

# On the Conceptual Structure of “Psych-Verb+*si* (死)” Compounds and “*le*<sub>2</sub> (了<sub>2</sub>)” in Mandarin Chinese

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## 1. Introduction

This paper begins by collating data about the conceptual structures of “Psych-Verb+*si* (死)” (hereinafter “V<sub>p</sub>+*si* (死)”), which can express strong emotion as an English phrase such as “I was frightened *to death*”, and then attempt to show how the appearance of the sentence-final *le* (了) (hereafter *le*<sub>2</sub>(了<sub>2</sub>)) relates to the semantic interpretation of the construction in question. Furthermore, the paper attempts to clarify the mechanisms underlying the phenomena in terms of cognitive concepts such as “viewpoints” presented in cognitive science and “viewing arrangement” as argued for by Langacker (1985), among others.

This construction has presented persistent puzzlement between word order and meaning relationship in Chinese linguistics. For example:<sup>1</sup>

(1) a. *Zhang San xiang/hen/taoyan/xianmu/fan/jidu -si Li Si le.*

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations used in the paper are as follows:

p.n.: proper noun, LE: aspectual *le* or sentence final particle *le*, 1/2/3p.sg: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, MOD: modal adverb, BA: marker of putting a disposed object in front of disposal verbs, CL: classifier, NOM: nominative case marker, ACC: accusative case marker, CAUS: causative marker, PAST: past tense marker, C.F.: conjunctive form, TOP: topic marker, IMPF: imperfective, PRES: present tense, DEM: demonstrative.

张三 想/恨/讨厌/羡慕/烦/嫉妒 -死 李四 了。  
 Z-S(proper noun) think/hate/dislike/envy/irritate/jealous -die L-S(p.n.) LE  
*Zhang-San* thinks/hates/dislikes/envies/irritates/is jealous of *Li-Si* to death.

- b. *Li Si xiang/hen/taoyan/xianmu/fan/jidu -si Zhang San le.*  
 李四 想/恨/讨厌/羡慕/烦/嫉妒 -死 张三 了。  
 L-S (p.n.) think/hate/dislike/envy/irritate/jealous -die Z-S (p.n.) LE  
*Li-Si* thinks/hates/dislikes/envy/irritates/is jealous of *Zhang-San* to death.

- (2) a. *Wo xiang/hen/taoyan/xianmu/fan/jidu -si ta le.*  
 我 想/恨/讨厌/羡慕/烦/嫉妒 -死 他 了。  
 1p.sg think/hate/dislike/envy/irritate/jealous -die 3p.sg LE  
 I think/hate/dislike/envy/irritate/am jealous of him to death.

- b. *Ta xiang/hen/taoyan/xianmu/fan/jidu -si wo le.*  
 他 想/恨/讨厌/羡慕/烦/嫉妒 -死 我 了。  
 3p.sg think/hate/dislike/envy/irritate/jealous -die 1p.sg LE  
 He thinks/hates/dislikes/envy/irritates/is jealous of me to death.

- (3) a. *Wo xiang/hen/taoyan/xianmu/fan/jidu -si ni le.*  
 我 想/恨/讨厌/羡慕/烦/嫉妒 -死 你 了。  
 1p.sg think/hate/dislike/envy/irritate/jealous -die 2p.sg LE  
 I thinks/hates/dislikes/envy/irritates/is jealous of you to death.

- b. *Ni xiang/hen/taoyan/xianmu/fan/jidu -si wo le.*  
 你 想/恨/讨厌/羡慕/烦/嫉妒 -死 我 了。  
 2p.sg think/hate/dislike/envy/irritate/jealous -die 1p.sg LE  
 You/I think/hate/dislike/envy/irritate/is jealous of me/you to death.

The arguments are interchangeable in all of the examples, but except that, the meaning of the word-order relations in these three pairs of examples are all different. That is to say, the experiencer of the emotion in (1) is always the referent in the subject position, so that in (1a) it is “*Zhang San*”, and in (1b) “*Li Si*” at the subject position in each sentence. On the contrary, the experiencer of the emotion in (2) can occur both in the subject position and the object position. (3) is the perpetuating pair

of sentences, and the arguments can reverse positions between the subject and the object without altering the meaning. As this could be confusing, it is necessary to collate data about the conceptual structures of “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*(死)” with the construction in question.

In section two, descriptions and data from previous studies are collated and examined, and section three introduces the concept of “viewpoints” in order to deepen the understanding of what is happening to the construction in question. Section four discusses the function of the so-called “*le*<sub>2</sub>”, the sentence-final “*le*”, arising in association with the construction. The final section will be devoted to elicit the conclusion.

## 2. Grammatical characteristics of “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*(死)”

### 2.1 Co-occurrence relation with *le*<sub>2</sub>(了<sub>2</sub>)

“V<sub>p</sub>+*si*(死)” co-occurs mostly with “*le*<sub>2</sub>(了<sub>2</sub>)”, despite the fact that resultative verbal compounds in Chinese usually co-occur with aspectual “*le*<sub>1</sub>(了<sub>1</sub>)”. For example:<sup>2 3</sup>

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|---|--|
| (4) a. <sup>OK</sup> <i>Wu Song da-si le<sub>1</sub> laohu.</i><br>武松 打-死 了 <sub>1</sub> 老虎。<br><i>W-S</i> (p.n.) hit-death LE <sub>1</sub> tiger<br><i>Wu Song</i> hit the tiger to death. | b. <sup>OK</sup> <i>Wu Song da-si laohu le<sub>2</sub>.</i><br>武松 打-死 老虎 了 <sub>2</sub> 。<br><i>W-S</i> (p.n.) hit-death tiger LE <sub>2</sub><br><i>Wu Song</i> hit the tiger to death. |
|---|--|

<sup>2</sup> The degree of well-formedness of sentences are marked by the following markers : OK > ? > ?? > \*. The markers “?” and “??” represent relatively uncomfortable acceptability to a native speaker's intuition. The author has not figured out what was the reason of this uncomfortable feeling by the native speaker.

