

The Subjectivity of the Verb "至于"

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Abstract. In modern Chinese, the verb "至于" (zhi yú) exhibits prominent subjective language characteristics. Apart from indicating degree, the verb differs semantically from other words in the semantic field of "degree" by emphasizing unexpected outcomes from a subjective point of view. The subjectivity of the speaker's perspective, emotions and expressions of "I think" and attitudes of disapproval towards the other's behavior are conveyed. The subjectivity of the selection of sentence structure, such as hypothetical sentences, interrogative sentences and negative sentences is also observed. Furthermore, the subjectivity of the combination with modal particles is shown, where affirmative forms are often paired with the particle "吗" (ma), while negative forms are paired with the particle "吧" (ba). The subjective attitudes of behavior states are also expressed, with behavior state words exhibiting attitudes of "要" or "不要" from a subjective point of view.

1 Introduction

In ancient Chinese, "至"(arrive) is commonly used as a moving-displacement verb, which is generally used as an intransitive verb and acts as the syntactic component of predicate. When the following is to represent the place of action, it cannot directly take the place noun as the object, and is often followed by the phrase "preposition + place" as the complement. The use of a prepositional phrase followed by a predicate verb as a complement still survives in modern Chinese. "于"(at) is a commonly used preposition in ancient Chinese, which can not only take people and objects, but also take time words and place words as the object of prepositions. Therefore, "至" and "于" will co-exist and co-use the language phenomenon, when it reaches a certain frequency, semantic changes will occur, syntactic structure will be integrated across layers, forming the two-syllable word "至于". *The Modern Chinese Dictionary* (The fifth edition), "至于": ① verb, means to reach a certain degree. ② A preposition means to mention something else. In modern Chinese, "至于" is a function word with a high frequency of use. Its grammatical meaning is mainly "to mention another matter, which is the topic to be discussed later". It has the function of topic marking and can change the topic. There are different views on it in the academic circle, including preposition, conjunctive and interconnective. We tend to view the function word as a preposition. the preposition "至于" (as for) is the result of grammaticalization, and the verb "至于" (reach) is the result of lexicalization. as a preposition, "至于" (as for) is used more frequently than a verb, and the study of grammaticalization has attracted much attention.

There are few studies on the verb "至于", which is characterized by its subjectivity.

2 The Subjectivity of the Verb "至于"

Subjectivity refers to "the speaker expresses his position, attitude and feelings towards a paragraph while saying it, so as to leave his own mark in the discourse". The subjectivity of the verb "至于" is mainly manifested as the subjectivity of meaning, the syntactic level of sentence when combined, and the pragmatic level of speech situation. The specific analysis is as follows:

2.1 Subjective Emphasis on Unexpected Outcomes.

According to the definition in the dictionary, the verb "至于" indicates the degree of something. In Chinese, there are many adverbs to indicate degree, which differ in relative and absolute degrees and the level of the degree. The verb "至于" tends to indicate the degree of the absolute excess level, which carries a strong emphasis. Therefore, some scholars classify the verb "至于" as an "adverb", but the semantic difference between the verb "至于" and other words in the semantic aggregation of "degree" in addition to the expression of degree lies in the subjective semantic emphasis of the result "unexpected". Its meaning shows a real, concrete lexical meaning, and it is often used as a predicate in the sentence, and can take an object, which is a typical grammatical feature of verbs. For example:

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(1) 这件事只不过是小事，你至于发那么大的脾气吗？(This is just a small matter. Do you need to be so angry?)

(2) 就算我们迟到了几分钟，你至于这么生气吗？(Even if we are a few minutes late, do you need to be so angry?)

(3) 要不是我之前太相信他了，何至于现在这么被动？(If I hadn't trusted him so much before, why am I so passive now?)

