

# Compensation: A Synchronic Dynamic Mechanism in Language

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**Abstract:** In this paper, compensation mechanism—a synchronic dynamic rule in language is postulated and theorized. The rule raises the acceptability of clauses by effecting the positive side of some variations with exceptional expression and offsetting their negative side. This mechanism is determined by the instrumentality and systematicity of language so that its basic principle should be applicable to all exceptional expressions for particular positive effects and thus universal synchronically.

**Key words:** compensation, synchronic, dynamic, mechanism, acceptability

## 0. Introduction

Compensation is one of the synchronic dynamic mechanisms, used in self compensation for inadequate clauses. It raises the acceptability of clauses by effecting the positive side of some variations with exceptional expression and offsetting their negative side.<sup>①</sup> Compensation aimed at emphasis (compensation for short) is one of the most frequent and important acts of compensating. This paper is focused on this subject with an analysis from six aspects, in an attempt to prove a universal mechanism of synchronic compensation: 1. acceptability and statistics, 2. preliminary compensation, 3. advanced compensation, 4. the determinative role of instrumentality, 5. systematic decision, 6. universality.

## 1. Acceptability and statistics

Acceptability is the extent to which linguistic data would be judged by native-speakers

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<sup>①</sup> Compensation is different from supplementation, or a strategy to make up for semantic losses, e.g. “*dōngli tài lěngde hěn* (冬里太冷得很, too cold in winter)” in which “*tài* (太, too)” is a supplement to the degree of emphasis in “*hěn* (很, very)” in Northwestern dialects (Long Guofu, 1958), and from substitution, or substitution of an apparently irrelevant form for an absent form in a system (Ma, 2005[2]:406), which comes from biology. Wang Jue (2001) used compensation in the sense of substitution. (cf. Wang Jue, 2007).

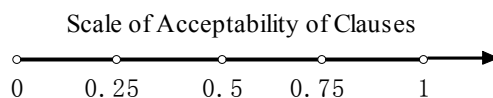
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to be possible in their language (D. Crystal, 1985, p.2). This is measured by addressee's psychological acceptance, which varies from person to person because it involves not only static linguistic structure and its rules but pragmatic elements in dynamic application, for instance, relevant extralinguistic knowledge, social background (dialect), psychological background (attitude), physiological background (age, sex) and register. So the acceptability of clauses is a socio-psychological variant.

Acceptability and adequacy are different but mutually complementary as indispensable categories of the analytic compensatory mechanism. Adequacy refers to the conformity of clauses to the static systems (including phonology, grammar and vocabulary, etc.) and their rules.<sup>①</sup> As far as compensation mechanism is concerned, recourse to acceptability to the neglect of adequacy means inevitably analysis of communicative strategy.

Clauses are divided into norms and variants according to adequacy, and are effective or ineffective according to expressive effect. Clauses are effective if the addressee understands and the speaker can expect their effects.<sup>②</sup> There are four types of relationship: 1) [+normal +effective], 2) [+normal -effective], 3) [-normal (variant) +effective], 4) [-normal (variant) -effective]. Acceptable clauses exist in 1) and 3) and compensation occurs in 3). Clauses in 4) are not acceptable, while case 2) only occurs in abnormal communication.

In current practice, acceptability can only be differentiated on three levels: totally acceptable (unmarked), marginally acceptable (marked “?”), or totally unacceptable (marked “\*”). This differentiation is not adequate in describing minor fluctuations on the same level of acceptability. To be more precise, it is feasible to decide acceptability by judging the hesitancy in accepting, namely 1 degree (simply judged acceptable), 0.75 degree (tending to be judged acceptable but with some hesitancy), 0.5 degree (always hesitant), 0.25 degree (tending to be judged unacceptable but with some hesitancy), 0 degree (simply judged unacceptable). See the following scale:



We used this scheme to do questionnaires and statistics of almost all the samples in this paper with 54 Ningjing University undergraduates. We averaged their scores on the acceptability of each clause as the mean acceptability of that clause (E). The fluctuation I

<sup>①</sup> It excludes the pragmatic adequacy on the dynamic level, as distinct from Fan Xiao (1998).

<sup>②</sup> Adequacy and effectiveness can also be used to measure the acceptability of nonsense clauses.

of the acceptability of clause Y against clause X is  $I = (E_y - E_x) / E_x$ . The result of the investigation is attached in the Appendix, as the possibly scientific quantitative evidence of the qualitative description given here.

## 2. Preliminary compensation mode

The basic condition of a specific clause (the sum of elements like vocabulary, clause type and meaning) determines the means by which it can be adjusted (eg. “chīle (吃了, eaten) ” cannot be replaced by “chī chī chī le (\*吃吃吃了, \*eat eat eaten) ” or “chī le le le (\*吃了了了, \*eaten-en-en)”). The expressive aim in turn decides which means to choose. There is the formula for compensation:

$$\text{Base (B)} \cdot \text{Regulation (R)} \Rightarrow \text{Aim (A)} \text{ ①}$$

Thus, we get the preliminary and advanced modes of compensation as the case may be. Variants play different roles in the two modes: as adjusting strategy in the preliminary compensation, and as the basis for clauses in the advanced mode. Emphatic compensation provides four means of variation (cf. §5.2.adaption to register): 1) violating the principle of economy, 2) eliminating lexicalization, 3) violating regular syntactic rules, 4) violating common sense. There are two forms of aim, emphasizing generation ( $A_1$ ) or elevation ( $A_2$ ), sometimes with some other effects.

Preliminary compensation involves the adjustment of normal clauses into variants, to achieve a new emphatic effect, which helps to make a variant acceptable in the formula:

$$B(\text{normal clause}) \cdot R(X) \Rightarrow A_1(\text{emphasis generated})$$

There are the following situations:

### 2.1. $X = \text{Variant}_1$

Variant<sub>1</sub> means the redundant form becomes the means of semantic emphasis, with its positive effect aimed to achieve acceptability. For instance, common sense shows that “shǒu (手, hand)” as instrument of the action in (1a) and case marker “yòng (用, with)” are both implicit. In (1b), these are represented as tautology. Since it expresses emphasis, the clause is acceptable (as acceptable as (36a)). Again, overemphatic strong degree adverbs tend to cause emotions, strong enough when used alone. When superposed, its subjective emphasis will be detached from rational emphasis to offset its redundant negative side; thus making the superposition acceptable<sup>②</sup> (Compare (2a) and (2b)).

① The complete formula should be “Need • Base • Strategy  $\Rightarrow$  Aim”. Need analysis is part of complex condition analysis. Need or not is regarded as 1 or 0, presumably 1.

② “tàiguòyu (太过于, too)”, “tàiguò (太过, too)” are basically lexicalized. “tài guòfèn (太过分, excessive)” is an adjectival phrase, without usage of superposition.