<sup>3</sup> The author assumes the construction “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*” is derived from resultative verbal compounds (RVCs). However, there are several differences in grammatical behavior that are observed between “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*” and RVCs. For example, RVCs can derive potential complements with “*de*(得)/*bu*(不)” intervening V1 and V2, but “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*” cannot; RVCs have negative forms, but “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*” does not except in rhetorical questions, etc. We think these are the natural consequences of the “subjectification” process from RVCs to “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*.” Apparently, “*si* (死)” does not mean “death” in “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*”; it only expresses the extreme degree of the speaker's emotion. That is why it does not have any potential meaning of “death” as a result of the action by V1.

The author is deeply indebted to an anonymous referee calling her attention to this point.

- (5) a. <sup>?</sup>*Zhang San hen-si le<sub>1</sub> Li Si.*  
 张三 恨-死 了<sub>1</sub> 李四。  
 Z-S(p.n.) hate-die LE<sub>1</sub> L-S(p.n.)  
*Zhang San hates Li Si to death.*
- b. <sup>OK</sup>*Zhang San hen-si Li Si le<sub>2</sub>.*  
 张三 恨-死 李四 了<sub>2</sub>。  
 Z-S(p.n.) hate-die L-S(p.n.) LE<sub>2</sub>  
*Zhang San hates Li Si to death.*
- (6) a. <sup>??</sup>*Wo hen-si le<sub>1</sub> Li Si.*  
 我 恨-死 了<sub>1</sub> 李四。  
 1p.sg hate-death LE<sub>1</sub> Li Si  
 I hate Li Si to death.
- b. <sup>OK</sup>*Wo hen-si Li Si le<sub>2</sub>.*  
 我 恨-死 李四 了<sub>2</sub>。  
 1p.sg hate-death Li Si LE<sub>2</sub>  
 I hate Li Si to death.
- (7) a. *\*Wo hen-si le<sub>1</sub> ni.*  
 我 恨-死 了<sub>1</sub> 你。  
 1p.sg hate-death LE<sub>1</sub> 2p.sg  
 I hate you to death.
- b. <sup>OK</sup>*Wo hen-si ni le<sub>2</sub>.*  
 我 恨-死 你 了<sub>2</sub>。  
 1p.sg hate-death 2p.sg LE<sub>2</sub>  
 I hate you to death.
- (8) a. *\*Ni hen-si le<sub>1</sub> wo.*  
 你 恨-死 了<sub>1</sub> 我。  
 2p.sg hate-death LE<sub>1</sub> 1p.sg  
 You hate me to death.
- b. <sup>?</sup>*Ni hen-si wo le<sub>2</sub>.*<sup>4</sup>  
 你 恨-死 我 了<sub>2</sub>。  
 2p.sg hate-death 1p.sg LE<sub>2</sub>  
 I/You hate you/me to death.

The examples in (4) are the resultative verbal compounds (hereinafter RVC), which can co-occur with both “*le<sub>1</sub>*” and “*le<sub>2</sub>*”. The examples in (5) are the “*V<sub>p</sub>+si*” construction, which in this case, can co-occur with both kinds of *le* (although informants tell that the “*le<sub>2</sub>*” is better). The examples in (6) use the first-person pronoun in the subject position which cannot co-occur with “*le<sub>1</sub>*”. The examples in (7) use the first-person pronoun in the subject position and the second-person pronoun in the object position, which means they cannot co-occur with “*le<sub>1</sub>*” either. The last pair use the second-person pronoun in the subject position and the first-person pronoun in the object position, which again makes it impossible to co-occur with “*le<sub>1</sub>*”.

<sup>4</sup> (8b) could have the same interpretation as (7b), and all of the informants commented the feeling expressed in (8b) is much stronger than (7b). Besides, when (8b) expresses the same meaning as (7b), it frequently omits the subject “*ni*(你)”.

The data above seems to indicate that the RVC expresses the events and the “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*” expresses the states due to the dynamic predicates that can co-occur with both kinds of “*le*”. However, static predicates co-occur only with “*le*<sub>2</sub>” as exemplified in (9) and (10).

(9) a. <sup>OK</sup>*Ta qu le<sub>1</sub> tang Beijing.*

他去了<sub>1</sub>趟北京。

3p.sg go LE<sub>1</sub> CL B-J(p.n)

He went to Beijing once.

b. <sup>OK</sup>*Ta qu Beijing le<sub>2</sub>*

他去北京了<sub>2</sub>

3p.sg go B-J(p.n.) LE<sub>2</sub>

He went to Beijing.

(10) a. <sup>\*</sup>*Ta yijing shi le<sub>1</sub> daxuesheng.*

他已经<sub>1</sub>是了大学生。

3p.sg already be LE<sub>1</sub> university student

He already is a university student.

b. <sup>OK</sup>*Ta yijing shi daxuesheng le<sub>2</sub>.*

他已经<sub>2</sub>是大学生了。

3p.sg already be LE<sub>1</sub> university student

He already is a university student.

The predicate in (9) “*qu Beijing*(去北京)” is an event, so it can co-occur with “*le*<sub>1</sub>” in (9a), as well as with “*le*<sub>2</sub>” in (9b). On the contrary, the predicate “*shi daxuesheng*(是大学生)” is a state, so it co-occurs with “*le*<sub>2</sub>” in (10b), but cannot co-occur with “*le*<sub>1</sub>” in (10a).

However, this presumption cannot explain the examples given in (5). Although the opposition between event versus state can explain the co-occurrence of “*le*<sub>1</sub>” or “*le*<sub>2</sub>” in examples (4) through (6-8,) it cannot reveal anything significant about (5) because it uses the same predicate as (6-8). Hence, the problem remains to be explained as to whether these data show the opposition of event vs. state.