In example (1), "You lost your temper" because of a small incident. In example (2), We were a few minutes late and "you're so(very) angry "; In example (3) , I trusted him so much that "I am now passive," implying that I did not expect (or believe) that he would betray my trust, but he did, resulting in "my current passive situation." Semantics all show unexpected, for the same thing, the speaker and the other party (or a third party) attitude conflict, and obviously express the subjective difficult to understand or accept, "unexpected" obviously shows the meaning of "beyond my (the speaker) expectations". In front of often "just", "even", "if not" and other words corresponding, often appear behind "so", "in this way", "then" and other modifying ingredients. We find that the two clauses in these three cases combine the "unexpected" semantics with the excessive degree meaning in the absolute degree of subjective expression through contrast comparison, showing a strong tendency of subjective thoughts and emotional focus.

2.2 The subjectivity of the speaker's perspective and emotion.

Perspective is the speaker's observation angle to the objective situation, or the starting point for the objective situation to be narrated. The meaning of emotion is broad, including feelings, emotions, intentions, attitudes and so on. In Chinese, the speaker's perspective of sentence expression can be reflected through semantic, grammatical and pragmatic levels. Grammatically, when the subject of a sentence is the first person pronoun "I" or "we", the subject is the speaker's perspective. When the sentence is not a first-person subject perspective, the speaker perspective is implicit in the semantic and pragmatic meaning of the sentence, which implies subjective emotions and meanings such as "I think", "I feel". By comparing the following use cases, it is not difficult to find the subjective characteristics of the verb "至于".

(4) 这件小事，你生气了。(You got angry about this small matter.)

(5) 这件小事，你不要生气了。(You shouldn't get angry about this small matter.)

(6) 这件小事，你至于生气吗？(Are you really going to get angry about this small matter?)

In these three examples, "this small matter" is the topic subject, and "you" is the subject of the action "getting angry". The difference is that example (4) objectively describes your attitude towards "this small

matter" (getting angry). The subjectivity of examples (5) and (6) is hidden in the sentence. Although it also represents your attitude towards "this small matter", it involves the speaker's perspective and implies the meaning of "I think". The speaker evaluates your behavior attitude from his or her own point of view, subjectively thinking that this matter is "small", and advises "you" not to get angry, which is not worth it. It can be seen that the subjectivity of example (5) is higher than that of example (4). In example (6), the use of the verb "至于" not only carries the subjective viewpoint of advising "you" not to get angry and not worthy, but also cannot understand and accept "your" behavior attitude, with an obvious subjective attitude of dissatisfaction or even condemnation, with a high degree of subjectivity.

2.3 Subjectivity in sentence structure choice.

"Non-real sentences or hypothetical sentences, including conditional sentences, hypothetical sentences, wishes, imperatives, etc., express the speaker's attitude towards the propositional content of the sentence and are subjective." The sentence structure chosen with the verb "至于" often takes the form of a hypothetical complex sentence, with single sentence types being question sentences and negative sentences, expressing the speaker's strong emotional bias. Sentences in modern Chinese are generally divided into single sentences and complex sentences structurally, and interrogatives belong to the sentence category divided from the sentence mood standard. Interrogative sentences mainly include interrogative sentences, rhetorical questions and rhetorical questions. "至于" used in the question, its semantic and rhetorical question is the same, express no doubt and ask. In the negative sentence, "不至于" (not reach) can be expressed in the positive form of "至于" with the same semantics, but from the frequency, "不至于" is used more frequently in the declarative sentence. In modern Chinese, the hypothetical complex sentence puts forward the hypothesis, and the normal sentence represents the result after the realization of the hypothesis. For example:

(7) 如果你之前跟我打个招呼，我现在至于手忙脚乱吗？(假设复句) (If you had said hello to me earlier, would I be so busy now?) (Hypothetical complex sentence)

(8) 你至于这么激动吗？(疑问句) (Are you really that excited?) (Question sentence)

(9) 我还不至于为这事闹到他单位去。(否定句) (I won't go to his workplace just for this matter.) (Negative sentence)

