

# Analysis on the Structure of Chinese Spoken Sentence "V ye bu V"

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**Abstract**—Taking the commonly-seen expression in spoken language "V ye bu V" (V refers to verb, "ye" means "also" in English and "bu" has the negative meaning in English) as the research object, this paper analyzes the characteristics and meaning of each component of such structure and expounds its discourse functions and contextual features. It is believed from syntactic analysis that the first "V" in "V ye bu V" is actually the omitted form with the same form as the second "V" after the preposition of the verb quantifier complement, evolving from "bu V yi V (negative) > yi V ye bu V (negative) > V ye bu V (negative)". Moreover, we find by means of corpus statistical analysis that monosyllable V in "V ye bu V" has the overwhelming advantages, presenting unmarked assembly. In the evolution, the whole structure gradually becomes fixed construction. The meaning of this construction is bu V in total or fundamental sense, which is the subjective judgment on deviated anticipation and expresses intensive subjective emotion and attitude.

**Keywords**—V ye bu V, construction, verb quantifier complement, meaning of construction, contextual relevancy

## I. INTRODUCTION

"V ye bu V" is a commonly-seen spoken expression in modern Chinese, which expresses negative meaning, such as "kan ye bu kan" ("kan" means "look" in English), "dong ye bu dong" ("dong" means "move"). Although the whole structure is contrastive positive and negative meaning, the semantic center lies in "bu V". Such semantic characteristic cannot be deduced from the components of the whole structure. Therefore, this paper defines the structure of "V ye bu V" as a typical "construction" in Chinese for the time being.

As an integrated expression, the construction matches forms and meanings. In analysis of the construction, it not only analyzes its construction and explains its meaning, but also explores its contextual relevancy which refers to what kind of contextual conditions speakers will use such construction. This paper exactly follows such idea to research "V ye bu V", a frequently-used construction in spoken language in modern Chinese, analyze the characteristics of each components and the integrated meaning of this construction, expound its discourse functions and corresponding contextual features and try to explore the causes and theoretical basis of such construction.

## II. VERB OR VERB QUANTIFIER

We find in corpus statistics that quantifier "yi" (which means "one" in English) can be added before the first V in some "V ye bu V" as shown in (1a), but some cannot be added as shown in (1b).

(1) a. yi dong ye bu dong/ yi xiao ye bu xiao ("xiao" means "smile")/yi zha ye bu zha("zha" means "blink")

b. \* yi zou ye bu zou ("zou" means "walk")/\* yi ku ye bu ku ("ku" means "cry")/\*yi baogao ye bu baogao("baogao" means "report")

Lv Shuxiang [1]597 points out that "yi dong" and "yi kan" in "yi dong ye bu dong" and "yi kan ye bu kan" are verb quantifiers. When the same verb is used in the first verb quantifier and in the second verb, then quantifier "yi" can be omitted, that is "dong ye bu dong", "kan ye bu kan".

But we find that there are nuances between "yi dong ye bu dong" and "dong ye bu dong" and "yi kan ye bu kan" and "kan ye bu kan" in terms of syntactic functions, for example:

(2) a. \* ta yi dong ye bu dong <yi xia>. \*ta yi dong ye bu dong ta. \*ta yi dong ye bu dong ta <yi xia>. ("ta" means "he" in English)

b. \* ta yi kan ye bu kan <yi yan>. \*ta yi kan ye bu kan ta. \*ta yi kan ye bu kan ta <yi yan>

c. ta dong ye bu dong <yi xia>. ta dong ye bu dong ta. ta dong ye bu dong ta <yi xia>

d. ta kan ye bu kan <yi yan>. ta kan ye bu kan ta. ta kan ye bu kan ta <yi xia>

It is shown in (2) that "dong ye bu dong" and "kan ye bu kan", as predicate center, can be added objects and quantitative phrases but there are some limitations for "yi dong ye bu dong" and "yi kan ye bu kan" with this regard.

Then whether the first "V" is a function word or a quantifier transformed from a verb in "V ye bu V"? We believe that the first "V" in "V ye bu V" should be understood as quantifier transformed from verb. According to the opinions of Zhu Dexi[2]50, Shao Jingmin[3]100, Huang Borong and Liao Xudong[4]17, verbs can be transformed into quantifiers. In addition, quantifiers transformed from verbs can be put in the beginning just like ordinary verb quantifiers, but it is only restricted to numeral "yi" for such quantifiers.

