On the Syntax of the Morphemes –*wan* and –*de* in Chinese: An Inner Aspect Account

Introduction. Two types of resultatives in Chinese have been identified: V-V compounds as in (1) and V-*de* phrases as in (2).

(1) Lisi xie-***wan***-le na feng xin
Lisi write-finish-Prf that CL letter
'Lisi wrote the letter (and finished writing it).'

(2). Lisi ku-***de*** shoupa dou shi-le
Lisi cry-de handkerchief all wet-Prf
'Lisi cried so much that the handkerchief got wet.'

Previous studies such as Tang (1997) and Sybesma (1999) argue that –*wan* functions as the head of the result-denoting phrase whereas –*de* is the head of a functional phrase that takes the result-denoting phrase as its complement. However, in the spirit of Travis (2010), we demonstrate that these two morphemes are both telic morphemes base-generated in the head of InAspP in between vP and VP.

The morpheme –*wan*. We argue that –*wan* should not be analyzed as a resultative complement (e.g., Li & Thompson 1981, Smith 1997). In contrast, it is a morpheme with the [+telic] feature that is base-generated in the head of InAspP as demonstrated by (3):

(3) …[vP Lisi [v [InAspP that letter$_i$ [InAsp ***wan*** $_{[+telic]}$ [VP write t$_i$]]]
|_____| |_____|

We further claim that InAsp is strong on V and therefore, the main verb (*xie* 'write') must move to adjoin to -*wan*. Moreover, the direct object *that letter* must move to the Spec, InAspP due to the fact that it is affected during the course of the event (Nossalik 2009). Finally, the cluster [write-wan] moves to the little v. The analysis explains why the sentence in (1) has an atelic reading without –*wan* (Tai 1984).

The morpheme –*de*. Following Mateu (2012), we claim that the main verb in (2) is phonologically null, meaning GO/CHANGE; it takes the result-denoting phrase as its complement. Like –*wan*, -*de* is also a telic morpheme that is base-generated in the head of InAspP. The null verb is first merged with the XP as in (4a). In the spirit of Hale & Keyser (2002), we argue that the first verb (i.e., *cry*) is adjoined to the null verb under the process of ***Conflation*** as in (4b). It not only provides phonological support but also specifies the manner how the resultant state attained. In (4c), –*de* is merged. Given that InAsp is strong on V, the compound [cry-Ø] must move to –*de* as in (4d). Because the subject of XP is the element that is affected, it further moves to the Spec, InAspP as in (4e). Finally, [cry-Ø-*de*] moves to v, which introduces the causer of the event.

(4) a. ... [VP Ø [XP the handkerchief all wet]]]
b. ... [VP cry-Ø [XP the handkerchief all wet]]]
c. ... [InAsp' ***de***$_{[+telic]}$ [VP cry-Ø [XP the handkerchief all wet]]]
d. ... [InAsp' cry-Ø$_i$-***de***$_{[+telic]}$ [VP t$_i$ [XP the handkerchief all wet]]]
e. ... [InAspP the handkerchief$_j$ [InAsp' cry-Ø$_i$-***de***$_{[+telic]}$ [VP t$_i$ [XP t$_j$ all wet]]]

Conclusion. We revisited the two types of resultatives in Chinese and demonstrated that both –*wan* and –*de* are telic morphemes that are base-generated in the head of Inner Aspect Phrase.