## 2.2 Conceptual structures of “NP<sub>1</sub> V<sub>p</sub> +*si*(死) NP<sub>2</sub>”

From the results of the collated data from previous studies, the following two kinds of conceptual structures were observed in “NP<sub>1</sub> V<sub>p</sub> +*si* NP<sub>2</sub>” :

- (11) (a) [State REACT<sub>±</sub> ([Y], [X])] *Zhang San hen-si Li Si le.*  
 张三 恨-死 李四 了。  
*Z-S(p.n.) hate-die L-S(p.n.) LE<sub>2</sub>*  
*Zhang San hate Li Si to death.*

- (b) [State AFF<sub>± ±</sub> VOL ([X], [Y])] *Zhe-shi fan-si wo le.*  
 这-事 烦-死 我 了  
*DEM-matter irritate-die 1p.sg LE<sub>2</sub>*  
*This matter irritates me to death.*

This formalization is based on Ray Jackendoff's (1990:140-141).<sup>5</sup> The role of NP<sub>1</sub> in (a) is an Experiencer, and in (b) is a Causer as stimulus.

## 2.3 Meanings of word-order relations

Based on the above conceptual structures, it is possible to deduce two types of meanings exist in the word-order relations of “V<sub>p</sub>+*si*” .

Type 1 can reverse positions between NP<sub>1</sub> and NP<sub>2</sub> without altering the meanings as (12) shows. Therefore, it can have both (11a) and (11b) structures.

- (12) a. *Wo xinteng-si haizi/ni le.*  
 我 心疼-死 孩子/你 了。  
*1p.sg love-die child/2p.sg LE<sub>2</sub>*  
*I am love by (my) child/you to death.*

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<sup>5</sup> Two kinds of semantic structures can be observed in “NP<sub>1</sub> V<sub>p</sub>+*si* NP<sub>2</sub>” : REACT, the subject's reaction to the stimulus; and AFF, the affect. The dichotomy follows the exemplification of Talmy (2000:98):

- (i) a. That frightens me. [Stimulus as subject]  
 b. I fear that. [Experiencer as subject]

b. *Haizi/Ni xinteng-si Wo le.*

孩子/你 心疼-死 我了。

child/2p.sg love-die 1p.sg LE<sub>2</sub>

I am love by (my) child/you to death.

Type 2, on the other hand, has the structure (11a) only, and therefore it cannot reverse the ordering of NP1 and NP2 without changing meanings as shown in (13).

(13) *Zhang San xinteng-si Li Si le.*

张三 心疼-死 李四 了。

Z-S(p.n.) love-die L-S(p.n.) LE<sub>2</sub>

*Zhang San* is love by *Li Si* to death.

The question is: what condition causes this difference between Type 1 and Type 2?

## 2.4 Analysis

Obviously, the above cited examples show that Type 1 is asymmetric in terms of the possibility to be construed as an experiencer of strong emotion between its argument for the predicate of  $V_p$ , and yet the most likely referent as an experiencer can occur in any position of a sentence. It is reasonable to argue then that the most likely referent who the speaker has enough authority to attach strong emotion to is himself/herself. For example, all the constructions in (14), cited from Xing eds. (1992:297), have the same reading: “I worry about you to the degree of death”, or “You worry me to the degree of death.”<sup>6</sup>

(14) a. *Ni ke danxin-si wo le.*

你可担心-死我了。<sup>7</sup>

2p.sg MOD worry-die 1p.sg LE<sub>2</sub>

You worry me to death.

b. *Ni ke ba wo danxin-si le.*

你可把我担心-死了。

2p.sg MOD BA 1p.sg worry-die LE<sub>2</sub>

You make me worry you to death.

<sup>6</sup> The same kind of examples can be found in Ando (2000: 231).

<sup>7</sup> “*ke*(可)” in general is described as an adverb for emphasis and it seems to have some kind of intersubjective usage. “*ba*(把)” is used in so-called BA construction which expresses causativeness involving a change of state.

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| <p>c. <i>Wo ke danxin-si ni le.</i><br/>         我可担心-死你了。<br/>         1p.sg MOD worry-die 2p.sg LE<sub>2</sub><br/>         I worry about you to death.</p> | <p>d. <i>Wo ke ba ni danxin-si le.</i><br/>         我可把你担心-死了。<br/>         1p.sg MOD BA 2p.sg worry-die LE<sub>2</sub><br/>         I worry about you to death.</p> |
|---|--|

I wonder what it is that makes this possible in Chinese.

The questions raised in the previous section were answered in classical Chinese descriptive grammar by using the information structure. As is well known, the main determinants of word order in Chinese are said to be the information structure,<sup>8</sup> as exemplified in (15), and the same noun can occur in the subject position and object position.

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|---|--|
| <p>(15) a. <i>Lai le keren.</i><br/>         来了客人。<br/>         come LE<sub>1</sub> guest<br/>         There came a <b>guest</b>.</p> | <p>b. <i>Keren lai le.</i><br/>         客人来了。<br/>         guest come LE<sub>1</sub><br/> <b>The guest(s)</b> have come.</p> |
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The difference between the two positions are shown in the English translations: in the object position “*keren*(客人)” is marked by the indefinite article “a,” whereas, when it occurs in the subject position it is marked by the definite article “the,” namely, the newest or the most important information is supposed to occur in the sentence-final position in Chinese. The word order in Chinese thus reflects the informative value of the referent in the discourse, as was previously mentioned.

In this way, it is possible to explain the examples in the previous section, which, the sentences using the first-person pronoun, would allow the same reading in different constructions involving “ $V_p+si$ ”. The main reason is that the first-person pronoun is the lowest informative element among the participants of a dialogue, which is why it can occur in the subject position, and yet it is the most important referent in the conceptualization of the speaker himself/herself, and thus it can occur in the object position.<sup>9</sup> That means informativeness and importance can be parallel

<sup>8</sup> See Chao (1968:76), Li and Thompson (1976), LaPolla, R J (1995:298), etc.

<sup>9</sup> An anonymous referee pointed out that “ $V_p+si$ ” can take “*ren*(人)”(people) as an experiencer in its object position just like the first-person pronoun in (12b) or (14a), and “*ren*(人)” cannot occur in its subject position.



concepts in the information structure in Chinese. Of course, this point should be carefully examined furthermore.

