

# A Corpus-based Study on the Semantic Features of “XiaLai” and “XiaQu” in Mandarin Chinese

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## Abstract

*This study is based on the investigation of the large-scale corpus and data statistics, applying methods of corpus linguistics. We analyzed the verbs from the top 100 frequency collocations. This study points out that the semantic features are related with the verbs, and we summarized their semantic features as [displacement], [durative] and [terminate]. Some semantic features are not so explicit, so we defined as [displace-terminate]. The two phrases have their own prominent semantic features, “XiaQu” tends to express [durative], which occupies 78.5%; “XiaLai” tends to express [terminate], which occupies 66.5%. They also present strong corresponding feature, which occupies 71.5%. When “XiaQu” works as complement among 100 verbs, it presents [durative] corresponding with “XiaLai”[terminate]. Their semantics appear similar distributions, which occupies 19%.*

## Keywords

“xialai”, “xiaqu”, verbs, semantic features, corpus linguistics

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## 1. Introduction

According to Liu Yuehua(1987), “XiaLai” and “XiaQu” after the adjective express the

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beginning of status. For example, “听了老王这番话, 她的心情才平静下来”[*ting le lao wang zhe fan hua, ta de xin qing cai ping jing xia lai*](*Hearing the old king's comments, she began to calm down*). Li Jinxi pointed out that “XiaQu” is an auxiliary, and it means “the continuation from begin to the end”. In addition, some scholars regarded “Xia Lai” and “Xia Qu” as aspect markers. For example, Zhang Guoxian(1999) thought that “Xialai” can express preorder time structure, which only comes into being in the end. “XiaQu” expresses postorder time structure, without starting point or ending point. Lu Yingshun(1999) accepted the viewpoint that “Xialai” stresses “from beginning to now”, while “Xiaqu” stresses “from nowadays to the future”. It shows that the aspect functions of “Xialai” and “Xiaqu” are very explicit.

But the aspect markers are not so strict on the continuation of righteousness. Specific performance for the speaker in the selection is the subjectiveness of psychological reference point. (Gao Shunquan 2001). “Xiaqu” can be summarized as [displacement], [continuation], [terminate] and [state](LuYingshun 2000). Some scholars even outlined nine kinds of implications, [separate], [abandon], [decision], [suspend], [accomplishment],and so on.

Expalining “Xialai” and “Xiaqu” from the cognitive perspective, “Xialai” is related to “bounded” while “Xiaqu” is related to “unbounded”(Liu Zhengguang 2013).

Most studies are based on the introspection, and scholars hold different opinions on the semantic features. Moreover, there is ambiguity about the division of aspect. From linguistic facts, this study investigates the collocation with the verb based on BCC corpus. As a result, we summarized their semantic features as [displacement], [durative] and [terminate]. On this basis, this study compared the similarity and differences between the complement “Xialai” and “Xiaqu”.

## 2. Distributions of the Similiar Semantic Features

As regard to the verbs above in our study, both “Xialai” and “Xiaqu” express the same semantic features when matching with the 38 verbs below.

### 2.1. [Terminate]

From the observation of the corpus, it is found that the semantic feature of “Xialai” and “Xiaqu” can be summarized as [teminate] when collocating with 12 verbs below.

verbs	xialai	xiaqu	verbs	xialai	xiaqu
放松[fangsong](relax)	698	6	镇定[zhending](assuage)	415	6
安顿[an-dun](arrange)	561	2	安定[an-ding](settle)	328	3
照[zhaol](photograph)	552	2	吩咐[fenfu](order)	110	152
平息[pingxi](calm down)	521	103	落实[luoshi](commit)	103	177
停顿[tingdun](pause)	475	4	镇压[zhenya](suppress)	13	109
缓和[huanhe]alleviate)	442	6	压制[yazhi](stifle)	30	92

Table 1 Verbs and frequency in “V+xialai/xiaqu” expression [terminate]

The verbs in table 1 present weak action, which is one of the factors that influence the semantic feature. “Xialai” and “Xiaqu” can be exchanged under such condition without changing the sentence meaning.

1) a.过了很长时间，吵闹声才平息下来。 [guo le hen chang shi jian, chao nao sheng cai ping xi xia lai] (After a long time, the noise subsided.)

b.总算有惊无险，这场风波暂时平息下去。 [zong suan you jing wu xian, zhe chang feng bo zan shi ping xi xia qu](Finally narrowly missed, the affair calmed down for a while.)