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|---|---|
| <p>(1) a. Búyào qiā rén.<br/>(不要 掐 人)<br/>No want pinch person<br/>'Do not pinch me.'</p>   | <p>b. Búyào yòng shǒu qiā rén.<br/>(不要 用 手 掐 人)<br/>No want with hand pinch person<br/>'Do not pinch me with your hand.'</p>                            |
| <p>(2) a. Qiúzhízhě de gèxìng tài / guòyú fúzào.<br/>(求职者的 个性太/ 过于 浮躁)<br/>Applicant's character too / much impulsive<br/>'The applicant is too impulsive.'</p> | <p>b. Qiúzhízhě de gèxìng tài guòyú fúzào.<br/>(求职者的 个性 太 过于 浮躁)<br/>Applicant's character too much impulsive<br/>'The applicant is too impulsive.'</p> |

**2.2. X=Variant<sub>2</sub>**

Variant<sub>2</sub> is used in some lexicon in an exceptional way. A rhetorical question expressing reproach “x+‘shénme (什么, what) / shá (啥, what)’+y” is very emotional so that almost all the compound verbs that cannot be disparate normally are separated by “shénme (什么, what) / shá (啥, what)” (for example, variant (3b) directly transformed from (3a) is much more acceptable than advanced compensation form (29b)).<sup>①</sup>

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|---|--|
| <p>(3)a. Dōu shénme shíhou la? Hái tāolùn a!<br/>(都 什么 时候 啦? 还 讨论 啊!)<br/>Already what time-la Still discuss<br/>'What time is it already? Still discussing!'</p> | <p>b. Dōu shénme shíhou la? Hái tāo shá lùn a!<br/>(都 什么 时候 啦? 还 讨 啥 论 啊!)<br/>Already what time-la Still dis-the devil-cuss<br/>'What time is it already? Why the devil discuss?'</p> |
|---|--|

Chinese idioms are strict set phrases, but coordinate idioms can experience word-order change to call for attention with a unique emphasis. For instance: pòfǔ-chénzhōu (破釜沉舟, burn one's boats)→chénzhōu-pòfǔ (沉舟破釜) | cánglóng-wòhǔ (藏龙卧虎, hidden dragons and crouching tigers)→wòhǔ-cánglóng (卧虎藏龙) | xīnchóu-jiùhèn (新仇旧恨, new hatred piled on the old)→jiùhèn-xīnchóu (旧恨新仇). Idioms are characterized by integrated meaning, but in the context of advertising language they can be changed with transformed homophones to yield impressive new meaning so that they become catchy phrases:

shíquán-shíměi (十全十美, perfect) → shíquán-shíměi (食全食美, perfect food (restaurant ad)) | xiánqī-liángmǔ (贤妻良母, good wife and mother) → xiánqī-liángmǔ (闲妻良母, idle wife and good mother (washing machine ad)) | mò mò-wúwén (默默无闻, not known to the public) → mò mò-wúwén (默默无蚊, quiet mosquito killer (pesticide ad)) | yī míng-jīng rén (一鸣惊人, overnight success) → yī míng-jīng rén (一明惊人, overnight sight (oculist instrument ad))

<sup>①</sup> In deep structure, the verbal phrase “tāolùn (讨论, discuss)” is the object of the rhetorical question (cf. “§3.2. Change of Conditions).

2.3. X= Variant<sub>3</sub>

Some elements can be extraposed via Variant<sub>3</sub>. For example, adverbials are extraposed to achieve emotional end effects. Effect of emphasis supports in turn the extraposition of variant.

- (4)a. Nǐ yǐjīng yòng nǐde xiě tì zhōngguó rénmin pūhǎo le dàolù !  
 (你已经 用 你的 血 替 中国 人民 铺好了 道路!)  
 you have with your blood for Chinese people paved the road  
 ‘You have paved the road for Chinese people with your blood!’
- b. Nǐ yǐjīng tì zhōngguó rénmin pūhǎo le dàolù, yòng nǐde xiě !  
 (你 已经 替 中国 人民 铺好了 道路, 用 你的 血!)  
 you have for Chinese people paved the road, with your blood  
 ‘You have paved the road for Chinese people, with your blood!’

3. Advanced compensation

Clauses with advanced compensation are based on variants. The strategies of augmentation, word order, exophora (reference, contrast, objectivation, context, etc.), resonance (two elements intensifying each other with similar functions), and differentiation adjust the variants via changing information content, conditions and/or flexible understanding to achieve the expressive effect and raise its acceptability. The combinations of variants and adjusting strategies (see table below) form the left side of the equation. Most of the combinations are found, with a few being non-existent or questionable.

		adjusting strategies				
		R <sub>1</sub> (augmentation)	R <sub>2</sub> (word order)	R <sub>3</sub> (exophora)	R <sub>4</sub> (resonance)	R <sub>5</sub> (differentiation)
variants	B <sub>1</sub> against the principle of economy	+	+	+	+	+
	B <sub>2</sub> loss of lexicalization features	-	-	+	+	+
	B <sub>3</sub> against normal syntax	?	?	? <sup>①</sup>	+	?
	B <sub>4</sub> against common sense	+	?	+	+	+

3.1. Change of information content

<sup>①</sup> There are many samples for this but they are not emphatic.

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Adjusting strategies are used to intensify the variants and make the information content full, thus differentiating the expressive function to highlight the affective effort, and raising the tolerance for redundancy<sup>①</sup> and thus acceptability.

#### 3.1.1. Increase of redundant items

Increase of redundant items upgrades emphasis or transforms linguistic functions to express intense emotions, so that structures not emphatic or functional are rendered acceptable with enough emphasis and affective function, in the formula:

$$B_1(X) \cdot R_1(\text{increase of redundant items}) \Rightarrow A_2(\text{more emphatic}) + \text{intense emotion}$$

**X= coordinate clauses with the same subject** In the principle of economy, coordinate clauses with the same subject show a strong tendency to omission, without which the clause may be ungrammatical or unnatural (i.e. (5a), (6a)). But when there are 3 coordinate items or more, with stronger emphasis, they will by themselves create a context of emotional repetition, thus raising their acceptability (i.e. (5b), (6b)).

(5)a. ?**Sūnzi** mínglǐ, **sūnzi** kě'ài.

(?孙子 明礼, 孙子 可爱。)

grandson polite, grandson lovely

'The grandson was polite, and lovely.'

b. **Sūnzi** mínglǐ, **sūnzi** kě'ài, **sūnzi** cōngmíng, **sūnzi** jīlíng.

(孙子 明礼, 孙子 可爱, 孙子 聪明, 孙子 机灵。)

grandson polite, grandson lovely, grandson clever, grandson sharp

'The grandson was polite, lovely, clever, and sharp at the same time.'

(6)a. ?**Tāmēn** xī yāpiàn, **tāmēn** hē yàojiǔ.

(他们 吸 鸦片, 他们 喝 药酒。)

They smoke opium, they drank medicated wine

'They smoke opium, and drank medicated wine.'

b. **Tāmēn** xī yāpiàn, **tāmēn** hē yàojiǔ, **tāmēn** pěng xizi, **tāmēn** wán nǚrén.

他们 吸 鸦片, 他们 喝 药酒, 他们 捧 戏子, 他们 玩 女人。

They smoke opium, they drank medicated wine, they patronized actresses, they flirted with women

'They smoke opium, they drank medicated wine, they patronized actresses, they flirted with women.'

**X= synonymous coordinate clauses** Synonyms are usually not juxtaposed for fear of redundancy, but to express extreme emphasis, the negative effect of the strange repetition would be offset. For example, the juxtaposition of 父亲爸爸 (father papa) is not common because the negative effect is not offset, i.e. (7a). But the juxtaposition of three or more items means intense emotion so that acceptability is raised, i.e. (7b).

<sup>①</sup> This varies with the corresponding conditions (Ma, 2005[2]:293,403).

- (7)a. Wǒ shì nǐ de fùqīn bàba !  
 (\*我是你的父亲 爸爸! )  
 I am your father papa  
 ‘I am your father papa!’
- b. Wǒ shì nǐ de lǎozi fùqīn bàba !<sup>①</sup>  
 (我是你的 老子、父亲、爸爸! )  
 I am your Dad, father, papa  
 ‘I’m your dear, dear papa!’

