



Semantic Features of the Verb 来 [LÁI]

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v8i4.2564>

Abstract

Describing the semantics of a verb is a much more difficult task. Because the content of the verb depends in many ways on its distribution. With this in mind, verbs are classified according to the direction of their meaning and the presence or absence of subject-objects with which they interact, and their number, if any. Chinese language researchers classify action verbs as part of a group of action verbs. These verbs can appear in a sentence as an independent verb predicate or as an additional part of speech as a modifier or directional morpheme. These simple verbs represent 来 [lái] to come and 去 [qù] to leave directions of action. They form compound verbs with the same meaning. The verb 来 to come is used when the action is directed to the speaker (or object), and the verb 去 to leave is used if the action is directed away from the speaker (or object). Orientation, in turn, can be set by the object or subject: when the orientation is indicated in the sentence - the object, if not specified - by the subject. Verb 来 [lái] is included in the group of basic simple action verbs in Chinese. The peculiarity of the semantics of the verb 来 [lái] to come is that it determines not only the orientation or direction of the action but also the point of the message, who (or what) describes the situation. The article examines the semantic features of the verbs of 来 [lái] directions of action. Based on the materials in Liu Shushiang's book “现代汉语八百词. 吕叔湘” (800 words in modern Chinese), the models of 来 [lái] verbs as independent and auxiliary verbs are analyzed.

Keywords: *Action-Direction Verb; Predicate; Additional Grammatical Meaning; Denotational Meaning; Conational Meaning; Directional Meaning; Auxiliary Verb; Modifier*

Introduction

The lexical-semantic group of action verbs is available in all languages. In Chinese, a verb is multifaceted in terms of meaning and syntactic function: it can perform both a predictive function and a grammatical meaning at the same time. In some cases, it can be a modifier, an auxiliary verb. In doing so, they point to the direction of the leading verb. The article examines the independent and auxiliary verb features of 来 [lái] action verbs.

The Main Findings and Results

Materials from Liu Shushiang's book “现代汉语八百词. 吕叔湘” (800 words in modern Chinese) [1, p.345-347] were used as a source for the study. In some places, the dictionary “Large Sino-Russian Dictionary” [2, p. 246] was used.

In particular, in the book “Initial course of the Chinese language” co-authored by T.P. Zadoenko and Huan Shuin, it is stated that in Chinese, along with the content of the action, there are verbs that express its direction [2, p. 246].

These are divided into two groups. The first group includes 7 verbs denoting movement in space: 进 – (*to enter*), 出 – (*to go out*), 下 – (*to go down*), 上 – (*to go up*), 回 – (*to come back*), 过 – (*to cross*), 起 – (*to ascend*). In the second group, 2 verbs 来 – (*to come*) and 去 – (*to leave*) denoting action directed to the speaker are recorded [2, p. 246].

来 [lái] (*to come*) and 去 [qù] (*to leave*) are simple verbs that indicate the direction of movement. They form compound verbs with the same meaning [3, p. 97-105]. If the action is directed at the speaker (or object), the verb 来 (*to come*) is used, and if the action is directed away from the speaker (or object), the verb 去 (*to leave*) is used. For example:

学生们来了 [Xué sheng men lái le] – *Students came*. (move towards the speaker - here).

学生们去了 [Xué shēng men qù le] – *Students left*. (The movement is in the opposite direction from where the speaker is standing - there).

Orientation can be determined either by subject or object: if orientation is clearly shown in a clause, it is chosen by the object; otherwise, the orientation is determined by the subject.

The meanings of the verbs 来 [lái] (*to come*) as independent verbs are explored below.

Application of 来 [lái] in the Function of the Independent Verb

1. In the function of 来 [lái] independent verbs, it means an action directed to the place where the speaker is standing or from where the speaker is standing; it can be used with auxiliary words such as 了 le and 过 guò. The following is an analysis of some of the models involving 来 [lái].

A) Noun (place, time) + 来 [lái] + noun (subject of action) model.