### 3. “Viewpoint” and “subjectivity” of “ $V_p+si(\text{死})$ ”

#### 3.1 The empathy hierarchy

The observations mentioned above make it possible to argue that the Chinese first-person pronoun violates the empathy hierarchy as defined in Kuno (1976:431-433) since it does not necessarily represent the speaker’s standpoint. There are two mutually related definitions: the first one is the speech-act participant empathy hierarchy cited in (16a), the other is the surface structure empathy hierarchy cited in (16b).

- (16) a. The speech-act participant empathy hierarchy: It is easiest for the speaker to empathize with himself (i.e., to express his own point of view); it is next easiest for him to express his empathy with the hearer; it is most difficult for him to empathize with the third party, at the exclusion of the hearer or himself.

$$\text{Speaker} \geq \text{Hearer} \geq \text{Third Person}$$

- b. The surface structure empathy hierarchy: It is easiest for the speaker to empathize with the referent of the subject; it is next easiest for him to empathize with the referent of the object... It is most difficult for him to empathize with the referent of the by-passive agentive.

$$\text{Subject} \geq \text{Object} \quad \dots \geq \text{By-Agentive}$$

According to these definitions, it is possible to say that the example (12b) and (14ab) violate to the empathy hierarchy.

气-死 人 了

angry-die people LE

(It makes people angry at the degree of death.)

The author analyzes that this kind of “ren(人)”(people) in fact refers to the speaker him/herself. The aim of using “ren(人)”(people) instead of first-person is the speaker intends to arouse universal sympathy by ordinary people about his/her strong emotion in the situation, that is he/she tries to express everyone would have such a strong feeling under the same situation.

(12) b. *Haizi/Ni xinteng-si Wo le.*

孩子/你 心疼-死 我 了。

child/2p.sg love-die 1p.sg LE<sub>2</sub>

I am love by (my) child/you to death.

(14) a. *Ni ke danxin-si wo le.*

你 可 担心-死 我 了。

2p.sg MOD worry-die 1p.sg LE<sub>2</sub>

You worry me to death.

b. *Ni ke ba wo danxin-si le.*

你 可 把 我 担心-死 了。

2p.sg MOD BA 1p.sg worry-die LE<sub>2</sub>

You make me worry you to death.

According to the empathy hierarchy, the speaker can most empathize with him/herself and therefore it is easy to occur in the subject position and most difficult to occur in the by-agentive position. But in (12b) and (14ab) the first-person pronoun occurs in the object position, making this example is difficult to translate into Japanese.

(12/14)' <sup>??</sup>*kodomo/anata -ga watasi-o sinpai-de tamarana-ku sase-ta.*

子供が/あなたが 私を 心配で たまらなく させた。

child/2p.sg -NOM 1p.sg-ACC worry-C.F mortally -CAUS -PAST

I am distressed by (my) child/you to death.

Japanese speakers do not use the first-person pronoun to express any strong emotions they might possess. This is why the most natural utterance corresponding to the Chinese (15Ca) is not (16Ja) but (16Jb). The back translation for (16Jb) is (15Cb), which shows that the Japanese speakers do not usually have a means to express (15Ca), and only have a means to express (15Cb) in their oral conversations.<sup>10</sup>

(15) Ca. *Ni fan-si wo le!*

你 烦-死 我 了!

Cb. *Ni zhen fan!*

你 真 烦!

<sup>10</sup> Wang (2013) claimed that the pragmatic function of Japanese and Chinese emotional expressions must be divided into two different types: one is 'portrait' and the other is 'exclamation'. In Chinese, both examples in (15Cab) have an exclamation function, whereas in Japanese only (16Jb) has the function of exclamation. (16Ja) does not have that function.

2p.sg irritate-die 1p.sg LE<sub>2</sub>                      2p.sg really irritate  
 You are irritating me to death!                      You are really irritating!

(16) Ja. ?? *anata-ha watashi-o sinuhodo wazuraw-ase-tei-ru!*

あなたは 私を 死ぬほど 煩わせている!

2p.sg-TOP 1p.sg-ACC mortally irritate-CAUS-IMPF-PRES

You are irritating me to death!

Jb. *omae maji uza!*

お前 まじ ウザ!

2p.sg really irritate

You are really annoying!

The biggest difference between Chinese and Japanese is the presence of the first-person experiencer in a sentence that expresses his/her exclamation of strong emotion.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.2 Standpoint and gaze point in cognitive science

As was introduced in the previous section, Kuno(1976) used the term

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<sup>11</sup> According to Prof. Noritaka Fukushima, the first-person pronoun can occur in Spanish exclamations expressing the speaker's inner experiences as exemplified by the following sentences. (DAT: dative, ind: indicative, pres: present):

- (i) a. ¡**Me** pica !  
       1p.sg-DAT CAUS itching.ind.pres.3p.sg  
       It's itchy!
- b. ¡**Me** pica la nariz !  
       1p.sg-DAT CAUS itching.ind.pres.3p.sg the nose  
       My nose is itchy!
- c. ¡Cómo **me** pica!  
       how 1p.sg-DAT CAUS CAUS itching.ind.pres.3p.sg  
       How itchy!
- (ii) ¡**Me** haces daño!  
       1p.sg-DAT do.ind.pres.2p.sg harm  
       It hurts!

“speaker’s point of view” to explain the wide range of language phenomena in English and Japanese. In recent years, however, cognitive science has differentiated between several kinds in the speaker's “point of view”. In the current paper, the following two concepts are considered the most important for the research of language: standpoint and gaze point. Whereas the standpoint is the point where someone watches from, the gaze point is the point where someone gazes at something. The differences can be understood by comparing the following two self-portraits, which were drawn during the same period.