Hypothetical relations are generally divided into two types: agreement and opposition. Example (7) is an agreement relation, expressing some complaints emotionally. Example (2) is an opposing hypothetical relation, with the partial sentence and the main sentence expressing opposite meanings, with the partial sentence admitting the hypothesis as a fact (even if we are a few minutes late), while the main sentence expresses the

conclusion that is not changed by the hypothesis (shouldn't be so angry). Emotionally, in addition to complaints, the speaker is more excited and cannot understand or accept the other person's behavior. The use of the verb in the hypothetical relation shows stronger subjectivity in the opposite relation, more prominently demonstrating the "unexpectedness" of the semantics of "至于." In a question sentence, "至于" often expresses an opposite meaning. Example (8) expresses the subjective opinion that "you shouldn't be so excited." In example (9), the verb "至于" expresses a direct negative attitude in a negative sentence.

The characteristics of sentence structure presented by the use of the verb "至于" in the language context mainly depend on two factors: on the one hand, it corresponds to the semantic emphasis of "unexpected" and on the other hand, the object after the verb "至于" is often negative or unpleasant, such as "angry" or "temper" which is often derogatory or not good. The sentence structures of the opposing hypothetical complex sentence, the negative question sentence, and the negative sentence all express a subjective attitude of not accepting bad things.

2.4 Subjectivity of modal particles collocation.

Modern Mandarin Chinese has six basic modal words: "的" (de), "了" (le), "呢"(ne),"吧"(ba), "吗"(ma) and "啊"(a). Among them, "Ma" represents interrogative semantics and interrogative tone, while "ba" represents doubt and certainty, with guessing or consulting tone, indicating interrogative tone and imperative tone. The affirmative form of the verb "至于" is often paired with the modal particle "吗", while the negative form is paired with the modal particle "吧". It expresses the narrator's strong tone and opposing attitude that he does not understand, is not satisfied with, and does not like the other person's behavior and attitude. For example:

(10)你至于为这件事生气吗? (Are you really angry about this matter?)

* 你至于为这件事生气吧? (*Are you really angry about this matter, right?)

你应该去吗? (Should you go?)

你应该去吧? (Should you go, okay?)

(11)你不至于为这件事生气吧? (You're not really angry about this, are you?)

* 你不至于为这件事生气吗? (*You're not really angry about this, right?)

你不应该去吗? (You shouldn't go, should you?)

你不应该去吧? (You shouldn't go, okay?)

The modal particle "吗" indicates a question, while "吧" indicates a guessing tone. The tone with "吗" is stronger than "吧". In a questioning sentence with the affirmative form of the verb "至于", the subjective emotional attitude is clear because the components following "至于" are things, emotions, or attitudes that the speaker subjectively considers to be bad. Therefore,

it can only be paired with "吗" in the form of a rhetorical question to express a negative meaning. The subjective expression is "I don't think you should be angry about this." It cannot be paired with the modal particle "吧" which expresses an uncertain tone. In a negative sentence, the negative form of the verb "至于" has already expressed the speaker's negative attitude and also shows an uncertain emotional tendency. Therefore, it can only be paired with "吧" and cannot be paired with the strong modal particle "吗". The collocation of modal particles reflects the strong emotional characteristics of the verb "至于", and the negative form weakens its emotional tone.