In this model, the number is usually placed before the second noun. 来 [lái] verbs in such sentences are given by verb *to come*. For example:

远处来了一条小船 [Yuǎn chù lái le yī tiáo xiǎochuán] - *A small boat was coming (sailing) from afar*.

昨天来过三个人 [Zuótiān lái guò sān gè rén] – *Three man came yesterday*.

In the former example, the proper noun of place and, in the latter, the proper noun of time is used.

B) Noun (subject of action) +来 [lái] + noun (object of action) model.

The difference between this model and model (A) is that before 来 [lái] comes the subject of motion and after 来 [lái] the object of motion, not the place or adverbial noun.

In this model, too, a number can be used before the second noun. The 来 [lái] verbs in such sentences are given in English by the verbs *to come* and *to send*. For example:

他 来 过 两 封 信 [Tā lái guò liǎng fēng xìn] – *He sent two letters.*

Actually, there is 寄 [jì] verb for the act of sending a *letter* in Chinese.

In the 来 [lái] verbs in the example, along with the meaning *to send*, the meaning of direction to the speaker is also preserved. The meaning of the 寄 [jì] verbs is abstract.

有的 班 级 班 长 自 己 来 了, 有 的 只 ~ 了 个 代 表 (= 派 来 了 一 个 代) [Yǒu de bānjí bānzhǎng zìjǐ lái le, yǒu de zhǐ ~ le gè dàibiǎo (= pài lái le yīgè dài biǎo)] - *Some group leaders came in personally, while others sent representatives on their own behalf (= to send someone as a representative).*

In the example, the meaning of *to send some else on behalf* is given by the verb 来 [lái], because the direction, that is, the arrival of a representative in a certain place.

C) Noun (subject of action) +来 [lái] + noun (place) model.

In this model, unlike the models (A), (B), the place name comes after the 来 [lái] verbs (来 北 京, 来 这 儿). It uses the subject of the action and the noun before the 来 [lái] verbs (老 郑 明 天 来). 来 [lái] verbs are given by the verb *to come*. For example:

老 郑 明 天 来 北 京 [Lǎo zhèng míngtiān lái Běijīng] – *Laojeng will come to Peking tomorrow.*

我 来 这 儿 看 看 [Wǒ lái zhèr kàn kàn] - *I came here to see.*

D) 来 [lái] + noun, model.

1. This model is usually used in the form of commands or requests, expressed by the verb *to bring*:

来 人, 快 来 杯 水 [Lái rén, kuài lái bēi shuǐ]. - *The man came, bring water as soon as possible.*

来 一 碗 肉 丝 面 [Lái yī wǎn ròu sī miàn]. - *Bring a bowl of meat noodles.*

In the examples, the meaning of the action of the 来 [lái] verb in relation to the speaker is observed. In the first example, the verb 来 [lái] is used twice in two different senses: 来 人 man came, 来 杯 水 bring water.

2. The occurrence of the verb 11 problem, event, etc., the assignment of any task is expressed by the verbs *to assign, to come, to load*:

任 务 来 了, 要 努 力 完 成 [Rèn wù lái le, yào nǔ lì wán chéng]. - *The task has been assigned (given), it must be completed successfully.*

你们的支援来得很及时 [Nǐmen de zhīyuán lái dé hěn jíshí]. - *Your help came just in time.*

In the first example, *the task is assigned (given)*, and in the second example, *the help came* verbs also have a directional meaning specific to the 来 [lái] verbs.

3. The verb 来 [lái] comes in place of certain verbs and means to perform the action they signify; it can be used in conjunction with auxiliary words such as 了 le and 过 guò.

Translated into English based on the content of the spoken text. For example:

你拿那个, 这个我自己来 (=自己拿) [Nǐ ná nàgè, zhègè wǒ zìjǐ lái (=zìjǐ ná)] - *You take that, I'll take this.*

The second part of the Chinese sentence does not use the verb 拿 [ná] *to take*, but 来 [lái] serves as 拿 [ná] *to take* in this sentence.