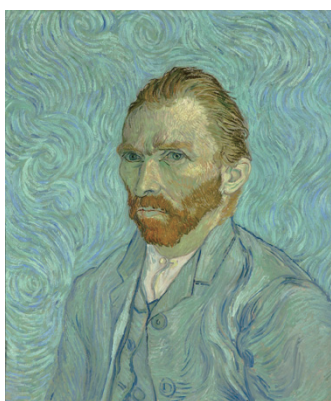


Figure 1 *Self-portrait* by Vincent van Gogh (1889)

Oil on canvas, 65 × 54 cm, Collection of Musée d'Orsay

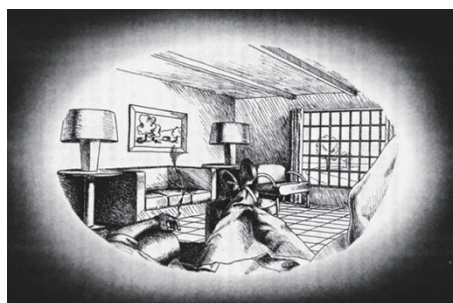


Figure 2 *Self-Portrait* by Ernst Mach (1886)

Figure 1 is the famous self-portrait drawn by Vincent van Gogh. The unique self-portrait shown in the Figure 2, which is also known as “view from the left eye,” appears in Ernst Mach’s *The Analysis of Sensations* to illustrate his ideas about self-perception.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, I lie upon my sofa. If I close my right eye, the picture represented in the accompanying cut is presented to my left eye. In a frame formed by the ridge of my eyebrow, by my nose, and by my moustache, appears a part of my body, so far as visible, with its environment.

(<https://publicdomainreview.org/collections/self-portrait-by-ernst-mach-1886/>, accessed

<sup>12</sup> The sketch in the original edition of Mach (1886) can be checked in the following website: <https://archive.org/details/b2229448x/page/14>.

on 11th April 2018)

These portraits reflect two kinds of self-perception, that is to say, Gogh's picture (Figure 1) is an objectified self as his gaze point is actively conscious of the existence of himself. Mach's picture (Figure 2) is the visual field from his left eye and seen through his standpoint, which is the standard type of self-perception in our daily life. The reason for this is that humans are usually scarcely conscious of the existence of themselves.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.3 "Viewing arrangement" in Langacker's work

This section utilizes the concepts regarding "viewpoint" in the cognitive semantics of Langacker.

The same kinds of self-reflection as those shown by Gogh and Mach can be found in language expressions as exemplified in Langacker's work.

- (17) a. Vanessa is sitting across the table from me.  
 b. Vanessa is sitting across the table.

(Langacker 1991:328)

Langacker's definition of the "subjective" versus "objective" is as follows:

- (18) An entity is said to be objectively construed to the extent that it goes “onstage” as an explicit, focused object of conception. An entity is subjectively construed to the extent that it remains “offstage” as an implicit, unselfconscious subject of conception.

(Langacker. 2006:18)

In (17a), self is expressed in the sentence as the first-person pronoun just like in

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<sup>13</sup> Each figure is "subjective" in that each painter sees the world through his own eyes, differently each may do this. Figure 1 is subjective since it reflects Gogh's highly subjective understanding of himself, such as his facial expressions or the choice of colors for the background. Figure 2 is subjective since it reflects a condition of Mach's surroundings as seen through his mind, albeit unconsciously. The latter understanding of "subjective" appears to be similar to Langacker's definition. See Langacker (1991), Nakamura and Uehara (2016), as well as the discussion in the following section.

Gogh's self-portrait. In contrast, there is not an element expressing the speaker himself/herself in (17b), but the hearer can build up images similar to the visual field just like in Mach's self-portrait.

According to the above analysis, it is possible to say that Gogh's self-portrait is expressing an objectified self as his gaze point, whereas Mach's self-portrait is expressing his visual field from his left eye as his standpoint, and the self is thus subjectively construed as Langacker defines.

### 3.4 Viewpoint and subjectivity of “ $V_p+si(死)$ ”

As was mentioned in section 3.1, Japanese speakers do not usually use the first-person pronoun to express strong emotions in exclamatory sentences as the examples (12/14)(16) shown. In comparison, Chinese speakers have two patterns to express emotions in exclamations that use the first-person pronoun as exemplified in (15) above.

(19=15) Ca. <i>Ni fan-si wo le!</i> 你 烦-死 我 了! 2p.sg irritate-die 1p.sg LE <sub>2</sub> You are irritating me to death!	Cb. <i>Ni zhen fan!</i> 你 真 烦! 2p.sg really irritate You are really irritating!
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(20) is a real example from a television drama set in the early 20th century Beijing.

(20) 志新: 喂, 刘颖, 真是你吗? 哎哟, 想死我啦! 八年了, 别提它了。  
怎么样? 在美国混得怎么样?

Zhi-xin: Hey, Liu Ying, is it you, really? Wow, you make me think about you to death (I did miss you to death)! It's eight years, anyway, how's it going in the States?

According to Langacker's definition in 3.3, the speaker expressed by the first-person pronoun in (19=15Ca) is an objectively construed entity, so it does not generally represent a standpoint of the speaker as the first-person pronoun in Japanese.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Honda (in press) argues that the standpoint can be construed to be in the situation ("onstage") even in the self-objectified situation of Langacker's so-called "objective construal". Unless Kuno's empathy

#### 4. Function of "*le*<sub>2</sub>" in “V<sub>p</sub>+si(死)” sentences

##### 4.1 Function of "*le*<sub>2</sub>" in previous Studies

Chinese textbooks used in Japanese university classrooms usually explain "*le*" as the follows: "*le*<sub>1</sub>" is attached to the active verbs that express the completion or realization of an action the relevant verb expresses; "*le*<sub>2</sub>" is used at a sentence final-position to express the emergence of a new situation in an assertive tone.

Li and Thompson (1982) defined "*le*<sub>2</sub>" as a signal of the "Currently Relevant State", which formed a base for subsequent studies.

- (21) The basic communicative function of *le* is to signal a ‘Currently Relevant State’ (=CRS). That is, *le* claims that a state of affairs has special current relevance to some particular Reference Time. The Mandarin *le*, then, can be easily seen as an exponent of the Perfect aspect, the basic discourse function of the Perfect being to relate some state of affairs to the “current” time, i.e., in the unmarked case, the conversational setting in which the speaker and hearer are participating as interlocutors.