2) a.事情已被镇压下来，但政府抓人的举动仍未停止。

[shi qing yi bei zhen ya xia lai, dan zheng fu zhua ren de ju dong reng wei ting zhi]

(Things have been suppressed down, but the government has’t stopped arresting people.)

b.坚决地将一切反革命分子镇压下去。 [jian jue di jiang yi qie fan ge ming fen zi zhen ya xia qu]

(All the counterrevolutionary must be suppressed down firmly.)

“Xialai” in example 1)a and 2)a can be changed into “Xiaqu” without changing the sentence meaning.“Xiaqu” in example 1)b and 2)b can be changed into “Xialai”. “V+xialai/xiaqu” emphasizes on the state of the outcome after the action is completed.

## 2.2. [Displace-terminate]

When “xialai” and “xiaqu” are used as complement of the 23 verbs below, they present [displace-terminate]. The semantic feature boundary is not so explicit.

V	xialai	xiaqu	V	xiala	xiaqu
掉[diao](fall)	10293	3320	拉[la](pull)	1132	224
蹲[dun](squat)	2605	598	滚[gun](roll)	842	450
跳[tiao](jump)	2491	2776	滑[hua](slip)	811	509
拿[na](fetch)	1964	108	砸[za](smash)	368	163
塌[ta](collapse)	1829	94	淌[tang](drip)	333	13
垂[chui](droop)	811	136	撤[che](remove)	315	87
割[ge](cut)	500	40	退[tui](retreat)	1684	593
砍[kan](chop)	504	221	灌[guan](fill)	9	231
掉落[diaoluo](drop out)	301	36	带[dai](take)	107	244
踹[chuai](kick)	13	117	押[ya](detain)	4	129
扎[zha](prick)	14	101	踩 cai](tread)	12	202
拖 <sub>2</sub> [tuo](hold)	301	39			

Table 2 Verbs and frequency in “V+xialai/xiaqu” expressing [displace-terminate]

Without the specific context, the boundary between displacement and the state after displacing of the subject in a sentence is not so explicit. For example, “垂下去”[chui xia qu](hang down) can be explained as the process of “垂”[chui](hang), or the end of the process. In addition, if the sentence ends with “了”[le](have been done), it turns out to be explicit-[terminate]. The greater the displacement of the space is, the clearer the boundary tends to be.

3) 他的脚已经支撑不住身体的重量，靠着门慢慢地滑下去。

[ta de jiao yi jing zhi cheng bu zhu shen ti de zhong liang, kao zhe men man man de hua xia qu]

(His feet were unable to support the weight of this body, so he slowly slid down against the door.)

4) 他强制隐忍的热泪终于滚滚滑下来。[ta qiang zhi yin ren de re lei zhong yu gun gun hua xia lai] (His swallowed tears finally rollingly slid down.)

5) 山城的月是那么圆，那么明……似乎一个泛着黄晕的大玉盘，随时都会滑下来。

[shan chen de yue shi na me yuan, na me ming, ..... si hu yi ge fan zhe huan yun de da yu pan, sui shi hui hua xia lai] (The moon is so round, so bright..... It seems that the moon is a glowing yellow halo of large plate, and will slide down at any time.)

“滑下去” [hua xia qu](slide down) in example 3) means the process of “滑”[hua](slide) or the end of the action, the same as example 5) without specific context.

But in exmple 4), “终于”[zhongyu](finally) goes before 滑[hua](slide) in the sentence, which means the result of the action has no ambiguity.

It is worth noting that it means [duritive] when words like “不断[bu duan(constantly)]/接着[jiezhe](then)/将[jiang](will)/坚持[jianchi](adhere to)/再[zai](again)/一直[yizhi](always)/继续[ji xu](go on)” go before “V+xiaqu”, it tends to express [terminate]. When adverbs like “马上[ma shang](immediately)/便[bian](then)/立刻[li’ke](at once)/突然[tu ran](suddenly)/就[jiu](hence)” go before “V+xialai/xiaqu”, the sentence tends to express [terminate], while the adverbs are “正[zheng](be being)/正在[zheng zai](be being)/逐渐[zhu jian](gradually)/渐渐[jianjian](gradually)/慢慢[manman](slowly)” and so on, the sentence tends to express [diplace].