唱得太好了, 再来一个 (=再唱一个) [Chàng dé tài hǎole, zài lái yīgè (=zài chàng yīgè)]. - *You sang so well, sing one more.*

老头儿这话来得痛快 (=说得痛快) [Lǎotóu er zhè huà lái dé tòngkuài (=shuō dé tòngkuài)]. - *The old man said it happily.*

In the above sentences, 来 [lái] is used instead of the verbs in parentheses to express their meaning.

The Use of 来 [Lái] As an Auxiliary Verb

A) Verb + 来 [lái] + noun, model.

The noun in this model usually refers to the object or subject and time of action. It comes after 来 [lái] prepositional verbs in a sentence and adds additional meaning to it: the action is directed to where the speaker is standing. It is translated into the English language based on the meaning of the leading verb used in the sentence. For example:

一架飞机从远处飞来 [Yī jià fēijī cóng yuǎn chù fēi lái]. - *A plane flew in the distance.*

In the example, the main action is the verb *to fly*, and the verb *to come* adds direction. 来 [lái] is a direct part of the verb 飞 [fēi], because 飞 [fēi] means *to fly*, and 来 [lái] indicates its direction to the subject.

Besides, the verb 来 [lái] is related to the 从 [cóng] auxiliaries (meaning to stand at a certain distance).

This is evident in the 从...来 - *to come from* the structure. Thus, 来 [lái] verbs are morphologically a component of a word and syntactically a component of a grammatical structure.

他给我送来一部希腊神话 [Tā gěi wǒ sòng lái yī bù "xīlà shénhuà"] - *He gave me the film "Greek mythology".*

In the example, 送 [sòng] *to donate to present* of the 送来 [sòng lái] verbs are the prepositional verbs, and the verb indicates that the gift has reached the speaker.

我借了几本小说来 [Wǒ jiè le jǐ běn xiǎoshuō lái]. - *I took some novels to **read (for rent)**.*

The verb 借 [jiè] actually means *to rent, to borrow*. The English language does not say that *I borrowed or rented a book*, so it is appropriate to translate this verb as *I took to read*.

那些资料今天拿得来拿不来? [Nàxiē zīliào jīntiān ná de lái ná bù lái?] - *Should I **bring those materials today or not?***

In Chinese, between 得 [de] compound verbs, it usually means that there is an opportunity to perform an action, and 不 [bù] means that there is no opportunity. These words add additional modal meaning to the verb.

四面八方都传来了喜讯 [Sì miàn bā fāng dōu chuán lái le xǐxùn] - *The gospel is being **preached from all sides**.*

The meaning of the verb 传 [chuán] is *to inform, to spread*, which indicates that the gospel is spreading everywhere.

前面走来一群学生 [Qiánmiàn zǒu lái yī qún xuéshēng] - *A group of students is **walking ahead**.*

The 走来 [zǒu lái] verbs in the example have 走 [zǒu] *to walk* and 来 [lái] *to come* components.

Apparently, in Chinese, it expresses the meaning of 来 [lái] directions and adds additional meaning to the leading verb. In this case, 来 [lái] verbs are translated into English directly from the meaning of the leading verb.

B) Verb + 得 [de] (不 [bù]) + 来 [lái], model.

This pattern of verb combinations indicates whether or not an action can be performed. Used with fewer verbs like 谈 [tán], 合 [hé], 处 [chù]. For example:

他们俩很谈得来 [Tāmen liǎ hěn tán dé lái]. - *They both **get on well** (their words always are in harmony).*

The 谈得来 verb in the example means *can talk*, that is, that the action can be performed, that two people can have a conversation, that they can come to an agreement.

这个歌我唱不来 [Zhègē gē wǒ chàng bù lái]. - *I **can't sing** this song.*

这道题我做得到 [Zhè dào tí wǒ zuò dé lái]. - *I **can handle** this problem.*

In the examples, 不 [bù] actions between the prepositional verb and 来 [lái] verbs indicate that it is not possible to perform (唱不来), and 得 [de] indicates that there is a possibility (做得到). In these examples, the meanings of 来 [lái] verb *to come* are not preserved.