Therefore, we believe that it actually omits numeral 'yi' in the first 'V' after the preposition of quantifiers transformed from verbs in the construction of 'V ye bu V',

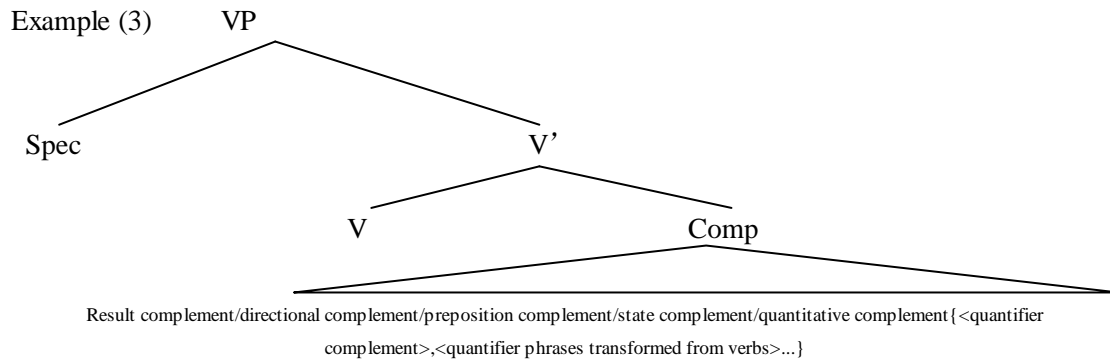
which means that bu V yi V(negative) > yi V ye bu V (negative) > V ye bu V (negative).

Another example is Horn scale[5]133 which holds that strong points contain weak ones and weak ones deny strong ones, as evident in negative sentences in which denying infinitesimal refers to denial of any values in domain. 'yi V ye bu V' means 'ye bu V in fundamental or total manner', among which 'yi V' signifies the minimum value of 'V'. Thus, the denial of 'yi V' mean denying 'V' in total sense. The preposition of 'yi V' is the result of subjectivisation[6]268-275,

which expresses intensive emotion of speakers. With the fixation of the construction of 'V ye bu V', numeral 'yi' implies in this construction, which expresses the denial of all values on the whole.

While in example (2), now that 'yi V ye bu V' is the omitted form of 'V ye bu V', why the latter form can be added with quantitative complement and the former one generally cannot be?

In principle, verb quantifier complement after verbs cannot be concurrence with other complements such as result complement, directional complement, preposition complement, state complement, quantitative complement, etc. but in complementary distribution.



As shown in example (3), according to Larson[9]335-391, Huang[7]119-147[8]15-35 treats quantitative complement as sister components of main verbs. Verb quantifier complements and verb quantifier complement transformed from verbs are subordinate category. In other word, verb quantifier complements transformed from verbs is also sister components of main verbs, which distribute complementarily with other complements in principle. This is the result of competition among different complements.

'yi V' is a quantifier phrase after the preposition in 'yi V ye bu V', but it is still in the position of quantifier complement and occupies the vacant position in complement: 'yi V ye bu V t'. But in 'V ye bu V', the whole structure has been fixed into a grammatical unit. Therefore, although 'V' has the meaning of quantifier, the actual position of it has already lost and the whole structure integrates deeply, which expresses the meaning of an integrated construction. Furthermore, the numeral for quantifier complement in 'V ye bu V' is restricted to 'yi', which in fact is the embodiment of the meaning of the construction.

In example (2), objects cannot be added after the structure of 'yi V ye bu V', whereas 'V ye bu V' can have objects. We believe that it is the reason of semantic orientation of predicate. Both 'dong' (which means 'move' in English) and 'kan' (which means 'look' ) are bivalent verbs, implying semantic roles of doers and receivers. 'yi dong ye bu dong' and 'yi kan

ye bu kan" in example (2a) and (2b) both refer to doers and their own behavior state. Semantically, they are self-contained and do not involve in receivers. Hence, there is no reason to add objects by principle. However, 'dong ye bu dong' and 'kan ye bu kan' in example (2c) and (2d) emphasize the influence of doers on receivers, thus it can add the objects of receivers.

### III. ANALYSIS ON THE CONSTRUCTION AND THE MEANING

In the construction of 'V ye bu V', it includes invariable 'ye' (which means 'also' in English) and variable 'V'. We aim to conduct analysis and conclude the meaning of the construction from these two aspects.

#### A. Invariable 'ye'

In the structure of 'V ye bu V', the first 'V' is positive and the second one is negative, which is contrastive and lays semantic emphasis on the latter. What the whole construction expresses is a negative meaning. What 'ye' indicates in this structure is reverse progressive, having the similar meaning with 'even' and expressing stressed tone.

#### B. Variable 'V'

Which 'V' can be used in this construction?