Synonyms are seldom juxtaposed except in idioms like “chuàngzào fā míng (创造发明, invention); xiōngyǒng péngpài (汹涌澎湃, surging and roaring); jiāo’ào zīháo (骄傲自豪, very proud); xiǎoxīn jǐnshèn (小心谨慎, very cautious); qīngchǔ míngbai (清楚明白, very clear)” for fear of redundancy, with few cases of juxtaposed binomials in isolated context. (Ma, 2005[1]). More synonyms juxtaposed means more redundancy, but the positive emphatic effect is boosted in a parabolic variation where it subsides drastically after reaching its peak. A few cases only allow two items (i.e. (34b)), and most frequently there are three items, sometimes even more (i.e. (9d)). So loose juxtaposed trinomials (with a pause) are more emphatic than corresponding tight binomials (without a pause), thus overpowering or offsetting the negative redundancy and raising acceptability (compare (8b) and (8a)).

- (8)a. ?Zhè shì nǐ de zuìguò zuìniè !  
 (?这是你的 罪过 罪孽! )  
 This is your fault crime  
 ‘This is your crime!’
- b. Zhè shì nǐ de zuìguò zuìniè, zuì’è !  
 (这是你的 罪过、罪孽、罪恶! )  
 This is your fault, evil, crime  
 ‘This is your evil!’

Strong degree adverbs only represent rational attribution when used alone, and will not add emphasis logically when juxtaposed. Their second items in affirmative clauses only suggest a failed attempt to raise intensity and thus they are often regarded as negative repetition (in fact not intensive enough to spin off strong emphasis function), barely acceptable (i.e. (9a), (9b), (9c)). In 2001, we had a survey among three correspondence college Chinese-major classes in Wenzhou and Taizhou. The 210 informants were mostly school teachers, who tended to reject the repetition. But when more items were involved (i.e. (9d)), the clauses became emphatic enough to be disparate and show the emotion underneath, thus offsetting the negative effect of redundancy and raising acceptability. Some informants even judged them as exceptionally good sentences.<sup>②</sup>

<sup>①</sup> Abusive, meaning ‘the speaker has fucked the addressee’s mother’. cf. Sample 25.

<sup>②</sup> Negative juxtapositions like “bànde bù shífēn tài hǎo (办得不十分太好, not very so good) | gǎnqīng shàng hǎoxiàng bù tài hěn shùnlì (感情上好像不太很顺利, not very so smooth romantically) | píqì bù dà hěn hǎo (脾气不大很好, not very so good-tempered)”. This merely boosts subjective emphasis, and combination with negation shows euphemism (Ma, 2006:102, 219).

- (9)a. <sup>?</sup>Chǎnpǐn pèitào xiǎnde **géwài hěn** zhòngyào.  
 (?产品 配套 显得 格外 很 重要。)  
 Product mix appears very so important  
 ‘Product mix appears very important’
- b. <sup>?</sup>Jǐgè zì zài níhóngdēng xià xiǎnde **hěn géwài** yāomèi.  
 (?几个 字 在 霓虹灯 下 显得 很 格外 妖媚。)  
 The several characters in neon lights seemed very so appealing  
 ‘The characters seemed very appealing in neon lights’
- c. <sup>?</sup>Qián fù zǒnglǐ jiǎng de yǐjīng **fēicháng hěn** qīnghu le.  
 (?钱 副 总理 讲的 已经 非常 很 清楚了。)  
 Qian Vice Premier spoke already very so clearly  
 ‘Vice Premier Qian spoke very clearly.’
- d. **Shífēn tèbié fēicháng géwài hěn** xièxiè nǐ de yǒuhǎo, qiānzhēn-wànquè de!  
 (十分 特别 非常 格外 很 谢谢 你的 友好, 千真-万确 的!)  
 Ever so much very so thank your friendliness, indeed  
 ‘Thank you ever so much for your friendliness, indeed!’

### 3.1.2. Resonance

The variants are the means of emphasis, boosting the affectiveness and raising acceptability by resonating with other strong means, in the formula:

$$B(X) \cdot R_4(\text{resonance}) \Rightarrow A_2(\text{boosted emphasis}) + \text{intense emotion}$$

**X= redundant juxtaposed structures** There are two types of resonance, one with emphatic vocabulary, the other with emphatic clause type. 1) Redundant structures resonate with emphatic vocabulary. In (10b), the new emphatic phrase “yī fēng fēng (一封封, many many)” resonates with the emphatic redundancy, and boosts the classifier “fēng (封, envelope)” which echoes with the head noun “xìn (信, letter)”, so that the affective function is enhanced to display tolerance for redundancy and raise acceptability as against (10a). 2) Redundant structures resonate with emphatic clause type. In (11b), when resonating with emphatic rhetorical question “Nǎgè nánren bùxiǎng yǒu gè [ ] (哪个男人不想有个 [ ], What man doesn’t want [ ]?)”, the affective function is boosted (the subjective “xiǎng (想, to think)” is involved in the resonance), thus displaying tolerance for redundancy so that acceptability is much higher than in an affirmative clause<sup>①</sup> like (11a).<sup>②</sup>

<sup>①</sup> The emphatic and affective effect of redundancy is easier to trigger in subjective commenting clauses, and more acceptable. i.e. “Tā shì gè wēnróu de qīzi, xiánhuì de qīzi. (她是个温柔的妻子、贤惠的妻子, She is a tender wife.)”



In (12b), synonymous structure resonates with emphatic exclamatory clause type “Lāsà, tāmen [ ] hěn jiǔ le (拉萨, 他们[ ]很久了! Lhasa, they [ ] for a long time!)” (the pause between theme and rheme is emphatic), so that the affective function yields enough positive elements to offset the negative redundancy in isolation and raise the acceptability of that phrase and the whole sentence. Since (10a)-(12a) lack the condition for resonance, the redundancy was regarded as meaningless emphasis. Therefore their acceptability is low.

- (10)a. <sup>?</sup>Dúzhěmen jì lái qīnqiè de xìn hán, rèqíng de xìn hán.  
 (?读者们 寄来 亲切的 信函、热情的 信函)  
 Readers sent cordial letters, enthusiastic letters  
 ‘Readers sent cordial and enthusiastic letters.’
- b. Dúzhěmen jì lái yì fēng fēng qīnqiè de xìn hán, rèqíng de xìn hán.  
 (读者们 寄来一封封 亲切的 信函、热情的 信函)  
 Readers sent many many cordial letters, enthusiastic letters  
 ‘Readers sent many cordial and enthusiastic letters.’
- (11)a. <sup>?</sup>Tā yǒu gè wēnróu de qīzi, xiánhuì de qīzi.  
 (?他 有个 温柔的 妻子、贤惠的 妻子。)  
 He has a tender wife, virtuous wife  
 ‘He has a tender and virtuous wife.’
- b. Nǎ gè nánrén bùxiǎng yǒu gè wēnróu de qīzi, xiánhuì de qīzi.  
 (哪个男人 不想 有个 温柔的 妻子、贤惠的 妻子!)  
 What man doesn’t want a tender wife, virtuous wife  
 ‘What man doesn’t want a tender and virtuous wife.’
- (12)a. <sup>?</sup>Dìchǔ shāmò de guójiā xiàngwǎng chōngjǐng lǜzhōu.  
 (?地处 沙漠的 国家 向往、憧憬 绿洲。)  
 Situated in desert country longs, yearns oasis  
 ‘Desert country longs, yearns for oasis.’
- b. Lāsà, tāmen xiàngwǎng chōngjǐng hěn jiǔ le!  
 (拉萨,他们 向往、憧憬 很久了!)  
 Lhasa, they long, yearn for a long time  
 ‘They have longed, and yearned for Lhasa for a long time.’