6) 上面的土方突然塌下来, 把他们压在了下面。 [shang mian de tu fang tu ran ta xia lai, ba ta men ya zai le xia mian] (The earth suddenly fell and covered.)

7) 她张嘴尖叫, 这时天花板正渐渐塌下来。 [ta zhang zui jian jiao, zhe shi tian hua ban zheng jian jian ta xia lai](She screamed when the ceiling was falling down.)

### 2.3. [Duritive]

We found that “V+xialai/xiaqu” express [duritive] only when the verbs are modified by“继续”[jixu](go on) and “错”[cuo](make mistakes) in BBC. Based on Lu Yingshun’ study in 1999, we think that “xiaqu” can also represent [duritive] about time from present to the future as “xialai” does. For example:

8) 这次重印, 这部分我没有校对, 以前怎样错下来的不能详查了。

[zhe ci chong yin ,zhe bu fen wo mei you jiao dui, yi qian zen yang cuo xia lai de bu neng xiang cha ]

( I have no proof about this part in the reprinting, so how it went wrong can not be examined. )

9) 如果喜欢你是一种错, 那我愿意错下去。

[ru ruo xi huan ni shi yi zhong cuo, na me wo yuan yi cuo xia qu](If loving you is a kind of wrong, I am willing to go wrong.)

10) 我当时不知道我们的婚姻能否维持下去以及是否值得继续下来。

[wo dang shi bu zhi dao wo men de hun yin neng fou wei chi xia qu yiji shi fou zhi de ji xu xia lai]

(I didn’t know whether our marriage can survive or it is worth being continued.)

11) 如果再这么继续下去, 我又要重蹈曾经的悲剧了。 [ru guo zai zhe me ji xu xia qu, wo you yao chong dao ceng jing de bei ju le] (If this continues, I will repeat the tragedy of the past.)

“V+xialai/xiaqu” in the above express [duritive]. In exmple 8) “错下来”[cuo xia lai](go wrong) refers to “from past to present”. In contrast to 8), exmple 9),example 10) and 11) refer to “from the present to the future”.

### 3. Distributions of the Corresponding Semantic Features

We found that “xialai” and “xiaqu” present strong corresponding semantic features when collocated with some verbs. In section 3.2, “xiaqu”-[duritive] corresponds to “xialai”-[terminate]. In section 3.3 “xialai”-[displace-terminate] corresponds to “xiaqu”-[displace-terminate] and [duritive].

#### 3.1. Xialai-[terminate] corresponds to Xiaqu-[duritive] and [displace-terminate]

“Xialai” expresses [terminate] corresponds to the semantic features of “xiaqu” including [displace-terminate] and [duritive] when modified by the 8 verbs below in table 3.

V	xialai	xiaqu		V	xialai	xiaqu	
	terminate	displace-terminate	duritive		terminate	displace-terminate	duritive
拍[pai](pat)	2402	107	93	取[qu](take)	1321	2	1
拍摄[paishe] (shoot)	353	1	2	跑[pao](run)	574	43	538
吃[chi](eat)	106	2367	231	跌[die](fall)	653	54	70
喝[he](drink)	15	2210	38	陷[xian](trap)	1	22	412

Table 3 The collocation verbs and frequency of corresponding semantic features

12) a.他高高地举起手，找准方位就要大力拍下去。[ta gao gao di ju qi shou, zhao zhun fang wei yao da li pai xia qu](He raised his hand up looked for the place to flap.)

b.连拍了六部电影，还将继续拍下去。[lian pai le liu bu dian ying, hai jiang ji xu pai xia qu]

(He has finished making six movies and he will continue to make more.)

13) 你真的是够艺术，这样的视角都被你拍下来了。[ni zhen de shi gou yi shu, zhe yang de shi jiao dou bei ni pai xia lai le] (You are genuinely artistic. You’ve taken a photo with such an amazing perspective)

14) a.一旦战争结束，猪肉价格马上就会跌下来。

[yi dan zhan zheng jie shu, zhu rou de jia ge ma shang jiu hui die xia lai](Once the war ended, pork prices will fall.)

b.她高兴得差点没从饭桌上跌下去。[ta gao xing de cha dian mei cong fan zhuo shang die xia qu](She was so excited that she almost fell down from the table.)