We find by the statistics of corpus in CCL corpus that most 'V' which can be used in the construction are monosyllable and only a few are disyllable. The statistics are as follows:

TABLE I. THE CATEGORY OF SPOKEN CONSTRUCTION "V YE BU V"

V	Examples	Total number	Percentage
Monosyllable	move, think, see, blink, catch, manage, wrinkle, carry, fumble, talk, point, hum, hear, sit, smell, touch, respond, listen, flash, glimpse, expect, fear, hide, sniff, search, drop, cover, glance, ask, smile, rotate, touch, believe, attack, chew, thank, guess, separate, speak, stand, pull, count, sound, lift, tremble, look, stop, shine, rinse, taste, cut, dismantle, hum, yawn, shake, send, say, reveal, wear, wait, jump	61	91%
Disyllable	report, avoid, thank, take notice of, be familiar with, care about	6	9%

The table above shows the statistics of non-repeated use cases in the CCL corpus, thus statistical proportion is absolute number. If given the actual use frequency, then the percentage will be even greater. Therefore, unmarked monosyllables "V" dominate the construction of "V ye bu V". It is easier to get explanation. According to hierarchical theory in cognitive category, monosyllable is the basic cognitive category, thus it has strong prototype. However, the meaning of disyllable (particularly juxtaposed compound words) is abstract and generalized to some degree, hence it has weak prototype [10]576-588.

Through analysis, we hold that variable "V" that can be used in the construction of "V ye bu V" has the following characteristics semantically: [+dynamic], [+independent], [+controllable], [+measurable].

C. The meaning of the construction

We refine the meaning of the construction "V ye bu V" into the following one: bu V in fundamental or total sense, which is the subjective judgment on deviated anticipation and expresses the speaker's negation, dissatisfaction, surprise, or appreciation of a situation that should have occurred but do not. In order to present such intense emotions, sentences often have an exaggerated meaning, possessing obvious subjectivity.

(4) a. Readers humbly asked several times, but it is normal for staff to ignore(li ye bu li). (dissatisfaction)

b. Someone does an experiment: locking a frog in front of dead flies, only to find that it starves without even looking flies. (kan ye bu kan) (astonishment)

c. Xiao Han shot the film for many times and was fed many spoons of chicken soup without wrinkling on his brow and cooperated with Ms. Wang to finish this film. (zhou ye bu zhou) (affirmation and appreciation)

d. As if there is no necessary to worry about and it can be decided without even thinking about: there is certainly someone who would keep flood out of the dam! (xiang ye bu xiang) (affirmation and appreciation)

e. He is in the middle of angry. You go and find him. He will definitely ignore you or even without looking at you. (li ye bu li; kan ye bu kan) (affirmation and appreciation)

(4a) dissatisfies staff's attitude. (4b) is astonished to such behavior of frogs as would rather starve than eat a heap of dead flies. (4c) admires Xiao Han's dedication to his work. (4d) and (4e) describe authors' or speakers' speculation instead of current situation. The former sentence appreciates Wuhan citizens' calm and leisure life style in the face of flood; the latter speculates "his" attitude. These speculation and predication are not necessarily in line with reality, but by

highlighting their deviation from anticipation, they express positive or negative emotion and attitude.

D. Applicable context

From the perspective of pragmatics, when speakers use the construction of "V ye bu V", it exists such psychological anticipation: party A concerned should be suppose to react, but the result is beyond anticipation. A does not have corresponding reaction, even without slightest of signs of reaction.

Therefore, the contextual relevancy of this construction is that when A does not respond to the corresponding contextual stimuli as expected by the speaker, or even without slightest of reaction, under such situation, speakers will judge and evaluate such action in accordance with the violated direction of anticipation.

When speakers think that the anticipation is not good and do not want it to come true and A's reaction totally deviates from anticipation, it shows affirmation and appreciation as shown in (4c) and (4d).

When speakers believe that the anticipation is good and want it to come true, but A's reaction totally deviates from anticipation, it shows denial and dissatisfaction as shown in (4a) and (4e).

When the anticipation does not involve in good or bad and speakers are not eager to make it come true and if A's reaction totally deviates from anticipation, then it simply expresses astonishment as shown in (4b).

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper maintains that the construction of "V ye bu V" evolves from " bu V yi V (negative) > yi V ye bu V (negative) > V ye bu V (negative)", among which the first "V" is the result of the preposition of verb quantifier and only when numeral is "yi" can the "V" be put in the beginning and the numeral be omitted. In negative sentences, denying minimum value refers to the denial of any values in domain. Therefore, the meaning of "V ye bu V" can be summarized as bu V in fundamental or total sense, which is the subjective judgment on deviated anticipation and is denial, dissatisfaction, surprise, or affirmation or appreciation of a situation that should have occurred but did not in terms of emotion and attitude, having obvious subjective features. Under such basis, this paper discusses preliminarily its contextual relevancy. With regard to the cause and theoretical basis of "V ye bu V", this paper does not conduct in-depth analysis and has yet to further refine and research.

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