X= disparate use of compound verbs at the end of a sentence Compound verbs can

② “<sup>?</sup>Tā yǒu gè yōuměi de shēncái, miáotiáo de shēncái. (她有个优美的身材、苗条的身材 She had, a graceful and slim figure.) (average acceptability value 0.203704)” ~ “Nǎgè nǚrén bùxiǎng yǒu gè yōuměi de shēncái, miáotiáo de shēncái. (哪个女人不想有一个优美的身材、苗条的身材!, Which woman doesn’t want a graceful and slim figure?) (average acceptability value 0.973214)”, or a rise of +377.8%.

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sometimes be used at the end of a sentence in resonance with other strong sememes to raise the acceptability of disparate forms. For example, in (13b) and (14b), emphatic disparate forms in resonance with strong sememes “*měi tiáo* (每条, each and every)” and “*wánquán* (完全, completely)” reinforce the emphasis and emotion to raise the acceptability of (13a) and (14a).

- (13)a. <sup>??</sup>Xuéxiào de jìlǜ nǐ wéi le fǎn.      b. <sup>?</sup>Xuéxiào de měi tiáo jìlǜ nǐ dōu wéi le fǎn.  
 (?学校 的纪律 你 违了反。)<sup>①</sup>      (?学校的 每条 纪律 你都 违了反。)  
 School discipline you vio-ed-late      School every discipline you all vio-ed-late  
 ‘You violated school discipline.’      ‘Every school discipline article you did violate.’
- (14)a. <sup>??</sup>Huánjìng tā yǐjīng shìle yīng.      b. <sup>?</sup>Huánjìng tā yǐjīng wánquán shìle yīng.  
 (?环境 他已经 适了应。)  
 Environment he has adapted to      Environment he has completely adapted to  
 ‘He has adapted to the environment.’      ‘He has adapted completely to the environment.’

**X= variant clause** Inversion or extraposition is a good way of speaking. Inversion yields rhetorical forces, but sometimes good sentences only come when it is combined with other emphatic measures. For example, regular sentences (15a) and (16a) with extraposed adverbials or attributives are not very emphatic ((15b), or questionable (16b)), but in coordination with repetitive markers, they become more emphatic and good sentences ((15c) and (16c)).

- (15)a. Tāmen cóng Lúndūn, Niūyuē, Bālí hé shìjiè gèdì láidào Guilín yóulǎn.  
 (他们 从 伦敦、纽约、巴黎 和 世界 各地 来到 桂林 游览。)  
 They from London, New York, Paris and world other places come to Guilin sightseeing  
 ‘They come from London, New York, Paris and other places to Guilin for sightseeing.’
- b. Tāmen láidào Guilín yóulǎn, cóng Lúndūn, Niūyuē, Bālí hé shìjiè gèdì.  
 (他们 来到 桂林 游览, 从 伦敦、纽约、巴黎 和 世界 各地。)  
 They come to Guilin sightseeing, from London, New York, Paris and world other places  
 ‘They come to Guilin for sightseeing, from London, New York, Paris and other places.’
- c. Tāmen láidào Guilín yóulǎn, cóng Lúndūn, cóng Niūyuē, cóng Bālí, cóng shìjiè gèdì.  
 (他们 来到 桂林 游览, 从 伦敦, 从 纽约, 从 巴黎、从 世界 各地。)  
 They come to Guilin sightseeing, from London, from New York, from Paris, and from world other places  
 ‘They come to Guilin for sightseeing, from London, New York, Paris and other places.’

<sup>①</sup> “*fěifǎn* (违反, violate)” is not a disparate verb. You can say “*fěifǎnle* (违反了, violated)”, but not “*fěile fǎn* (违了反, violated)”.

<sup>②</sup> “*shìyīng* (适应, adapt)” is not a disparate verb. You can say “*shìyīngle* (适应了, adapted)”, but not “*shìle yīng* (适了应, adapted)”.

- (16)a. Wúshù shuāng jīnhuáng, bilán, yòuhēi de yǎnjīng tóngshí zhùshìzhe zhè tiáo shǒubì.  
 (无数 双 金黄、碧蓝、黝黑 的眼睛 同时 注视着 这条 手臂。)  
 Numerous pairs golden, blue, dark eyes simultaneously looked this arm  
 ‘Numerous golden, blue, dark eyes simultaneously looked at the arm.’
- b. ?Wúshù shuāng yǎnjīng, jīnhuáng, bilán, yòuhēi de, tóngshí zhùshìzhe zhè tiáo shǒubì.  
 (?无数 双 眼睛, 金黄、碧蓝、黝黑的, 同时 注视着 这条 手臂。)  
 Numerous pairs eyes, golden, blue, dark, simultaneously looked this arm  
 ‘Numerous eyes, golden, blue, dark ones, simultaneously looked at the arm.’
- c. Wúshù shuāng yǎnjīng, jīnhuáng de, bilán de, yòuhēi de, tóngshí zhùshìzhe zhè tiáo shǒubì.  
 (无数 双 眼睛, 金黄 的、碧蓝 的、黝黑 的, 同时 注视着 这条 手臂。)  
 Numerous pairs eyes, golden, blue, dark, simultaneously looked the arm  
 ‘Numerous eyes, golden ones, blue ones, dark ones, simultaneously looked at the arm.’

### 3.2. Change of conditions

Clauses with variants can, by strategy, temporarily change their speech objectives to express meaning or effects not directly connected to variants, shifting over-strident attention from variants, which then survive to exchange for compensation with their positive emphasis.

***B<sub>1</sub> (coordinate clause with the same object) • R<sub>1</sub> (with connective marker) ⇒ juxtaposable + A<sub>1</sub> (emphatic)*** The addition of connective markers sometimes brings unjuxtaposable redundancy together, to be emphatic under this condition. Example (17a) is ungrammatical because of the repeated object, without which “gàishang (盖上, cover), xiānkāi (掀开, uncover)” would be a consecutive imperative. With the coordinative marker, it becomes grammatical even with a repeated object (17b).

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (17)a. *Gàishàng bù, xiānkāi bù<br>(*盖 上 布, 掀 开 布)<br>Cover cloth, uncover cloth<br>‘Cover cloth, uncover cloth’ | b. Yīhuìr gàishàng bù, yīhuìr xiānkāi bù.<br>(一会儿 盖 上 布, 一会儿 掀 开 布)<br>sometimes cover cloth, sometimes uncover cloth<br>‘sometimes cover cloth, sometimes uncover cloth’ |
|--|---|

***B<sub>1</sub> (synonymous coordinatives) • R<sub>3</sub> (rhythmic symmetry) ⇒ musical + A<sub>1</sub> (emphatic)*** Symmetrical rhythm can connect redundant combinations otherwise not juxtaposable, to be emphatic conditionally. For example, most informants felt (18a) to be wordy, but the same combination is grammatical and emphatic in (18b), where there is rhythmic juxtaposition.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (18)a. ?Tā shēngyīn fēngmǎn, bǎomǎn.<br>(?他 声音 丰满、饱满。)<br>His voice round, rich<br>‘His voice was round, rich.’ | b. Dīyīn fuyou tanxing, zhōngyīn fēngmǎn, bǎomǎn.<br>(低音 富有 弹性, 中音 丰满 饱满。)<br>Bass rich in elastic, baritone round, rich<br>‘His bass was elastic and baritone round, rich.’ |
|---|--|

### 3.3. Flexible comprehension

Absurd sentences will be judged unacceptable if spoken by beginners of Chinese. But native speakers of Chinese are trusted for their competence and people will try to compromise in understanding them on artistic level instead of on normal level. A change of mind makes an absurd sentence original and humorous, with cartoon-like positive effect, and thus more acceptable. Absurdity here becomes the means to differentiate the speech levels. Acceptable absurd sentences are usually the result of coordination of implicit contrastive strategy and other effective strategies. There is an implicit triangle between its real meaning, literal meaning and common sense, which is the basis for novelty and emphatic effect. The compensatory formula is:

$$B_4(\text{absurd sentence}) \cdot (R(X) + R_3(\text{implicit contrast})) \Rightarrow \text{novelty} + A_1(\text{emphatic})$$