(Li and Thompson. 1982:22)

(22) is one of Li and Thompson's (1982) examples.

- (22) A. *ta zhidao nei-ge xiaoxi* (他/她知道那个消息。)  
 s/he know that-CL news  
 S/He knows about that piece of news.

- B. *ta zhidao nei-ge xiaoxi le* (他/她知道那个消息了。)  
 s/he know that-CL news CRS  
 S/He knows about that piece of news now. (S/He hadn't before)

(Li and Thompson. 1982:28)

The analysis by Shimoji (2002) is basically an advanced version of CRS, but it sheds more light on another aspect of the relevant linguistic phenomenon, I believe.

- (23) "*le*<sub>1</sub>" specifies an action of what a verb signifies, from generic to specific,

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hierarchy which is thought to belong to this pattern, it cannot explain the difference between the behaviors of the first-person pronoun in Chinese and Japanese.

and so it changes a proposition to a phrase at the same time; "*le*<sub>2</sub>" on the other hand, relates the phrase into the current situation where the conversation is taking place, entailing much more specification. In this way, "*le*<sub>2</sub>" changes the phrase to a sentence and is related to the deictic situation as a reference time. There is a speaker's viewpoint of watching the affair that is expressed in the sentence from outside of the "*le*<sub>2</sub>" sentences.

(Shimoji. 2002:17)

(24) is one of Shimoji's (2002) examples.

- (24) “那么, 天空里刮大风, 谁在扇大扇子呀?” 小天真问。  
“问得好!” 老爷爷说: “我们还有一个脾气, 热了, 就要变大, 变轻, 就要上升。一处地方的空气上升, 旁边的空气立刻跑过来填补。那么空气流动, 就…”

“起了风!” 小天真接着说。

〔风〕

"So, when the wind blows, who is fanning by an airflow?" the innocent boy asked. "Good question!" the old man replied, performing as if he was a wind: "We have another behavior when we become hot, we become bigger and lighter, and climb upward. When an air of a place moves upward, another air runs into and fills the place immediately. Then the air becomes to flow… "

"The wind blows!" the boy followed the words.

(Shimoji. 2002:18)

Shimoji pointed out that if one uses "*le*<sub>2</sub>" instead of "*le*<sub>1</sub>" in (24), the interpretation could be that the real wind started to blow where an ongoing conversation between the innocent boy and the old man is taking place.<sup>15</sup>

Another example is cited from a narration in the opening scene of a television

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<sup>15</sup> The Chinese native speakers who are studying Japanese often make mistakes when they translate this kind of "*le*" into Japanese. "The wind blows" in (24) is a habitual situation under a certain condition, so it cannot translate into the past tense "-*ta*" in Japanese, but Chinese students are often influenced from using "*le*", and so directly mistranslate it as "-*ta*". This is one of the pieces of evidence that supports the analysis above.



drama "家有儿女 (Home with Kids)".

- (25) 这是发生在中国一个普通家庭里的故事。故事中的男主人公叫夏东海，女主人公叫刘梅。

夏东海曾和前妻长期在美国工作，他们的女儿夏雪留在国内，一直在爷爷家住。到美国七年后，夏东海和妻子离了<sub>1</sub>婚，带着在美国出生的七岁的儿子夏雨回到了<sub>1</sub>中国。

刘梅是一家医院的护士，离婚后带着儿子刘星一起生活。后来，刘梅和夏东海相识并相爱，组成了<sub>1</sub>一个新的家庭。

我们的故事发生在这个重新组合的家庭里。那么，在这个重新组合的家庭里，会发生一些怎样的故事呢？

This is a story of an ordinary family in China. The male protagonist in the story is called Xia Donghai and the heroine is called Liu Mei.

Xia Donghai worked with his ex-wife for a long time in the United States, and their daughter Xia Xue stayed in China with her grandfather. Seven years after arriving in the United States, Xia Donghai and his wife were separated from each other and he returned to China with his seven-year-old son, Xia Yu, who had been born in the United States.

Liu Mei is a divorced hospital nurse who lives with her son Liu Xing. Later, Liu Mei and Xia Donghai meet and fall in love, forming a new family.

Our story takes place in this regrouped family. After regrouping, what kind of stories will happen to the family?

All instances of "*le*<sub>1</sub>" in (25) cannot be substituted with "*le*<sub>2</sub>". If "*le*<sub>2</sub>" is used in this discourse, the events "separate from each other", "return to China", and "form a new family" could be directly related to the narrative time, that is not an appropriate reference time.

Some related examples are found in Wang et al. (2009), Yue. (2011).

- (26) “了<sub>2</sub>”的出现条件是“话主显身，客观或主观上与受话同处一个话语时空，主观上与受话互动”。

(Wang et al. 2009:328)

The discourse condition of an appearance of " $l_2$ " is that "the speaker is manifested, be with the hearer in the same place objectively or subjectively where the discourse taking place and subjectively interacts with each other in short distance."

(27) is one of Wang et al.'s (2009) examples.

(27) a. 我店商品一律大幅降价，欢迎购买。

My store products will be greatly reduced prices, welcome to buy.

b. 我店商品大降价了！快来买吧！

My store goods have dropped prices! Come and buy it!

(Wang et al. 2009:319)

Wang et al. (2009:318-319) argued that whether it is narrative or argumentation, there are two kinds of styles to choose from: without " $l_2$ " and with " $l_2$ ". The style without " $l_2$ " is some sort of an authoritative one-way release as exemplified by (27a). Although there must be both an author of news/discussion and the audience/readers, but they are both invisible in the discourse, and there is no subjective requirement to interact with the audience. On the other hand, the style with " $l_2$ " where the speaker or the author is visible explicitly or implicitly, the sentence has a certain type of willingness to interact with the audience/hearer as exemplified by (27b).