C) Verb 1 and verb 2, model.

The verbs in this model are the same verb, coming in the form of a compound (phrase) and signifying the repetition of an action, the continuation of an organ. In this case, the verb combinations are translated into English based on the spoken text:

孩子们在操场上跑来跑去 [Háizimen zài cāochǎng shàng pǎo lái pǎo qù] - *The kids were **running back and forth** on the sports field (跑来跑去 to run, to come running).*

想来想去, 也想不出个好办法来 [Xiǎng lái xiǎng qù, yě xiǎng bù chū gè hǎo bànfǎ lái] - *I can't **think** of a better solution. (想来想去 - think about (something carefully, especially before making a decision or reaching a conclusion)*

D) The verb 来 [lái] comes after the 说 [shuō], 看 [kàn], 听 [tīng], 想 [xiǎng], 算 [suàn] verbs and adds additional meaning to these verbs. Verb combinations serve as introductory words, expressing different attitudes of the speaker to the content of individual parts of speech or the whole sentence:

You can replace 来 [lái] verb with 起来 [qǐlái] verb:

说来话长 [Shuō lái huà cháng] - *Too long to **tell** (It is impossible to say in two words)*

这个人看来年纪不小了 [Zhège rén kàn lái niánjì bù xiǎole] - *This person is not too young **in appearance**.*

他的话听来很有道理 [Tā de huà tīng lái hěn yǒu dào lǐ] - *It sounds like a lot.*

春节想来你们一定过得非常愉快 [Chūnjié xiǎng lái nǐmen yīdìngguò dé fēicháng yúkuài] - *I **think** you had a great Chunjie holiday.*

算来时间已经不短了, 快有十年了 [Suàn lái shíjiān yǐjīng bù duǎnle, kuài yǒu shí niánle] - *I **think**, it's been a long time coming, ten years.*

In the Chinese examples and their English translation, the meaning of the verb 来 [lái] is not preserved.

Conclusion

1. In Chinese, the lexeme 来 [lái] is ambiguous and is used in speech as an independent verb, auxiliary verb. The article analyzes the models of using the verb as an independent and auxiliary verb:

As an independent verb of 来 [lái]:

Noun (place, time) + 来 [lái] + noun (subject of action); noun (subject of action) + 来 [lái] + noun (object of action); noun (subject of action) + 来 [lái] + noun (place); 来 [lái] + noun; 来 [lái] + verb; verb (purpose) + 来 [lái]; 来 [lái] + 成 [chéng] / 得/不了 [dé/bù liǎo];

As an auxiliary verb:

Verb + 来 [lái] + noun; verb + 得 [de] (不 [bù]) + 来 [lái]; verb₁ and verb₂; verbs 说 [shuō], 看 [kàn], 听 [tīng], 想 [xiǎng], 算 [suàn] + 来 [lái].

2. The semantics of the verbs 来 [lái] in Chinese are characterized by the fact that the direction of action is directed to the endpoint of the action, that is, regardless of how the action is determined by the leading meaning of the verb (by the subject / by object) represents the directional motion.
3. 来 [lái] verb in Chinese differs from the verb to come in the following features:
 - a) expresses the following meanings: *the sudden appearance of someone or something; to start to do something; to do any work; to bring; to pass; to involve, to call, to invite;*
 - b) The meanings of the verb 来 [lái] *to send, to occur, to load* are not expressed in the English translation by the verb *to come* (他来过两封信; 任务来了).
 - c) comes in place of certain verbs (in the second part of a sentence) and means to perform the action they signify (你拿那个, 这个我自己来 (=自己拿)).

They are translated into English by verbs from other semantic layers, depending on the meaning expressed in the spoken text.
4. The semantic field of the verb 来 [lái] direction of action is much wider: it can be used as an independent and auxiliary verb, as well as in its own and figurative meanings, as well as in the functions of auxiliary words.

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