

Study on the Prosodic Patterns of “YÒU... YÒU...” in Modern Chinese

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Abstract—Prosodic syntax is a new subject based on prosody and established on the basis of Chinese, which has played a very positive role in the study of Chinese grammar. In modern Chinese, the use cases of “yòu... yòu...” combination in language communication are very extensive, and the elements that can be matched with words or phrases. The number of syllables shows certain regularity, that is, the number of syllables in the front component is not more than it in the latter components. And then the combination form is grammatically correct. It is thought that this law is played by prosody rules other than semantics and syntax. Specifically, the Nuclear Stress Rule of Chinese restricts their combination forms. This analysis provides a new perspective for the study of Chinese grammar, enriching the theory of Chinese research to a certain extent, and has certain theoretical value.

Keywords—prosody; foot; coordinating conjunction; theoretical significance

I. INTRODUCTION

Prosodic syntax is a new subject based on prosody and established on the basis of Chinese. The concept of “Syntax being constrained by prosody” has not been widely recognized in western linguistic theory. In modern Chinese, language phenomena that prosody restricts syntax can be found everywhere. For example, “yòu... yòu...”¹ (又...又...) is frequently used in modern Chinese, which can connect two words or two phrases in a sentence. And the two connected components are coordinating. In the investigation of these two words, it is found that, the adjectives or adjectives used between “yòu... yòu...” show certain regularity in syllables.² That is, after “not only”, the number of syllables of adjectives or verbs needs to be consistent, forming prosodic combination patterns of [yòu 1 yòu 1], [yòu 2 yòu 2], [yòu 1 yòu 2], [yòu 1 yòu more].³ At present, no scholar has discussed its usage law and internal mechanism from the perspective of prosody. 298 articles are randomly selected from BCC corpus. This paper investigates the example

¹ “Yòu” is understood as an adverb in all kinds of dictionaries in modern Chinese. But yòu...yòu...is often used together, not an independent word. Therefore, it will be called adverb combination temporarily.

² There are also examples of verbs or verb phrases between them. But here we do not discuss, only the situation of adjectives.

³ The words “1” and “2” here denote the number of syllables, which are the same below.

sentence and hopes to analyze its formation mechanism from the perspective of Chinese Nuclear Stress Rule.

II. INVESTIGATION OF THE USAGE OF “YÒU... YÒU...”

In modern Chinese, yòu...yòu... is often used to form sentences, in the view of native Chinese users; there is nothing special about their usage, because our language sense does not go wrong. And it is difficult for native speakers to say [yòu 2 yòu 1] combined sentences such as “*yòu piao liang yòu hao (*又漂亮又好 / not only beautiful but also kind)”. However, in the process of learning Chinese, it is difficult for non-native speakers to feel this “language sense”. And it is very easy to say sentences like “*Sichuan de cai yòu hao chi yòu la (*四川的菜又好吃又辣 / Sichuan food is not only delicious but also spicy)”.⁴ However, if the adjectives “spicy” and “delicious” in this sentence are changed, and the sentence is changed into “Sichuan de cai yòu la yòu hao chi (四川的菜又辣又好吃 / Sichuan food is not only spicy but also delicious)”, it seems to be more literate. If you do not change the position of the two adjectives, but replace the first adjective “delicious” with the “goluptious”, the sentence becomes “Sichuan de cai yòu xiang yòu la (四川的菜又香又辣 / Sichuan food is not goluptious but also spicy.)” It is also grammatically correct. Here it is asked: the same adjectives, the same syntactic structure (yòu+ adjective +yòu +adjective), why the legitimacy is opposite, when placed in different positions? Why do yòu change the first two-syllable adjective into a synonymous monosyllabic adjective, and the sentence is grammatically correct? Here, it is neither a matter of semantics nor a problem of syntax. It is believed that beyond the syntactic and semantic levels, the prosodic rules of Chinese control the matching patterns of this set of conjunctions with subsequent components.

The first 4000 corpus of newspapers in BCC corpus are investigated, from which a total of 298 pieces of usage yòu...yòu... are used. The corpus of the prosodic pattern is analyzed which shows certain regularity.