Through the analysis of corpus data, Yue (2011) pointed out several important findings of the usage of " $l_2$ ", including:

(28) a. “了<sub>2</sub>”偏爱出现句法上是话主第一人称主语的句子在语义上是与话主相关的句子之中。

" $l_2$ " is preferably used in first-person subject sentences or sentences which are semantically related to the speaker.

b. 第二人称和第三人称“了<sub>2</sub>”句所传达的信息有很多是和第一人称话主“我”相关的，

Most of the information conveyed by the second-person and the third-person " $l_2$ " sentences are actually related to the first-person, the speaker "I".

(Yue. 2011:128)

- (29) a1. \*你去商店了。      a2. 我去商店了。      a3. 他去商店了。  
           You went to the store.      I went to the store.      He went to the store.

- b1. 听说你去商店了。      b2. 你去商店了吧。  
           I've heard you went to the store.      You went to the store, right?

(Yue. 2011:121)

(29a1) is difficult to use as an independent constative sentence since it needs to add some evidential element like “*ting-shuo* (听说)” (they say) or “*ba* (吧)”<sup>16</sup> as in (29b1) and (29b2) respectively. Although it is invisible in those sentences, the subject of “*ting-shuo* (听说)” is the speaker, and the use of “*ba* (吧)” to express his/her hesitation is also the speaker.

#### 4.2 “Grounding” and “Currently Relevant State”

To summarize, the function of “*le*<sub>2</sub>” in the literature associates the proposition of the sentence with the real scene where an utterance occurs, or more precisely, the scene denoting a reference time. Li and Thompson. (1982:38) give a compelling example shown below:

- (30) A. (To friend who has asked why the speaker didn't choose a certain university)

yinwei nali xuefei tai gui      (因为那里学费太贵。)

because there tuition too expensive

The tuition is too high there (neutral response).

- B. (One student to another standing in line to pay fees)

xuefei tai gui      *le*!      (学费太贵了!)

tuition too expensive

(I tell you) the tuition is (really) too high!

(Li & Thompson. 1982:38)

---

<sup>16</sup> “*ba*(吧)” is one of the sentence final particles, which expresses the speaker's hesitation to assert the proposition of the sentence with certainty.

In a context where it serves to announce a piece of information to the hearer, scholars claim that it must have the "*le*<sub>2</sub>" to signal that the volunteered information is all that the speaker has to contribute at the moment (Li and Thompson. 1982:38).

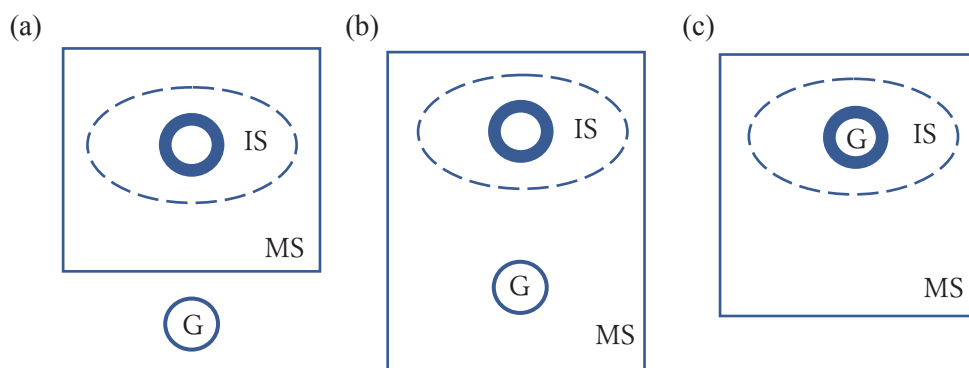
"*le*<sub>2</sub>" connects the proposition in a sentence to the scene as a reference point, not only to the time but also to the related situation of the scene. Due to this function, "*le*<sub>2</sub>" is possible to be defined as one of the "grounding elements" in cognitive semantics by Langacker. The following paragraph is Langacker's definition of "grounding":<sup>17</sup>

(31) I use the term "ground" for the speech event, its participants, and its immediate circumstances (such as the time and place of speaking). [...] The class of "deictic" expressions can now be defined as those which necessarily do invoke the ground and thus include it in their scope. We can distinguish two broad classes of deictics. One class comprises expressions like *yesterday*, *tomorrow*, and *last year*, where the ground remains offstage as an implicit, unprofiled reference point, as sketched in Figure 2(b). Forming the other class are expressions such as *I*, *you*, *here*, and *now*, in which some facet of the ground is put onstage and profiled, as depicted in Figure 2(c). Naturally, as one goes from (a) to (c) the construal of G becomes progressively more objective.

(Langacker. 1991:318-319)

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<sup>17</sup> "Figure 2" in (31) refers to Figure 3 in this paper.



(G: ground, IS: immediate scope (onstage region), MS: maximal scope)

Figure 3 "Grounding" by Langacker. (1991:319)

Langacker (2008) pointed out the relationship between specification and grounding as follows:

(32) a. The usual starting point for a nominal or clausal expression is thus a lexical noun or verb, which specifies what type of thing or process is being referred to. But for the most part our interest lies with specific individuals rather than general categories----we want to talk about particular people, particular events, and so on. [...] Chief among these are grounding elements, which establish an epistemic relationship between the ground and the profiled thing or process instance.

b. Semantically, tense and the modals have related epistemic values, specifically invoke the ground, and jointly fulfill the grounding function.  
(Langacker. 2008:265)

It is reasonably apparent that what Li and Thompson. (1982) tried to explain the function of "*le*" by using the term "CRS" is very similar to what Langacker tried to explain the semantic systems of languages by the term "grounding" and the opposition of "subjective" versus "objective".

The most subjective way to construe the scene depicted by Figure 3(a) corresponds to the self-portrait of Mach illustrated in Figure 2 in 3.2. The most objective way to construe the Figure 3(c) is comparing it to the self-portrait of Gogh

illustrated in Figure 1 in 3.2. The profiled entity of G in Figure 3(c) is precisely a Gogh as portrayed and gazed at by Gogh himself in Figure 1.