#### 3.3.1. $X=R_1$ (addition or subtraction of meaning)

There is reasonable addition or subtraction of meaning in the artistic comprehension of absurd sentences, and emphasis and humor are achieved by means of the implicit contrast among real, literal meaning and common sense. When (19) is understood as meaning a, it is a barely acceptable absurd sentence, since only small animals can be combined with “*Rén chī* (人吃, people eat)” to form “*Rén chī* [ ] (人吃[ ], people eat [ ])", e.g. “*Tā chī yú/xiā/jī*. (他吃[鱼/虾/鸡], He eats [fish/shrimps/chicken]”; but large animals can hardly be combined directly with “*Rén chī* (人吃, people eat)” to form “*Rén chī* [ ] (人吃[ ], people eat [ ])" as in “*Ròushí dòngwù chī* [ ] (肉食动物吃[ ], Carnivores eat [ ])". For example, we do not say “\**Tā chī [niú/zhū/yáng]*. (\*他吃[牛/猪/羊], He eats [buffalo/pig/sheep])”, but “*Tā chī [niúròu/zhūròu/yáng ròu]*. (他吃[牛肉/猪肉/羊肉], He eats [beef/pork/mutton])” instead. Understood as b, in synecdoche, we achieve a humorous effect, so that it is more acceptable. When (20) is understood as a, the semantic features of the components are contradictory, so it is not acceptable. If understood as b, we only get the feature “*dùzi dà* (肚子大, potbelly)”, and discard the gender (metaphor), and then it is humorous to say so; emphasis raises its acceptability. When (21) is understood as a, it is against common sense and unacceptable. As b, we only get the meaning of “ $X>Y$ ” in “*X shàng fùdài Y* ( $X$  上附带  $Y$ ,  $X$  carries  $Y$ )”, and with the implicit contrast to common sense and literal meaning, we get exaggerating and humorous effect with the reversal of size to underline a large nose on a small face, making the sentence more acceptable.

(19) (In Ethiopia) *Yǒu yīcì wǒ kàndào yīgè rén chī shīzi*. (有一次我看到一个人吃狮子。)

Once I saw someone eat a lion

a. ‘Once I saw someone eat a whole lion raw.’

- b. 'Once I saw someone eat lion roast.'
- (20) Nà dānshēnhàn huáiyùnle. (那单身汉怀孕了。)
- That single man pregnant.
- a. 'That single man is big with a baby.' b. 'That single man is with a potbelly.'
- (21) Bízǐ shàng fùdài yīzhāng liǎn. (鼻子上附带一张脸。)
- Nose carries a face
- a. 'The nose is larger than the face.'
- b. 'a large nose on a small face.'

### 3.3.2. X=R<sub>5</sub> (differentiating the nature)

The nature<sup>①</sup> of the content of absurd sentences is differentiated to dissolve the meaninglessness, so that the heterogeneous elements do not conflict with it, while the coordinated contrastive elements become humorously obvious by the false semantic conflict, to make the clause more acceptable. Differentiation includes that of narration or reporting (22b), that of truth or falsity (23b), direct narration or metaphor (24). Examples (22a) and (23a) are unacceptable absurd sentences.

- (22) Tā chīle méiyǒu de dōngxi. (他吃了没有的东西。)
- He ate nothing.
- a. 'The thing that he ate never existed.'
- b. 'He ate so-called "nothing".'
- (23) Méi tuǐ de qǐgài fēi yě shìde pǎozǒule. (没腿的乞丐飞也似地跑走了。)
- Legless beggar flying like ran away
- a. 'The beggar ran away without legs.'
- b. 'The beggar who had pretended to have lost his legs ran away.'
- (24) Zhāng Hǎidì<sup>②</sup> shīquē le shuāngtuǐ de gōngnéng, què zǒuchūle yītiáo guāngcǎnlàn de dàdào. (张海迪失去了双腿的功能，却走出了一条光灿灿的大道。)
- Zhang Haidi lost legs function, but walked out a bright road
- 'Zhang Haidi lost the function of her legs, but walked out a bright road.'

## 3.4. Comprehensive method

Several strategies can be applied in one or more channels in compensation to achieve a corresponding positive effect. The formula for compensation in extra emphasis is:

$$B(X) \cdot R(Y) \Rightarrow A_2(\text{extra emphasis}) + Z$$

### 3.4.1. Multiple strategies in a single channel

<sup>①</sup> The nature of clause content at the top and lower right angle of the semantic triangle, in relation to interlocutor, and functional nature in the speech acts.

<sup>②</sup> Zhang Haidi is a disabled Chinese writer.

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In term of adjusted information content:

**X= end synonymous juxtaposition, Y=R<sub>2</sub> (changed word order) + R<sub>4</sub> (resonance), Z=intense emotion** Juxtaposed synonyms at the end of a sentence are unacceptable if the focus is on the former, with the affective effect not strong enough to offset the repetitive negative side (25a). Change of word order to focus on the latter, to form an escalating tendency, will resonate with the emphatic redundancy in intense emotion, so that (25b) is passable (the subjectivity of the judgment sentence also participates in stimulating emotion).

- (25)a. Wǒ shì nǐ de **lǎozi fùqin!**      b. Wǒ shì nǐ de **fùqin lǎozi!**  
 (\*我是你的 老子父亲!)      (我 是 你的父亲 老子!)  
 I am your dad, father      I am your father, dad  
 ‘I am your dad, father!’      ‘I am your dear father!’

**X= strong degree adverb repeated, Y=R<sub>1</sub> (redundant items increased) + (R<sub>3</sub> (reference) + R<sub>4</sub> (resonance)), Z=intense emotion** College and high school field inquiry yielded a dozen samples to prove: strong degree adverbs (except for the superlative and overemphatic adverbs) repeated once are barely acceptable (e.g. (26a) and (27a)), but repeated more times can be more acceptable via effective strategies, or even form extraordinary good sentences (e.g. (26b) and (27b)), in which an astronomical figure brings explanatory reference and resonance). This is similar to juxtaposed strong degree adverbs (cf. above).

- (26)a. Gèwèi wǎngyǒu, zhēnde **shífēn shífēn** de duìbùqǐ.  
 (?各位 网友, 真的 十分十分 的对不起。)

Dear online friends, really very very sorry

‘Dear online friends, I’m really very very sorry.’

- b. **Shífēn shífēn shífēn shífēn** (N times) yíhàn...méiyǒu yíge jìzhě zhàn qilai.  
 (十分 十分 十分 十分 (n times) 遗憾.....没有 一个 记者 站起来。)  
 very very very very ... sorry ... not a correspondent raised

‘I’m extremely sorry that not a correspondent raised.’

- (27)a. ?**wúbǐ wúbǐ** zhēnguì  
 (?无比 无比 珍贵)

extremely extremely rare

‘extremely extremely rare’

- b. Jiǎngjīn **wúbǐ wúbǐ wúbǐ** de fēnghòu, shù’è **gāodá yīyì měijīn de shùshí yì bèi.**  
 (奖金 无比 无比 无比的 丰厚, 数额 高达 一亿 美金的 数十亿倍。)

Awards extremely extremely extremely plenty, amount reaching a billion dollars’ billions times

‘Awards are extremely extremely extremely generous, the amount reaching billions of a billion

dollars.’