15) 大名古寿司一顿吃下来很少过瘾。[da ming gu shou si yi dun chi xia lai hen shao guo yin] (Daminggu sushi is always too little to feel my stomache.)

In example 12a) “拍下去” [pai](pat) is a specific action, which means a continuation of the time. But “拍”[pai](shoot) in example in 13) just refers to the result of the action, the same as “跌”[die](fall) in example 14a). Example 14b) “饭桌”[fanzhuo](table) is a spacial scale, so “跌下去”[die xia qu](fall down) express es[displace-terminate].

### 3.2. Xialai[terminate]-Xiaqu[duritive]

From the statistics, we found that when serving as the complements of the following 100 verbs, xialai expresses [terminate] correspond xiaqu expresses [duritive]. Due to space limitations, we only list a part of the word without frequency.

奋斗[fen dou](struggle)	交往[jiao wang](contact)	经营[jing ying](manage)
僵持(jiang chi)(stalemate)	找[zhao](find)	记录[ji lu](record)
静止[jing zhi](static)	救[jiu][help]	答应[da ying](repond)
睡[shui](sleep)	循环[xun huan](cycle)	隐瞒[yin man](conceal)
追查[zhui cha](trace)	发扬[fa yang](develop)	学[xue](study)
追究[zhui jiu](investigate)	解[jie](unbind)	传承[chuan cheng](inherit)
沿袭[yan xi](follow)	幸存[xing cun](survive)	讲[jiang](speak)
研究[yanjiu](reseach)	挤[ji](squeeze)	延伸[yan shen](extend)
执行[zhi xing](execute)	追问[zhui wen](ask)	保存[bao cun](save)
怪罪[guai zui]blam)	接受[jie shou](accept)	败[bai](lose)
等[deng](wait)	纠结[jiu jie](tangle)	聊[liao](chat)
贯彻[guan che](implement)	支撑[zhi chen](support)	承担[chen dan](assume)
进行[jin xing](proceed)	稳定[wen ding](stabilize)	保持[bao chi](maintain)
开展[kai zhan](promote)	存在[cun zai](exist)	遗留[yi liu](leave)
堕落[zhui luo](fall)	支持[zhi chi](support)	停留[ting liu](remain)
讨论[tao lun](discuss)	积累[ji lei](accumulate)	忍受[ren shou](bear)

Table 4 Verbs collocating with “xialai /xiaqu” expressions

[terminate/duritive]

We herely adopt “活”[huo](live) and “说”[shuo](speak) as examples to illustrate in details.

16) 他从老金这里买了 100 株花, 只活下来 60 来株。[ta cong lao jin zhe li mai le 100 zhu huang jia bao shi, zhi huo xia lai 60 zhu] (He bought 100 strains of flowers from laojin, but only 60 strains survived.)

17) 防止狗瘟的传播, 让更多健康的狗狗更好的活下去! [fang zhi gou wen de chuan bo, rang geng duo jian kang de gou gou geng hao de huo xia qu] (Prevent the spread of dog blast, and let more healthy dogs live better.)

18) 这汉子虽猥琐, 言语却极灵便, 一口气说下来, 连疙瘩都没有一个。[zhe man zi sui wei suo, yan yu qu ji ling bian, yi kou qi shuo xia lai, lian ge da dou mei you yi ge] (Although this man is trivial, his words are very flexible. He's able to talk for a long time without break.)

19) 这位有着强烈使命感的少女无法接着说下去。[zhe wei yo zhe qiang lie shi ming gan de shao nv wu fa jie zhe shuo xia qu] (The girl with a strong sense of mission cannot keep talking)

While comparing sentence 16) and 17), we can find that “活下来”[huo xia lai](live on) represents the final state, however, “活下去”[huo xia qu](continue to live) accounts for going on living. The differences between sentence 18) and sentence 19) is also very obvious. “说下来”[shuo xia lai](finish describing) means “words have finished”, but “说下去”[shuo xia qu](continue to speak) means going on to say.

### 3.3. Xialai[Displace-terminate]-Xiaqu[Displace-terminate] and[Duritive]

When collocating with the following 26 verbs, “V+xiaqu” can express both [displace-terminate] and [duritive], but “V+xialai” only means [displace-terminate].

