

Resultative, Passive and Derivations

Chaofen Sun Stanford University

Abstract

Givón (1981) characterized passives in three functional domains, i.e., cessation of a subject/agent to be the clausal topic, assumption of clausal topic position by a non-agent, and becoming more stative. In *Zuozhuan* and *Lunyu*, the lexical verb *jian* 見, treated by many (Wang 1957, Jiang and Cao 2005) as a passive marker, is typically followed by an NP or a verb with either a departing tone or an entering tone. Comparative studies (Zhou 1966, Pulleyblank 1973, Mei 1980) found that Chinese at this time lost the Sino-Tibetan suffix *-s, and the departing tone emerged in its place. The new tone is taken to be a nominalizer functioning to turn an active event into a stative one, the emergence of *jian* passive is then consistent with a cross-linguistic phenomenon, i.e., passive constructions commonly grow out of a nominalized pattern (Givón 1981). Furthermore, it has been generally assumed (Wang 1957) that the emergence of the resultative verb compounds (RVC) in Middle Chinese might be related to the Old Chinese coordinate serial-verb construction, Verb+Verb sequence in which the two transitive verbs share a common subject and object. But this hypothesis alone fails to capture the fact that the second verb of the Modern Chinese RVC (Mei 1991) is stative, or intransitive. Arguments will be given to show that the detransitivized constraint on the second verb of a Chinese RVC may be ultimately motivated by the Old Chinese VV compounds like *jian*+V, *wei*+(*suo*)+V, etc.