In the investigation, the 298 articles used yòu...yòu... with total five types of collocation patterns.⁵

⁴ The sentence comes from the composition of foreign student.

⁵ Because the author searches and extracts one by one manually, the missed example sentences are unavoidable, and the data may be slightly



The combination pattern [yòu 1 yòu 1] has the largest number of corpus, accounting for 60% of the total number of examples investigated, with 180 groups, such as:

戴上这顶草帽，她的脸显得又小又白。(1)

Dai shang zhe ding cao mao, ta de lian xian de yòu shou yòu xiao. (1)

Wearing this straw hat, her face looks small and white. (1)

下辈子咱也托生成城里人，也找个又白又嫩的城里女人做老婆。(2)

Xia bei zi zan ye tuo sheng cheng chen li ren, ye zhao ge yòu bai yòu nen de chen li nv ren zuo lao po. (2)

In the next life, we also should be born as city people and find a white and tender city woman to be our wife. (2)

月亮刚从田野后面升起，又圆又亮。(3)

Yue liang gang cong tian ye hou mian shang sheng, yòu yuan yòu liang. (3)

The moon has just risen from behind the field, round and bright. (3)

The number of combination patterns [yòu 2 yòu 2] in the corpus is only second to that pattern [yòu 1 yòu 1], accounting for 28% of all the sample sentences, with 83 groups, such as:

她得到了这么些钱，又惊奇，又兴奋。(4)

Ta dei dao le zhe me xie qian, yòu jing qi yòu xing fen. (4)

She got all this money, surprised and excited. (4)

他又嫉妒又委屈，脑袋发热了。(5)

Ta yòu ji du yòu wei qu, nao dai fa re le. (5)

He was jealous and aggrieved, and his head was hot. (5)

可是这种爱好却保持着，保持得又严峻又纯洁。(6)

Ke shi zhe zhong ai hao que bao chi zhe, bao chi de yòu yan jun yòu chun jie. (6)

But this kind of hobby is kept, and it's hard and pure. (6)

The combination pattern [yòu 2 yòu 2] accounts for 9% of the total number of examples, with 28 groups, such as:

她的手倒真是又小又嫩，可也称得上是又瘦又平凡。(7)

Ta de shou dao zhen shi yòu xiao yòu nen, ke ye chen de shang shi yòu shou yòu ping fan. (7)

Her hands are really small and tender, but they are also thin and ordinary. (7)

桌布上躺着那封又大又奇怪的信，里面含着生或死。(8)

Zhuo bu shang tang zhe na feng yòu da yòu qi guai de xin, li mian han zhe sheng huo si. (8)

On the tablecloth lay the big and strange letter containing life or death. (8)

小顺儿的妈长得不难看，中等身材，圆脸，两只又大又水灵的眼睛。(9)

Xiao shun er de ma zhang de bu nan kan, zhong deng shen cai, yuan lian, liang zhi yòu da yòu shui ling de yan jing. (9)

Xiao Shuner's mother is not unattractive with medium build, round face and two big and watery eyes. (9)

The combination pattern [yòu 1 yòu multisyllable] accounts for 2% of the total number of examples, and there are five groups as follows:

可以略知事件的全貌，但文章又短又不详尽。(10)

Ke yi lue zhi shi jian de quan mao, dan wen zhang yòu duan yòu bu xiang jin. (10)

The full picture of the event can be gleaned, but the article is short and not exhaustive. (10)

病人觉得卧室里又热又不方便。(11)

Bin ren jue de wo shi li yòu re yòu bu fang bian. (11)

The patient felt hot and uncomfortable in the bedroom. (11)

全班合影里她的脸又小又不自然。(12)

Quan ban he ying li ta de lian yòu xiao yòu bu zi ran. (12)

Her face is small and unnatural in the whole class photo. (12)

天空是不同层面的不同云朵，有些又厚又不透明。(13)

Tian kong shi bu tong ceng mian de bu tong yun duo, you xie yòu hou yòu bu tou ming. (13)

The sky is different clouds on different levels, some of which are thick and opaque. (13)

虽说镇又小又无特色可言，但毕竟是我的镇。(14)