拆[chai]	爬[pa]	坐[zuo]	冲[chong]	沉淀[chen dian]
扒[pa](cling)	发[fa](send)	揭[jie](uncover)	换[huan](exchange)	
飘[piao](flutter)	剪[jian](cut)	托[tuo](support)	压[ya](press)	飞[fei](fly)
扯[che](pull)	种[zhong](grow)	拔[ba](draw)	踢[ti](kick)	剥[bao](peel)
敲[qiao](knock)	劈[pi](split)	吞[tun](swallow)	走[zou](walk)	挖[wa](dig)
垮[kua](fall)	背[bei](recite)			

Table 5 Verbs collocating with “xialai /xiaqu” expressions

[displace-terminate/duritive]

20) 既然我选择了自己要走的路就算是爬也要爬下去。[ji ran wo xuan ze le zi ji yao zou de lu jiu suan shi pa ye yao pa xia qu] (Now that I have chosen the way I want to go, even if I have to crawl)



21) 三名探险队员系好安全带，慢慢地沿着吊绳爬下去。[san ming tan xian dui yuan xi hao an quan dai, man man di yan zhe diao sheng pa xia qu](Three explorers fastened their seat belts, climbed slowly along the rope)

22) 这时候可以看到乘客们纷纷正从车厢爬下来。[zhe shi hou ke yi kan dao cheng ke men fen fen zheng cong che xiang pa xia lai](At that time, you can see the passengers getting down from the car)

23) 一片片的鹅毛大雪纷纷扬扬地飘下来。[yi pian pian de e mao da xue fen fen yang yang di piao xia lai] (Snowflakes floated down)

24) In sentence 20) “爬下去”[pa xia qu](climb down) conveys abstract meaning and the semantic feature is [durative]. On the contrary, “爬下来”[pa xia lai](climb down) in sentence 21) and sentence 22) conveys concrete meaning. Thus it can be seen that “xialai” only expresses [displacement] or the result of displacement, rather than [durative] when it is the complement of “爬”[pa](climb). In 23), “飘下来”[piao xia lai](float down ) expresses [displacement-terminate], which means snowflakes are floating or the snowflakes have floated down the ground. It all depends on the context.

### 3.4. [Terminate]-[Durative]

As shown in table 6, the five verbs in the left list matching with “xiaqu” can express [terminate] and [durative], but can only express [terminate] in construction “V+xialai”. It only means [durative] when “xiaqu” matches with verbs in the right list, but construction “V+xialai” can express [terminate] and [durative].

xialai	xiaqu		xialai		xiaqu
terminate	terminate	durative	durative	terminate	durative
停[ting](stop)			坚持[jian chi] (insist)		
减[jian](reduce)			继承[ji cheng](inherit)		
松懈[song xie](loose)			撑[cheng](maintain)		
批[pi](approve)			待[dai](stay)		
冷却[leng que](cooling)					

Table 6 “V+xialai/xiaqu”express [terminate] consponding [durative]

25) 按说明书服药后，孩子体重不但没有减下去，反而增加了 0.2 公斤。[an shuo ming shu fu yao hou, hai zi ti zhong bu dan mei you jian xia qu, fan er zeng jia le 0.2 gong jin] (Following the instruction of the medicine, the child’s weight not only did not cut down, but also increased 0.2 kg.)

26) 今年就快要过去了, 我的肥还没有减下来。[jin nian jiu kuai yao guo qu le, wo de fei hai mei you jian xia lai](This year is going to pass, my weight has decreased.)

27) 唐纳凡已将库存量减少了五十天, 而且还会再继续减下去。[tan na fan yi jiang ku cun liang jian shao le wu shi tian, er qie hai hui zai ji xu jian xia qu](Tang Nafan has reduced fifty days of inventories, and will continue to reduce.)

28) 这种高度重视人的主观能动性的思想, 道士们世代代继承下来。[zhe zhong gao du zhong shi ren de zhu guan neng dong xing de si xiang, dao shi men shi shi dai dai ji cheng xia lai](The thought of paying great importance to person's subjective initiative has been handed down by monks from generation to generation.)

29) 党员干部特别是领导干部要加强这种修养并把它继承下去。[dang yuan gan bu te bie shi ling dao gan bu yao jia qiang zhe zhong xiu yang bing ba ta ji xu xia qu](Party members and cadres, especially leading cadres should strengthen the cultivation and inherit it)

Both “xialai” and “xiaqu” in sentence 24), 25) express [terminate] when combined with “减”[jian](lose weight). But “xialai” can also express [durative] in sentence 26), especially the adverbs “再”[zai](again) and verb“继续”[jixu](continue to do) in front of “V+xiaqu”. We can account “xialai” in sentence 27) for[durative] or [terminate], which depends on the context. But “xiaqu” in sentence 28) only means [durative].