The problem is that if "*le*<sub>2</sub>" is defined to be a grounding element, "*le*<sub>2</sub>" sentences would be objective by Langacker's definition. However, in general, all sentence-final particles in Chinese are characterized as highly subjective for they function as means to express the speaker's emotions. For this reason, it is possible to think that Langacker's definition is rather formal and technical compared with conventional descriptive grammar, and thus thoughts about subjectivity can be different in a significant way.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.3 "*le*<sub>2</sub>" in "V<sub>p</sub>+*si*(死)" sentences

Now, it is possible to return to the unanswered question raised in section 2.1: how can "*le*" be treated in (5) (quoted below again)?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(4) a. <sup>OK</sup> <i>Wu Song da-si le<sub>1</sub> laohu.</i><br/>           武松 打-死 了<sub>1</sub> 老虎。<br/> <i>W-S(p.n.)</i> hit-death LE<sub>1</sub> tiger<br/> <i>Wu Song</i> hit the tiger to death.</p>             | <p>b. <sup>OK</sup> <i>Wu Song da-si laohu le<sub>2</sub>.</i><br/>           武松 打-死 老虎 了<sub>2</sub>。<br/> <i>W-S(p.n.)</i> hit-death tiger LE<sub>2</sub><br/> <i>Wu Song</i> hit the tiger to death.</p>              |
| <p>(5) a. <sup>?</sup> <i>Zhang San hen-si le<sub>1</sub> Li Si.</i><br/>           张三 恨-死 了<sub>1</sub> 李四。<br/> <i>Z-S(p.n.)</i> hate-die LE<sub>1</sub> L-S(p.n.)<br/> <i>Zhang San</i> hates <i>Li Si</i> to death.</p> | <p>b. <sup>OK</sup> <i>Zhang San hen-si Li Si le<sub>2</sub>.</i><br/>           张三 恨-死 李四 了<sub>2</sub>。<br/> <i>Z-S(p.n.)</i> hate-die L-S(p.n.) LE<sub>2</sub><br/> <i>Zhang San</i> hates <i>Li Si</i> to death.</p> |
| <p>(6) a. <sup>??</sup> <i>Wo hen-si le<sub>1</sub> Li Si.</i><br/>           我 恨-死 了<sub>1</sub> 李四。<br/>           1p.sg hate-death LE<sub>1</sub> <i>Li Si</i><br/>           I hate <i>Li Si</i> to death.</p>          | <p>b. <sup>OK</sup> <i>Wo hen-si Li Si le<sub>2</sub>.</i><br/>           我 恨-死 李四 了<sub>2</sub>。<br/>           1p.sg hate-death <i>Li Si</i> LE<sub>2</sub><br/>           I hate <i>Li Si</i> to death.</p>           |
| <p>(7) a. <sup>*</sup> <i>Wo hen-si le<sub>1</sub> ni.</i><br/>           我 恨-死 了<sub>1</sub> 你。<br/>           1p.sg hate-death LE<sub>1</sub> 2p.sg<br/>           I hate you to death.</p>                               | <p>b. <sup>OK</sup> <i>Wo hen-si ni le<sub>2</sub>.</i><br/>           我 恨-死 你 了<sub>2</sub>。<br/>           1p.sg hate-death 2p.sg LE<sub>2</sub><br/>           I hate you to death.</p>                               |

<sup>18</sup> Refer to Footnote seven. A detailed related discussion can be found in Nakamura and Uehara (2016).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (8) a. * <i>Ni hen-si le</i> <sub>1</sub> <i>wo</i> . | b. ? <i>Ni hen-si wo le</i> <sub>2</sub> . |
| 你 恨-死 了 <sub>1</sub> 我。                               | 你 恨-死 我 了 <sub>2</sub> 。                   |
| 2p.sg hate-death LE <sub>1</sub> 1p.sg                | 2p.sg hate-death 1p.sg LE <sub>2</sub>     |
| You hate me to death.                                 | I/You hate you/me to death.                |

All of the sentences in (4a)-(8a) are not being grounded by "*le*<sub>2</sub>", and when the first and the second-person pronouns are used in emotional expressions the "grounding" seems to be obligatory since all of the sentences in (4b)-(8b) are grounded by "*le*<sub>2</sub>". Suppose that the speaker's strong emotional experiences must be connected to the ground, so that (5) is just in the intermediate position between (4) and (6) to (8). (5) is a strong emotional experience as (6) to (8), and so by this point, this example is different from (4): this emotion does not belong to the speaker himself/herself at this point since this example is also different from (6) to (8). For this reason, the behavior of "*le*<sub>2</sub>" lands between (4) and (6) to (8).

The analysis above bears out the observations of the previous sections bilaterally.

## 5. Conclusion

The main points of this paper are the followings:

Firstly, a “*V<sub>p</sub>+si*(死)” sentence has two kinds of conceptual structures and the two types of meanings regarding the word-order relationships: one has only a single conceptual structure, and the other has both two structures. If the sentence has the first-person pronoun as its argument, it can especially be interpreted as an experiencer of the emotion wherever it occurs in the sentence positions. The main reason is that the first-person pronoun is the lowest informative element among the participants of a dialogue so that it can occur in the subject position, and yet it is the most critical referent in the conceptualization of the speaker himself/herself so that it can occur in the object position.

Secondly, the first-person pronoun occurs as an argument of “*V<sub>p</sub>+si*(死)”, which violates the empathy hierarchy as defined in Kuno (1976). It does not necessarily represent the speaker's standpoint, but is more like the "objectified self" corresponding to Langacker's Figure 3(c) (Figure 2(c) in the source text). Therefore, it elicits as objective construal but exhibits an exclamatory function at the same time.

Thirdly, “*V<sub>p</sub>+si*(死)” almost always co-occurs with “*le*<sub>2</sub>” even though the

resultative verbal compounds usually co-occur with aspectual “*le*<sub>1</sub>”. “*le*<sub>2</sub>” has the function that relates the proposition of the sentence with the scene in which the conversation is taking place. “*V<sub>p</sub>+si(死)*” has both 'portrait' and 'exclamation' functions in Wang (2013), and so when the first or second-person occurs as an argument, its exclamatory function is activated, which makes it quite congruent with “*le*<sub>2</sub>”.

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