Sui shuo zhen yòu xiao yòu wu te se ke yan, dan bi jin shi wo de zhen. (14)

Although the town is small and featureless, it is my town after all. (14)

In all of the containing yòu...yòu... examples investigated, [yòu 2 yòu 1] combined pattern was the least, and only 2 in 298 cases, accounting for only 1% of the total, for example:

* 咱家旁边有比这套又便宜又好的。(15)

Zan jia pang bian you bi zhe tao yòu pian yi yòu hao de. (15)

There is a cheaper and better house next to my family. (15)

* 她只是又年轻又傻，给你迷住了。(16)

Ta zhi shi yòu nian qing yòu sha, gei ni mi zhu le. (16)

biased, but the overall proportion will not be greatly affected. Therefore, the inspection results can reflect objective language facts.

She was just young and stupid, and attracted by you. (16)

Although it exists in the corpus, the two example sentences here do not conform to the rules of Chinese rhyme. If the adjectives in the two sentences are changed into "yòu hao yòu pian yi (又好又便宜 / better and cheaper)" and "yòu sha yòu nian qing (又傻又年轻 / stupid and young)" respectively, the two sentences will be even easier to say.

Therefore, the two examples here are exceptional, and their overall stock can also reflect this fact.

The above are 298 cases of investigation including yòu...yòu.... In order to reflect the linguistic facts more intuitively, the overall situation of conjunctions is listed as follows ("Table I"):

TABLE I. CASES OF INVESTIGATION INCLUDING YÒU...YÒU...

Composite Mode	Number	Proportion	Examples
[yòu 1 yòu 1]	180	60%	Ta de bi zi yòu bian yòu ta. (他的鼻子又扁又塌。) His nose is flat and collapsed.
[yòu 2 yòu 2]	83	28%	Ta gan dao yòu qi fen yòu huang tang. (他感到又气愤又荒唐。) He felt angry and absurd.
[yòu 1 yòu 2]	28	9%	Zhe xie sheng yin ting qi lai jiu yòu xiang yòu ci er. (这些声音听起来就响又刺耳。) These voices sound loud and harsh.
[yòu 1 yòu more]	5	2%	Bin ren jue de wo shi li yòu re yòu bu fang bian. (病人觉得卧室里又热又不方便。) The patient felt hot and uncomfortable in the bedroom.
[yòu 2 yòu 1]	2	1%	1. Ta zhi shi yòu nian qing yòu sha, gei ni mi zhu le. (她只是又年轻又傻，给你迷住了。) She was just young and stupid, and attracted by yòu. 2. Zan jia pang bian yòu bi zhe tao yòu pian you hao de. (咱家旁边有比这套又便宜又好的。) There is a cheaper and better house next to my family.

From the comparison of the data in the table above, it is also clear that:

First, [yòu 1 yòu 1] and [yòu 2 yòu 2] should be the typical usage of conjunctions. While [yòu 2 yòu 1] is the "illegal" pattern, which does not conform to the prosodic rules of Chinese.

Second, in all the "legal" patterns, the number of syllables in front is not less than the number of syllables in the latter. That is, the number of syllables before and after is the same, or the number of syllables in the front is less than it behind, such as "yòu da yòu yuan (又大又圆 / big and round)", "yòu qi fen yòu huang tang (又气愤又荒唐 / angry and absurd)", "yòu xiang yòu ci er (又响又刺耳 / loud and harsh)", "yòu re yòu bu fang bian (又热又不方便 / hot and inconvenient)". All these "legal" patterns follow this rule.