#### 4. Distributions of the Prominent Semantic Features

We compared the semantic features of “xialai/xiaqu” from a general view. The study shows that “xialai” has its prominent semantic feature -[terminate], which occupies 66.5%., and “xiaqu” also has its semantic prominent feature-[durative], which occupies 78.5%.

	Xialai		Xiaqu	
	num	per	num	per
Displace-terminate	53	26.5%	55	27.5%
durative	6	3%	157	78.5%
terminate	133	66.5%	17	8.5%

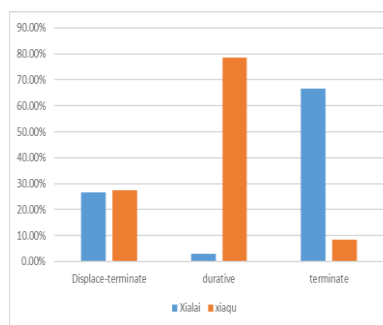


Table 7 The semantic features population distributions of xialai/xiaqu

V + xialai	V + xiaqu	
定居[ding ju](settle down)	想[xiang](think)	争论[zheng lun](debate)
取[qu](take)	等待[deng dai](wait)	爱[ai](love)
积淀[ji dian](deposit)	哭[ku](cry)	吵[chao](quarrel)
节省[jie shen](save)	纠缠[jiu chan](tangle)	纠结[jiu jie](struggle)
积攒[ji zan](accumulate)	服[fu](take down)	沉沦[chen lun](sink into)
下载[xiazai](download)	赌[du](gamble)	烂[lan](rot)
节约[jie yue](save)		

Table 8 The Multiple Selection of Verb for ‘xialai/xiaqu’

In order to further prove the prominent semantic features of “xialai/xiaqu”, we surveyed the collocations with verbs in corpus. In table 8, verbs in the left list only choose “xialai” as its complement, which means [terminate]. In contrast, verbs in the right list only choose “xiaqu” as its complement, which means [durative].

30) 尽管如此，“我们还得等待戈多，而且将继续等待下去”。[jin guan ru ci, “wo men hai de deng dai ge duo, bing qie ji xu deng dai xia qu”] (In spite of this, "we have to wait for Godot, and will continue to wait.")

31) 今天把《幸福拾荒者》下载下来了，一定要好好看看。[jin tian ba xing fu shi huang zhe xia zai xia lai le, yi ding yao hao hao kan kan] (Today I downloaded the *xing fu shi huang zhe*, and I look at it carefully.)

For example, “等待”[dengdai](to wait) only choose “xiaqu” as its complement instead of “xialai” in sentence 29). Contrarily, “下载” only choose “xialai” as its complement. We can’t say “等待下来”[deng dai xia lai] or “下载下去”[xia zai xia qu].

Verbs influence the collocation selections and consequently they also influence the semantic feature of “V+xialai/xiaqu”.

## 5. Conclusion

From the statistics of corpus, we point out that the semantic features of the two complements can be summarized as [displacement], [durative] and [terminate]. [Displacement] is the beginning of an action, [durative] is the process and [terminate] is the end. Sometimes, the semantic feature is not so explicit between [displacement] and [terminate], which denotes as [displacement-terminate]. Moreover, only when “xialai” and

“xiaqu” express [durative] in “V+xialai” and “V+xiaqu”, can they be named aspect markers.

In conclusion, influenced by the verb, the semantic features of “xialai” and “xiaqu” express the distributions as follow:

Firstly, the semantic features of “xialai” and “xiaqu” present similar distributions, which occupies 19%. Secondly, the two complements present strong semantic correspondence. For example, “xiaqu” expresses [durative] while “xialai” expresses [terminate], “xialai” expresses [displacement-terminate] while “xiaqu” expresses [displacement-terminate] and [durative] etc. Finally, “xialai” and “xiaqu” have their own prominent semantic features. The prominent semantic feature of “xiaqu” is [durative], occupying 78.5% among all the features. And the prominent semantic feature of “xialai” is [terminate], occupying 66.5% among all the features.

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