### 3.4.2. Combination of various strategies in multiple channels

Combination of two or three channels in condition, information content and flexible understanding will raise the acceptability of clauses through joint forces. There are the following situations:

**X= sentence-end compound verb disparate, Y=R<sub>5</sub> (differentiation) + R<sub>3</sub> (objectivation) + R<sub>4</sub> (resonance), Z=intense emotion** Disparate use of non-disparate verbs can raise acceptability by the following means: 1) Conditioning. Disparate use by objectivation, in which a segment of language is temporarily transformed into a reported unit (similar to a quote) in another segment (Ma, 2005[2]:54). People are not so strict with quotes in judging grammaticality. The reported unit forms an exophora to explanatory elements. Variants in disparate use “shuàiguò lǐng (率过领, took the lead)、tǎoguò lùn (讨过论, discussed)、làngguò fèi (浪过费, wasted)” in (28b)-(30b) are all objectivized as quotes, so that they are more acceptable. In deep structure, emphatic clause type or emphatic adverbs are descriptions of them, so this type of reference is the semantic basis for objectivation. 2) Adjusted information content. It is noted that the positive effect of (28a)-(30a) disparate use is not enough to offset the negative variants, so that the clauses are not acceptable. So the explanatory elements to support the variants in (28b)-(30b) form a more extensive emphatic situation, which, in resonance with disparate use<sup>①</sup>, forms a higher degree of emphasis to offset the negative side.

(28)a. Bùduì yóu tā **shuàiguò lǐng**.

(\*部队 由 他 率过领。)

Troops were by him led

‘Troops were led by him.’

b. ?Nǐ kàn zhèzhī bùduì nǎgè tīng nǐ huà? **Hái shuàiguò lǐng ne!** Shuí xiāngxìn a?

(?你 看 这 支 部 队 哪 个 听 你 话? **还 率 过 领 呢!** 谁 相 信 啊?)

You see the troops who listen to you? Still Led? Who believes?

‘You see who in the troops listens to you? You led! Who believes you?’

(29)a. Wǒmen zài yìqǐ **tǎoguò lùn**.

(?我 们 在 一 起 讨 过 论。)

We together discussed

‘We had a discussion together.’

<sup>①</sup> If the disparate verb is not used at the end, the clause is not so emphatic.

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b. Zhème dà de wèntí dōu méi tán dào, hái tǎo guo lùn ne! Nǐ zài fūyǎn shuí ya?  
(?这么大的问题都没谈到, 还讨过论呢!你在敷衍谁呀?)  
So big problem even not discussed. Still Discussed! you are fooling who?  
'So big a problem was not discussed. Had a discussion! Who are you fooling?'

(30)a. Tā làngguo fèi.      b. Tā jiùshì làngguo fèi.  
(?他浪过费。)      (?他就是浪过费。)  
He wasted      He just wasted (just emphasized)  
'He wasted.'      'He did waste.'

**X= synonymous coordinate structure, Y=R<sub>3</sub> (synonymous reference) + R<sub>1</sub> (increased redundant items)** Juxtaposed synonyms can raise acceptability by the following means. 1) Conditions changed. Many impossible phenomena when supported by outside reference can naturally be reasonable (Ma, 2006:165-173). Juxtaposed synonyms are more acceptable when referred to by synonyms, for example, in (31b), nonce word “àoxīng (澳星, sorry star)” echoes “àohuǐ àonǎo (懊悔懊恼, sorry sorry)”. 2) Resonance. Synonymous echoes in fact raise the degree of emphasis with increased redundant items. So in (31b) the added “ào (懊, sorry)” makes the clause more acceptable than (31a). Experienced interlocutors would be reminded of the sensational “àoxīng (澳星, Aussate)” (homophone of “àoxīng (澳星, sorry star in Chinese)” which China launched for Australia, making the nonce word legitimate. The informants even took it as an exceptionally good sentence.

(31)a. Wǒ àohuǐ àonǎo zìjǐ bùgòu qiānxū.  
(?我懊悔懊恼自己不够谦虚。)  
I sorry sorry self not enough modest  
'I am so sorry that I had not been modest enough.'  
b. yīncǐ ér àohuǐ àonǎo, chéngwéi yíxiào-dàfāng de àoxīng.  
(因此而懊悔懊恼, 成为 貽笑大方的 澳星。)  
So sorry sorry and became laughing stock sorry star  
'So sorry that I made a sorry laughing stock of myself.'

**X= absurd sentences, Y=R<sub>3</sub> (contrast) + R<sub>1</sub> (changed understanding) + R<sub>4</sub> (multi-meaning in synergy), Z=novelty** Absurd sentences can rise in acceptability by the following means. 1) Conditions changed. Some absurd sentences can contrast with familiar proverbs expressing extreme statement (32a), and become more emphatic and grammatical (32b). 2) Flexible understanding. Pushing the impossible in clause meaning (32b<sub>2</sub>). 3) Changed information content. Just add up emphasis from two different sources to exaggerate and



impress, forming exceptional acceptable good sentences (32b<sub>2</sub>). Without contrast with familiar proverbs for emphasis, acceptability is low ((32c) and (32d)).

(32)a. Yǒu qián néng shǐ **guǐ tuī mò**. (有钱能使鬼推磨。)

With money can make devil push mill

a<sub>1</sub>: 'Money makes the devil work for you.'

a<sub>2</sub>: 'Money makes the impossible possible.'

b. Yǒu qián néng shǐ **mò tuī guǐ**. (有钱能使磨推鬼。)

With money can make mill push devil

b<sub>1</sub>: 'Money completes more difficult work than a<sub>1</sub>.'

b<sub>2</sub>: 'Money makes the highly impossible possible.'

c. \*Nàgè mò tuīle yītiān de guǐ. (\*那个磨推了一天的鬼。)

That mill pushed one day devil

'That mill pushed the devil one day.'

d. Yǒu qián néng shǐ **mén tuī rén**. (\*有钱能使门推人。)

With money can make door push people

'Money makes a door push people.'

#### 4. The decisive role of instrumentality of language

The principles and features in a language are all derived from limited preliminary features and the compensation mechanism is no exception. Its formation and operation are governed by instrumentality and systematicity. Language is an audial<sup>①</sup> tool for exchanging knowledge, feeling and meaning created under the condition of mental and physiological acceptability. Instrumentality dictates that language must be effective and optimized, by which compensation is feasible, rational and implemented.

##### 4.1. Principle of effectiveness

If a language is to be an effective tool to express and exchange, it must be as practical as all tools, and deeply utilitarian. When rules conflict with effectiveness, the result tends to favor the latter. Compensation then comes in.

In a moment of excitement, social restraints are resolved partially so that inspiration and creativity prevail, with innovative speech gushing out.<sup>②</sup> It is clear to the speaker that special effects will come only out of breaking the ordinary rules, with formal or meaning

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<sup>①</sup> Later extended to visual.

<sup>②</sup> Affective motivation is a major momentum for lexical change (H. Sperber, 1929), and a means of innovative use of language.

breakthrough to realize the affective function. That is why the emphasis in compensation is mostly affective.

Variants are tolerated only when there is the expected effect, to realize their exceptional value. Variants that bring no positive effects will be rejected by the language system as falsity (i.e. (33b)). Compensation is obviously only utilitarian compromise against rules.

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| (33)a. Tā fàn yǐjīng chīle.<br>(他 饭 已经 吃了。) | b. Tā fàn yǐjīng chī.<br>(*他 饭 已经 吃。) |
| He meal already ate                         | He meal already ate                   |
| ‘He has had his meal.’                      | ‘He has finished his meal.’           |

#### 4.2. Principle of optimization

Any tool should be versatile, and language is being optimized all the time. This leads to a basic maxim, maxim of quantity, which governs the adjustment in compensation: speakers’ contributions should be as informative as is required for the current purposes of exchange, and should not be unnecessarily informative (Crystal, 1985:190).

