicate, they can no longer take the object. This is mainly due to the weakening of the action of verbs after overlapping as AABB form. This kind of reduplication is mainly used as adverbial. Verbs can be used as adverbials, and verbs can also be regarded as adverbials after overlapping in the form of AABB.

The meaning of verb reduplication is expressed by specific events in specific sentences. Therefore, the essence of verb reduplication lies in the semantic variation brought to it by the events reflected in its sentence and the new grammatical meaning, rather than the action reflected by the verb itself. It can be

seen that verb overlap belongs to the category of events. We should avoid imposing the meaning of a specific sentence containing verb overlap on the overlapping verbs contained in the sentence. Therefore, we should examine whether a verb can overlap from the sentence category, and combine it with the specific event and its specific environment. That is, verb reduplication should conform to the context of the event. Specific events occur in different environments, and whether a verb can overlap depends on its context; See whether the events expressed by it conflict with other components in the sentence; Whether the temporality and initiative it represents are suitable for the context. At the same time, because the same action can cause different events in different environments, the same verb has a “contradiction” situation that can overlap or not overlap in different contexts. In many Chinese examples, verbs can overlap only in their respective contexts. It can be seen that context restricts verb overlap.

Generally speaking, an overlapping clause or sentence is dependent, which is manifested in that it is not the core statement of the sentence, but always in a subordinate position. Some people regard “come and go” as a predicate part of the continuous motion, and “carry” is another predicate part. Even if we regard it as a continuous verb as part of the predicate. This verb is still dependent, and its expression (or situation) cannot replace the semantic center of the verb. Grammatical features are the summary of language communicative functions, and the more profound motivation behind syntactic phenomena is textual function. In actual discourse, especially in narrative style, some sentences directly report the progress of events and people's activities, while others lay out and set off events. The former is called foreground information and the latter is called background information. In narrative style, the foreground part actually answers what happened, while the background information does not answer what happened, but only describes the accompanying states. In a text, there are often subsequent clauses. Overlapping clauses or sentences provide background information for the main line of the event and provide a condition or environmental reference, which is used to pave the way before the declarative sentence. The grammatical characteristics of overlapping clause determine that it mainly appears as background information in the text. In other words, overlapping clauses are dependent, and the background information in the text is unmarked; the performance foreground information is marked.

4. The process of grammaticalization in the reduplicative form of verb

Grammaticalization holds that language is uncertain, the category of language is non discrete, and the structure and use of language are interdependent. In the investigation of the corpus, we find that the verb overlapping AABB form in modern Chinese has the characteristics of both verbs and adjectives. Wang Jianjun (2010) believes that verb reduplication AABB is “in the progressive zone between verb reduplication ABAB and adjective reduplication AABB”. This can fully explain why it has the form and function of verb reduplication and adjective reduplication at the same time. As the evolution process has not been finalized, the boundaries between different forms at different stages are not very clear. In the previous article, we have discussed the composition and grammatical significance of verb overlapping AABB, and made it clear that there are not only the free combination of two monosyllabic verb overlapping AA and BB, but also the fixed combination of AABB, as well as the AABB overlapping with stable form and abstract meaning in modern Chinese.

In fact, this situation is the different expression of verb overlapping AABB grammatical meaning in different grammaticalization stages. The process of grammaticalization is the continuous transformation of word meaning from real to virtual. At the beginning of grammaticalization, the real meaning weakens and is strengthened by the more abstract meaning, as well as the more significant meaning in the current speaking environment and the meaning related to the speaker's subjective attitude. In practical application, we can find that some verb overlapping AABB forms show that the original action meaning of verb A and verb B is weakening, while the more abstract meaning such as description is enhanced. Li Jinxia (2012) classified verb reduplication AABB forms into three categories according to their semantic content: (1) expressing action meaning, such as bouncing, coming and going, and wobbling. (2) It expresses abstract meaning, such as remembering, sewing and mending. (3) It shows extended meaning, such as sneaking and pulling. She also pointed out that the extended AABB has some characteristics of adjectives and tends to adjectives. These three categories just represent the three stages of grammaticalization of verb AABB reduplication.

In such overlapping forms, AA and BB can be used separately. The order can be changed freely during use, either AABB or BBAA; In pronunciation, the last B can read with both the soft tone and the original tone. In terms of word meaning, AA and BB maintain their own meaning, and AABB form can be regarded as the combination of AA and BB in meaning. Such AABB overlapping formula is the result of the combination of AA and BB overlapping formulas. At this time, AA and BB can no longer be

separated, nor can they change the word order at will. In pronunciation, the last B is generally no longer lightly read; In terms of meaning, AA and BB still maintain relative independence, having not been combined as a whole, and still act as predicate in syntactic function.

At this time, AABB has formed a fixed format. The word meanings of AA and BB have been combined and have new meanings in their original meanings. The last B can no longer read the soft voice, but can only read the original tone. At this time, the grammaticalization of verb overlapping AABB has been basically completed. For those AABB forms with the highest degree of grammaticalization, their part of speech attributes are transformed from verbs to state adjectives, and their semantics are changed from expressing action to describing state. Others have increased the function of reference, and their syntactic function is no longer mainly used as predicate, but as modifier and supplementary components such as adverbial, attributive and complement, or as subject, topic and object. Even if it is used as a predicate, it is usually combined with other verbs.

We confirm that the grammaticalization of AABB is a process of continuous evolution from verb AABB to adjective AABB. In the process of this evolution, the verb part of AABB type is weakening, while the adjective part is strengthening. In terms of meaning, the action meaning continues to weaken, while the descriptive meaning continues to be strengthened. Finally, the descriptive meaning continues to solidify into referential meaning, or refers to a certain activity or a certain nature. At the same time, it is also a process of increasing subjectivity. At first, AABB only objectively describes the action situation, or indicates the repetition of actions, or the alternation of actions, such as “running and jumping” and “walking and stopping”; After that, the amount of action described by AABB style has been increasing, and the subjectivity of language has been gradually strengthened, such as “shouting” and “beating and making noise”, which has a derogatory color; After the form of AABB is basically fixed, the change of semantics is more obvious. In addition to the change of style and color, the referential meaning is also gradually clear. For example, “washing and washing” and “sewing and mending” mainly refer to this kind of household activities. In the last stage of grammaticalization, AABB no longer contains the action meaning related to verbs A, B or AB, but expresses an abstract meaning as a whole, such as “sneaking”, “eating and drinking”, “stumbling” and so on.

Therefore, verb reduplication of AABB forms a continuous sequence in the process of grammaticalization to adjective reduplication ABB: the conjunction of AA and BB - the combination of AABB - AABB reduplication.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of previous studies, this paper makes a preliminary investigation on the verb AABB reduplication from the aspects of its form, type, scope and constraints, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties, and the process of grammaticalization. It is considered that the verb AABB reduplication is very complex, unstable and productive, and the semantics of the constituent materials are related; The word order of most verb reduplications is determined by the occurrence of actions and people's cognitive characteristics. Using phonetic features, we can distinguish verb AABB reduplication from other forms. Verb AABB reduplication can act as a variety of syntactic components. Verb AABB reduplication has many different syntactic meanings from verb ABAB reduplication and adjective AABB reduplication, forming a unique pragmatic value. In discourse, the verb AABB reduplication mainly expresses background information. In the development of AABB reduplication, its action is weakened and its description is gradually enhanced, which has the function of state adjective.

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