Thirdly, according to the above conclusions, it is further ratiocinated that all illegal correct combination patterns should be that the number of preceding syllables is more than the number of the syllables in the latter. In addition to the 2 cases [yòu 2 yòu 1] combination pattern sentences obtained from the corpus, the "illegal" patterns can also be made according to reasoning. For example:

* 可以略知事件的全貌，但文章又不详尽又短。 (17)

Ke yi lue zhi shi jian de quan mao, dan wen zhang yòu bu xiang jin yòu duan. (17)

The full picture of the incident can be obtained, but the article is not detailed and short. (17)

* 病人觉得卧室里又不方便又热。 (18)

Bing ren jue de wo shi li yòu bu fang bian yòu re. (18)

The patient felt uncomfortable and hot in the bedroom. (18)

* 全班合影里她的脸又不自然又小。 (19)

Quan ban he ying li ta de lian yòu bu zi ran yòu xiao. (19)

Her face is unnatural and small in the whole class photo. (19)

* 天空是不同层面的不同云朵，有些又不透明又厚。 (20)

Tian kong shi bu tong ceng mian de bu tong yun duo, you xie yòu bu tou ming yòu hou. (20)

The sky is different clouds on different levels, some of which are opaque and thick. (20)

* 虽说镇又无特色可言又小，但毕竟是我的镇。 (21)

Sui shuo zhen yòu wu te se ke yan yòu xiao, dan bi jin shi wo de zhen. (21)

Although the town is featureless and small, it is my town after all. (21)

The above examples are sentences that do not conform to the Chinese prosody. It is the result of the exchange of the components of (10)-(14) before and after the yòu...yòu..., and the sentence becomes very awkward after exchanging. The "illegal correct" of these examples again proves the correctness of our reasoning.

So far, it is compulsively asked: why does the combination pattern of conjunction words show such a rule? Can the difference in the number of syllables really affect the legality of a combination? What causes the subsequent components to show such a strong correspondence in the number of syllables? In the following, we are trying to propose the solution.

III. A STUDY INTO THE MECHANISM OF THE CONJUNCTIONS USAGE OF YÒU...YÒU...

Before "why" is answered, a concept of prosodic syntax — Nuclear Stress is introduced. "The Nuclear Stress refers to the stress structure that a sentence is expressed in the absence

of a special context." ⁶ Nuclear Stress is non-focus stress, that is, the special emphasis on a certain component of the sentence to exclude the special situation after the stress form. Nuclear stress in Chinese obeys the following rules ("Fig. 1"):

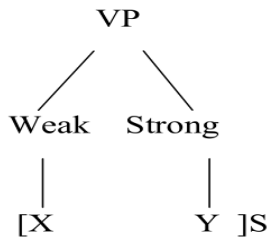


Fig. 1. The Nuclear Stress Rule of Chinese.

The "X" and "Y" in the picture above are two components of the verb-centered VP. "X" is the last verb in the sentence; "Y" is the object of "X". VP is the last verb phrase in the sentence. The nuclear stress of the sentence falls on "Y". If "Y" or "X" are intransitive verbs in the sentence, the nuclear stress is borne by "X". ⁷

It is known that the adjective and the verb can be used as the predicate in the modern Chinese. According to the traditional classification, the verb is divided into transitive verbs and intransitive verbs. Then, according to the Nuclear Stress Rule, the following conclusion is got:

If the predicate of a sentence is acted as an adjective, then the adjective carries the Nuclear Stress of the whole sentence, which is equivalent to the intransitive verb in the last VP.

Now, from the combination pattern above, the following can be got:

In the pattern [yòu 1 yòu 1], there are two situations in the corpus of the elements that match yòu...yòu.... First, the two act as predicate elements of the whole sentence together, in which case, "yòu A yòu A" naturally bear the nuclear stress of the whole sentence. However, within the whole predicate element, it is also needed to follow the principle of "post-emphasis", that is, the nuclear stress of a sentence should fall on the element after the adverb, such as:

街上卖的那些粉纸叠又糙又厚，真不讲究。(22)

Jie shang mai de fen zhi die yòu cao yòu hou. (22)

The pink paper sold on the street, is rough and thick. (22)

她象木乃伊一样的干瘪，又瘦又冷，缩在火炉旁边。(23)

Ta xiang mu nai yi yi yang de gan bie, yòu shou yòu leng, suo zai huo lu pang bian. (23)

She was as flat as a mummy, thin and cold, and curled up beside the fire. (23)

In the above two cases, the "yòu cao yòu hou (又糙又厚 / rough and thick)" is the predicate component of the previous sentence (22). The "yòu shou yòu leng (又瘦又冷 / thin and

cold)" is the predicate component of the previous sentence (23). In the prosody level, the "yòu cao (rough)" and the "yòu hou (thick)" form two double-syllable sound steps, and the prosodic weight is equivalent. So, the post-adverb "yòu" and the following components can be accented, and the "back weight" on the prosody is satisfied. So it reads fluently.