The maxim of quantity establishes the function between positive effects and acceptability. 1) Adjustment and compensation yield special effects to abundantly offset the negative side, so that variant clauses become exceptionally good sentences. 2) Adjustment and compensation yield special effects to offset the negative side, so that variant clauses become acceptable. Most of the sentences noted in this paper have achieved 1) and 2) in compensation. 3) Adjustment and compensation strengthen positive effects to counter the negative side, so that variant clauses become somewhat more acceptable ((16b) and (17b)). 4) When variants reach peak positive effects, attempts to further extend them will be contained by maxims of economy, and acceptability is reversed. There are the following three samples.

*Sample 1.* If two strong enough synonyms are juxtaposed (34b), when we add another strong synonym (e.g. (34a)), no emphasis will appear. On the contrary, tautology will make the clause less acceptable (34c).

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| (34)a. wěi’àn de shēnyǐng<br>(伟岸 的 身影) | b. gāodà, kuíwǔ de shēnyǐng<br>(高大、魁梧 的 身影) | c. ?gāodà, kuíwǔ, wěi’àn de shēnyǐng<br>(?高大、魁梧、 伟岸 的 身影) |
| stalwart figure                        | tall, robust figure                         | tall, robust, stalwart figure                             |
| ‘stalwart figure’                      | ‘tall, robust figure’                       | ‘tall, robust, stalwart figure’                           |

*Sample 2.* Strong degree adverbs when further repeated will be contained by the maxim of economy. For example, the superlative “zuì (最, most)” repeated once is enough to express emphasis (35b), but if repeated more times it means less acceptability.

- (35)a. Dìyī cì chéngrèn cuòwù shì zuì jiǎnnán de.  
 (第一次承认 错误 是 最 艰难的。)  
 First time admit mistake is most difficult  
 ‘It is most difficult to admit mistakes for the first time.’
- b. Dìyī cì chéngrèn cuòwù shì zuì zuì jiǎnnán de.  
 (第一次承认 错误 是最 最 艰难的。)  
 First time admit mistake is most most difficult  
 ‘It is most difficult to admit mistakes for the first time.’
- c. shìjiè shàng zuì zuì zuì zuì zuì zuì zuì zuì ěxīn de gùshi  
 (?世界 上 最 最 最 最 最 最 最 最 恶心的 故事)  
 the world on most most most most most most most most nauseating story  
 ‘Most nauseating story in the world.’

*Sample 3.* When common sense is repeated to exaggerate its emphasis (36a), the redundant negative factor is increased if the logical stress is on it and the sentence becomes less acceptable (36b).

- (36)a. Bùyào yòng shǒu qiā rén.  
 (不要用手掐人。)  
 Do not with hand pinch **person** (grammatical stress) ‘Do not pinch me.’
- b. Bùyào yòng **shǒu** qiā rén.  
 (?不要用手掐人。)  
 Do not with **hand** pinch person (logical stress) ‘Do not pinch me with your hand.’

So there is the function between positive effects and raised acceptability, which is the necessary result of language optimization.

## 5. System decision

Possibility, rationalization and implementation are mostly decided by the language system except for direct influence of instrumentality. Of course, the system is fundamentally determined by the instrumentality. If a language is to express the infinite open and changeable world of human knowledge, feeling and meaning, it has to be a complicated system of innovation, development and flexibility. So compensation is characterized by its self-stability, register adaptation and factor interaction, all representations of the language system.

### 5.1. Self-stability

Any active system will sustain and stabilize itself. A language function lost can be “retrieved” with certain interfering variants under new conditions. Such fluctuations can be repeated time and again on different basis, for different objectives, by different strategies,

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so that a simple language can become more complex (Ma, 2005[2]:9,395-396). Compensation is just one of the retrieval processes in the system. Compared with retrieval without meaning compensation, its self-stabilizing effects can be better understood. The former is a normal fluctuation, a restraint and release of the reasonable potential of a language, or self-discipline before monopoly, intentional rejection of reasonable potentials which might disrupt the system. But, with interfering variants, the restraint is released and the usage becomes acceptable. Take juxtaposition of monosyllables. Though in theory coordinate phrases presuppose flexible word order, and can appear in any position<sup>①</sup>, two coordinated monosyllables are actually not allowed in almost all positions<sup>②</sup>, unless they are to be lexicalized or pre-ordered<sup>③</sup>. Disyllables dominate contemporary Chinese vocabulary, most of them are coordinate compounds (Zhang Dengqi, 1992). Once two monosyllables are put together, the addressee will assume lexicalization (any pause in between will be resolved by rhythmic pressure). This assumption is contradictory to the linguistic fact, so that people are repulsive to the latter, judging the whole clause as ungrammatical ((37a)-(41a)). This restrains the otherwise legitimate use. But under the adjustment of interference (with added markers in (37b) and (38b), with downgrading element in (39b)) and extraposition (objectivized in (40b), implicit contrast in (41b)), the clause will resume its adequacy, becoming more acceptable.

(37)a. xiǎng    wǒ <b>mā</b> 、 <b>diē</b> (*想    我 妈、爹) Think   my mother, father ‘Think of my mother, father’	b. xiǎng    wǒ <b>mā</b> <b>hé</b> <b>diē</b> (想    我 妈 和 爹) Think   my mother and father ‘Think of my mother and father’
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<sup>①</sup> E.g.: “Běijīng、Shànghǎi de gāoxiào (北京、上海的高校, colleges in Beijing and Shanghai) ~ Shànghǎi、Běijīng de gāoxiào (上海、北京的高校, colleges in Shanghai and Beijing) | guānxīn àihu xiàyībèi (关心爱护下一辈, care for the next generation) ~ àihu guānxīn xiàyībèi (爱护关心下一辈, care for the next generation) | shuìde shēnchén, xiāngtián (睡得深沉, 香甜, sleep deeply and sweetly) ~ shuìde xiāngtián, shēnchén (睡得香甜, 深沉, sleep sweetly and deeply) | shēnghuó píngjìng ānshì jíle (生活平静安适极了, live a peaceful and easy life) ~ shēnghuó ānshì píngjìng jíle (生活安适平静极了, live an easy and peaceful life)”.

<sup>②</sup> E.g.: “?ài hèn nǐ (?爱、恨你, love, hate you) ~ ?hèn ài nǐ (恨、爱你, hate, love you) | ?jiàn yào shède yuǎn zhǔn (?箭要射得远准, arrows must be shot far and accurate) ~ ?jiàn yào shède zhǔn yuǎn (?箭要射得准远, arrows must be shot accurate and far) | jíyì jǐ pèng shāng (?极易挤碰伤, easy to get hurt) ~ jíyì pèng jǐ shāng (?极易碰挤伤, easy to get hurt)”.

<sup>③</sup> Compare: “fàn cài piào (饭菜票, meal coupon) ~ \*cài fàn piào (\*菜饭票, meal coupon) | búyào dǎ mà háizi (不要打骂孩子, Don’t beat or scold children) ~ \*búyào mà dǎ háizi (\*不要骂打孩子, Don’t beat or scold children) | pèide qí quán (配得齐全, adequately provided) ~ \*pèide quán qí (\*配得全齐, adequately provided) | xiǎng wǒ diē mā (想我爹、妈, ‘Think of my mother and father’) ~ ?xiǎng wǒ diē mā (?想我妈、爹, Think of my mother and father)”.