2.5 The subjectivity of behavioral states.

Words in sentences that describe behavioral states can be objective descriptions or subjective desires. For example, in the sentences “他走了(he left)”、“他能 (表能力) 走了(he is able to leave)”、“他要走了(he wants to leave)”、“我要他走了(I want him to leave)” the word "leave" in the first sentence is an objective description of his behavior, in the second sentence "leave" is a description of his objective ability, in the third sentence "leave" is his subjective desire with an active intention, and in the fourth sentence "leave" is his passive behavior with my subjective desire added. It can be seen that the first two sentences have objective behavioral actions, while the latter two have subjective ones. In the examples using "至于," the meaning can be understood similar to the semantics of the latter two sentences in the "leave" examples: Example (1) This is just a small matter, don't get so angry; Example (2) Even if we are a few minutes late, you don't need to be so angry; Example (3) If I didn't trust him so much before, I wouldn't be so passive now; Example (6) This is a small matter, don't be angry; Example (7) If you had told me beforehand, I wouldn't be so flustered now; Example (8) Don't be so agitated; Example (9) I won't make a scene at his workplace because of this matter; Example (10) and (11) Don't get angry about this matter. In sentences (1), (2), (6), (8), (10), (11), "I don't want you to X (behavioral state)" is the same as the sentence "I don't want him to leave." In sentences (3), (7), and (9), "I won't X (behavioral state)" does not mean "I cannot X" expressing ability, but expresses the subjective desire of "I don't want to X." For example, (3) "I won't be so passive now" means "I don't want to be so passive now," (7) "I won't be flustered now" means "I don't want to be flustered now," and (9) "I won't make a scene at his workplace because of this matter" means "I don't want to make a scene at his workplace because of this matter." In the verb "至于" sentences, the words after "至于" express subjective desires, not objective descriptions. Therefore, the "至于" sentences in the text cannot be understood as having the same semantics as the first two sentences in the "leave" examples, such as: Example (1) "You cannot be so angry" or "You cannot get so angry"; Example (2) "You cannot be so angry" or "You cannot

get so angry"; Example (3) "You cannot be so passive now" or "You cannot be so passive now"; Example (6) "Don't get angry" or "You cannot be angry"; Example (7) "I cannot be so flustered now" or "I cannot be flustered now"; Example (8) "Don't get agitated" or "You cannot be so agitated"; Example (9) "I cannot make a scene at his workplace because of this matter" or "I cannot make a scene at his workplace because of this matter"; Example (10) (11): You should not be angry about this matter (or you cannot be angry about this matter). Here, 'can' refers to objective ability. The interpretation of "至于" as such is inconsistent with the original meaning. 'Can' is an objective verb, indicating a statement of objective ability; 'want' is a subjective verb, indicating emphasis on subjective intention. The action state words in the verb "至于" sentence all show subjective attitudes of 'want' or 'do not want'.

3 Conclusion

The preposition "至于", which has a topic marking function, is frequently used in modern Chinese and is the main grammatical expression of "至于". The use frequency of the verb "至于" is relatively low and is easily overlooked. The verb "至于" is the predicate verb of a sentence or a clause, which is usually followed by a predicate element or a clause as an object. The object represents semantically the degree or stage to which a certain situation or situation has developed. The typical syntactic context in which it is used is that the "至于" clause objectively describes how far a situation has come, without the need for subsequent clauses to comment on it. In modern Chinese pragmatic materials, the verb "至于" is distinctly subjective in semantics, grammar and pragmatics: The choices of sentence patterns are mainly hypothetical sentences, interrogative sentences and negative sentences with strong subjectivity. The subjective use of modal words at the end of the sentence, the positive sentence uses modal word "吗" (ma), the negative sentence uses modal word "吧" (ba); Behavioral states show subjective attitudes of "wanting" or "not wanting". These subjective features of the verb "至于" deserve our attention. This will also prompt us to continue to explore the relationship between the preposition "至于" and the verb "至于". The formation process of verbs and prepositions of the two-syllable word "至于" is very complicated. Most of the two-syllable words in Chinese first go through lexicalization to form content words, and then the latter goes through grammaticization to form function words. However, the verbalization and preposition of "至于" in Chinese evolve at different levels, showing the characteristics of parallel and forward trajectory, and the prepositional time is obviously earlier than the verbalization time. It is a mode of "multilexicalization". We need to continue to further explore the process and interaction between grammaticalization and lexicalization of "至于".

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