Second, the whole of the composition acts as a language component and serves as a modification. In this case, although the whole of the composition acts as a fixed language, in the combination, it is also necessary to follow the "back weight" principle to drop the stress on the latter component, such as:

在又热又干的天气里，它们会在地上撒尿。(24)

Zai yòu re yòu gan de tian qi li, ta men hui zai di shang sa niao. (24)

In hot and dry days, they will pee on the ground. (24)

他头戴镶满宝石的金冠，周身上下被一个又亮又大的黑色的斗篷裹着。(25)

Ta tou dai cuan man bao shi de jin guan, zhou shen shang xia bei yi ge yòu liang yòu da de dou peng guo zhe. (25)

He wore a gold crown full of precious stones and was wrapped around by a bright and large black cloak. (25)

Similarly, in the [yòu 2 yòu 2] mode, the front and rear are also disyllabic words. In terms of syllable weight, the latter disyllabic components are no lighter than the previous, so the stress can be carried smoothly. Thus, the [yòu 2 yòu 2] combination mode also conforms to the prosodic rules, it also exists grammatically correctly.

But for the pattern of [yòu 1 yòu 2], its grammatically correct existence can be explained more effectively. The front component is monosyllabic, the following component is disyllabic, in the syllable weight, and the front component is lighter than the following. Therefore, the following disyllabic component can be stressed, the whole combination also conforms to the Chinese prosodic rules. So it also becomes the grammatically correct form. And the legality of the prosody [yòu 1 yòu 2] can also be deduced, why the pattern [yòu 2 yòu 1] is illegal correct. Because the syllable of the latter component is monosyllabic, the syllable of the front component is disyllabic, according to the Nuclear Stress Rule; the stress should fall behind the component. However, due to the heavier weight of the syllables in the previous component, the stress is taken, and the following components can be excluded from the grammatically correct form by the prosodic rules without the stress, which is an important reason for such a combination pattern being such a small stock in the corpus.

As far as this is concerned, the legitimate reasons for the combination form [yòu 1 yòu more] are very clear. The Nuclear Stress Rule in Chinese requires "post-emphasis". And in all the grammatically correct patterns that conform to the prosodic rules investigated earlier, "yòu...yòu..." the number of syllables in the front component is not more than in the latter component, and the combination form [yòu 1

⁶ Feng Shengli, Prosody, Lexical and Syntax in Chinese [M]. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2009; 78.

⁷ Please refer to Feng Shengli (2009):86-92.

yòu more] can fully meet its requirements. So its form is allowed by prosodic rules.

IV. CONCLUSION

The combining form of adverbs is governed by the rules of Chinese prosody. Specifically, the Nuclear Stress Rule of China dominates its specific forms, and its dominant role is independent of the semantic and syntactic influences. There are many syntactic forms in modern Chinese that are influenced by Chinese prosodic rules, and prosody will greatly restrict syntactic forms at some times. The collocation pattern yòu...yòu... investigated is also affected by the prosodic rules of Chinese. In this article, it is discussed only for the yòu...yòu... combined by adjectives and adjectives phrases; it has not discussed for various forms of their collocation with verbs for the time being limited to the length. And, in addition to yòu...yòu..., many related words in Chinese also show strong syllable correspondence in form, which are extremely obvious and urgent to explain language phenomena. And prosodic syntax theory undoubtedly provides with a new perspective, and it is expected to continue to use new tools to solve new problems in future research.

Prosodic syntax is a new theory, which is also developed on the basis of Chinese literature. Although it has not been widely accepted by the theory of the international mainstream linguistics, it has explained many linguistic phenomena that can not be explained by the traditional theory. With the continuous development of theory, more and more language phenomena will be explained, which is not only helpful to the further development of the subject, but also has practical significance and reference function on constructing the theory, as well as the development of Chinese linguistic theory.

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