- (38)a. shède **zhǔn diāo**  
 (?射得 准 刁)  
 Shoot accurately, artfully  
 ‘Shoot accurately and artfully’
- b. shède **zhǔn ér diāo**  
 (射得 准 而 刁)  
 Shoot accurately and artfully  
 ‘Shoot accurately and artfully’
- (39)a. \*Wǒ **chī shuì**  
 (\*我 吃 睡。)  
 I eat, sleep  
 ‘I eat and sleep.’
- b. Fúshì wǒ **chī shuì**.  
 (服侍我 吃 睡。)  
 Help me eat, sleep  
 ‘Help me eat and sleep.’
- (40)a. ?Bùyào **mà dǎ** háizi.  
 (?不要 骂 打 孩子。)  
 Don’t scold, beat children  
 ‘Don’t scold or beat children.’
- b. **Mà dǎ** yóu nǐ.  
 (骂 打 由 你。)  
 Scold, beat depend on you  
 ‘It’s up to you to scold and beat them.’
- (41)a. Wǒ xǐ **xié, bāo**.  
 (?我 洗 鞋、包。)  
 I wash shoes, sack  
 ‘I wash the shoes and sack.’
- b. Wǒ dān xǐ **xié, bāo**.  
 (我 单 洗 鞋、包。)  
 I only wash shoes, sack  
 ‘I wash only my shoes and sack.’

Non-compensatory retrieval is also a case of self-stabilization. It has no extra positive effects, because the released potential is reasonable in any case. The fluctuation of acceptability is a witness to the self-stability of compensation.

## 5.2. Register adaptation

Systematic adaptability requires adequacy in a language, where a clause must be adaptable to style. Various functions for diverse registers call for different expressive styles to serve the register, which restrains the style to maintain its existence, so that style requirement also directly influences acceptability. For example, scientific register is realistic, while poetry is given to bizarre imagination. Absurd sentences are not found in scientific discourse because they deviate drastically from logical truth, but abound in poetry, where they arouse dead images in language as very poetic, visionary and imaginative means to express originality. Chomsky’s nonsense sentence “Green ideas sleep furiously” is said to have been found in poetry (with certain devices, poems with such a sentence are not impossible), not as Hu Mingyang (2000) said, “Any English native speaker would not think such a sentence acceptable”.<sup>①</sup>

<sup>①</sup> Liu Dawei (2001: 206, 216) studied absurd sentences in literary language. Liu Dawei & Wang Zhiguang (2007) put forward the possibility of features, in a further probe into this.

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No register rejects emphasis. If spoken unscrupulously, any clause can be emphasized by certain kinds of stimuli. It is not hard to understand that to emphasize, we must try to impress addressees, so we should get formal or semantic stimuli. The following formal augmentation by simulation can cause emphasis: {stress, elongation (e.g. long vowels), disparate use of set phrase (“Chaici (拆词)<sup>①</sup>” etc.), juxtaposed synonyms, repetition, extraposition (added position for elements)}. Semantic (in addition to formal) methods of emphasis include antithesis, rhetorical question, redundancy, absurd clause, selection of eye-catching synonyms<sup>②</sup>. Some methods are normal (stress, elongation, rhetorical question, antithesis, selection of eye-catching synonyms); others are variants (disparate use of set phrase, extraposition, semantic absurdity, redundancy (superposition, repetition<sup>③</sup>)). Variants alone involve compensation. Emphatic compensation exchanges variants for positive effects, as a means to form vivid artistic register or everyday casual style, so it is not found in typical scientific texts.

#### **5.3. Interactive elements**

The language system dictates the purpose of communication to organize items of linguistic structure, to adjust their interrelationship, and to suit structure to its environment, so that within the structure only this movement instead of that is allowed among various possibilities. So, in all the compensation modes, there are interactive relationships among the foundation, adjustment, object and raised clause acceptability. There are three types of interaction. The first type is mutual, based on the same need, which contains the effect of A on B and B on A. The factors in a resonance all serve the emphatic expression, so that clause intensity is obviously raised. Compensation only occurs in vivid registers or casual speech, which need it to enliven the atmosphere. The second is based on different needs, so that the effect of A on B is different from that of B on A. For example, variants often carry exceptions expressing exaggeration or special interest, which in turn raises clause acceptability. The third type is directional, that is, without the effect of B on A. Variants of the advanced compensation and adjustment strategy in condition change exemplify this type, with the latter providing the former with favorable environment in which to express positive emphasis (cf. §3.2. Change of conditions).

## **6. Universals in language**

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<sup>①</sup> “Chaici (拆词)” is a figure of speech, the disparate use of set phrases is aimed at a meaning.

<sup>②</sup> “yìcháng (异常, unusual)” is more emphatic than “fēicháng (非常, uncommon)” (Zhang and Zhang, 2005: 257).

<sup>③</sup> Repetition is counted as a variant because it violates the principle of economy.

In this paper, the rules of compensation are investigated in the field of emphatic compensation. Analysis is made into the variants, which achieve positive effects via exceptions, in order to offset the negative effects of variants and raise clause acceptability. After discussing their root causes, we conclude: Compensation is the result of the instrumentality and systematicity, rather than an accidental phenomenon; language must compromise against existing rules under utilitarian conditions, and follow informational adequacy in compensation; there are interactive relationships among clause bases, adjustment, objective and the raised acceptability. Fluctuation in acceptability is self-stabilizing, and follows the principle of adequacy in compensation. This is the concrete principle of operation in compensation. Since compensation is directly determined by the instrumentality and systematicity, its basic principles not only cater to the expressive activity of emphasis, but also to linguistic exceptions for other purposes (e.g. poetic license as variant), thus compensation is a synchronic dynamic mechanism that is universal. This is the final conclusion of this paper, which shows the value of our academic endeavor.

**Appendix**

**Field work results for the raise(+) or lowering(-) of acceptability**

Clauses	Average value	Raise or fall	Clauses	Average value	Raise or fall	Clauses	Average value	Raise or fall
3a	1	-17%	13a	0.083333	+221.4%	31a	0.419643	+260.2%
3b	0.830357		13b	0.267857		31b	0.528846	
29b	0.444444	+86.8%	14a	0.018519	+960.7%	32b	1	-68.5%
3b	0.830357		14b	0.196429		32c	0.314815	
5a	0.705357	+17.7%	18a	0.305556	+139.6%	32b	1	-52.8%
5b	0.830357		18b	0.732143		32d	0.472222	
6a	0.8125	+18.7%	19a	0.583333	+15.9%	33a	1	-60%
6b	0.964286		19b	0.675926		33b	0.401786	
7a	0.071429	+1012.5%	20a	0.138889	+311.4%	34b	0.991071	-44.9%
7b	0.794643		20b	0.571429		34c	0.546296	
8a	0.241071	+207.4%	21a	0.222222	+279.2%	35b	0.910714	-12.5%
8b	0.741071		21b	0.842593		35c	0.796296	
9a	0.196429	+83.8%	22a	0.074074	+840.2%	36a	0.848214	-22.5%
9d	0.361111		22b	0.696429		36b	0.657407	

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9b	0.107143	+237%	23a	0.303571	+226.4%	37a	0.366071	+61.9%
9d	0.361111		23b	0.990741		37b	0.592593	
9c	0.151786	+137.9%	25a	0.241071	+118.5%	38a	0.5625	+60.3%
9d	0.361111		25b	0.526786		38b	0.901786	
10a	0.5	+98.2%	28a	0.074074	+450%	39a	0.419643	+136.2%
10b	0.991071		28b	0.407407		39b	0.991071	
11a	0.5	+98.2%	29a	0.175926	+152.6%	40a	0.342593	+78.4%
11b	0.991071		29b	0.444444		40b	0.611111	
12a	0.444444	+58.7%	30a	0.222222	+300%	41a	0.87963	+12.7%
12b	0.705357		30b	0.888889		41b	0.990741	

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