

Topicality and Differential Object Marking in Mandarin Chinese

Pei-Jung Kuo
National Chiayi University

SLE 2015
09/03/2015



INTRODUCTION

- In this talk I discuss the differential object marking in Mandarin Chinese.
- Yang and van Bergen (2007): BA is a kind of differential object marking in Mandarin Chinese.

- The BA construction

- S-V-O

(1) Zhangsan mai-le zhe-ben shu.
Zhangsan sell-ASP this-CL book
'Zhangsan sold this book.'

- S-O-V

(2) Zhangsan ba zhe-ben shu mai-le.
Zhangsan BA this-CL book sell-ASP

- The [\pm specificity] and [\pm animacy] exhibition

(3)

- a. Zhangsan (ba) shu/zhe-ben shu shuai-chuqu-le.
Zhangsan (BA) book/this-CL book throw-out-ASP
'Zhangsan threw the book/this book away.'
- b. *Zhangsan ba yi-ben shu shuai-chuqu-le.
Zhangsan BA one-CL book throw-out-ASP
'Zhangsan threw a book away.'

(4)

- a. Zhangsan *(ba) Lisi shuai-chuqu-le.
Zhangsan *(BA) Lisi throw-out-ASP
'Zhangsan threw Lisi away.'
- b. *Zhangsan ba yi-ge ren shuai-chuqu-le.
Zhangsan BA one-CL person throw-out-ASP
'Zhangsan threw a person away.'

- Major Claim:

- Two more constructions:
 - The verb copying construction
 - The transitive V-O compound verb construction
- Differential object marking in Mandarin Chinese is only observable with preposed objects inside the vP/TP domain.
- That is, differential object marking is co-related with internal topicalization in Mandarin Chinese.

- The roadmap:
 - The verb copying construction and the transitive V-O compound verb construction
 - The [\pm specificity] and [\pm animacy] exhibition
 - The shared property – internal topicalization
 - similarity and difference
 - Comparison with external topicalization

THE VERB COPYING CONSTRUCTION

- Li and Thompson (1981), Huang (1982), (1984), Gouguet (2006), Fang and Sells (2007), Cheng (2007), Hsu (2008), Tieu (2009) and so on

(5) Zhangsan **qi** ma **qi** de hen kuai.
 Zhangsan ride horse ride DE very quick
 'Zhangsan rode the horse very fast.'

- Proposal: The copied verb is not a verb, but a kind of differential object marking.
- Tsao (1987b): The copied verb is not a verb.
 - Aspect marker
 - A-not-A question

(6)
 a. Zhangsan qi-le/zhe/guo ma.
 Zhangsan ride-ASP horse
 'Zhangsan rode/is riding a horse.'
 b. *Zhangsan qi-le/zhe/guo ma qi-de hen kuai.
 Zhangsan ride-ASP horse ride-DE very fast

(7)
 a. Zhangsan qi-bu-qi ma?
 Zhangsan ride-not-ride horse
 'Does Zhangsan ride horses?'
 b. *Zhangsan qi-bu-qi ma qi-de hen kuai?
 Zhangsan ride-not-ride horse ride-DE very fast

- The [\pm specificity] and [\pm animacy] exhibition

(8)
 a. Zhangsan (fan) shu/zhe-ben shu fan-de hen yong-li.
 Zhangsan (flip) book/this-CL book flip-DE very hard
 'Zhangsan flipped the book/this book very hard.'
 b. *Zhangsan fan yi-ben shu fan-de hen yong-li.
 Zhangsan flip one-CL book flip-DE very hard
 'Zhangsan flipped a book very hard.'

(9)
 a. Zhangsan *(ti) Lisi ti-de hen yong-li.
 Zhangsan *(kick) Lisi kick-DE very hard
 'Zhangsan kicked Lisi very hard.'
 b. *Zhangsan ti yi-ge ren ti-de hen yong-li.
 Zhangsan kick one-CLperson kick-DEvery hard
 'Zhangsan kicked Lisi/*one person very hard.'

THE TRANSITIVE V-O COMPOUND VERB CONSTRUCTION

- V-O compound verbs (Li and Thompson 1981, Chang et al. 1988, Paul 1988, Tang 1988, C.-R. Huang 1989, Mo 1990, Her 1997 and so on)

(10)

- Zhangsan hen guan-xin Lisi.
Zhangsan very care Lisi
'Zhangsan cares Lisi a lot.'
- Zhangsan **dui** Lisi hen guan-xin.
Zhangsan to Lisi very care

- Proposal: *dui* is not a preposition, but a kind of differential object marking.

- Comparison to a semi-transitive V-O compound verb whose object is introduced by a real preposition:

- The semi-transitive V-O compound verb *kai-dao* (lit. open knife)

(11)

- *Yi-sheng kai-dao Dongni.
doctor operate Tony
'The doctor operated on Tony.'
- Yi-sheng [gei Dongni] kai-dao.
doctor to Tony operate
'The doctor operated on Tony.'

- Movement

- (12) [dui Kaite], Dongni hen guan-xin.
to Kate Tony very care
'Tony cares about Kate a lot.'

- (13) *[gei Dongni], yisheng mingtian kai-dao
to Tony doctor tomorrow operate
'The doctor will operate on Tony tomorrow.'

- Omission

- (14) Kaite, Dongni hen guan-xin.
Kate Tony very care
'Tony cares about Kate a lot.'

- (15) *Dongni, yisheng mingtian kai-dao
Tony doctor tomorrow operate
'The doctor will operate on Tony tomorrow.'

- The [\pm specificity] and [\pm animacy] exhibition

(16)

- Zhangsan (dui) shi/zhe-jian shi hen guan-xin.
Zhangsan (to) matter/this-CL matter very care
'Zhangsan cared about the matters/this matter a lot.'
- *Zhangsan dui yi-jian shi hen guan-xin.
Zhangsan to one-CLmatter very care
'Zhangsan cared about a matter a lot.'

(17)

- a. Zhangsan *(dui) Lisi hen guan-xin.
Zhangsan *(to) Lisi very care
'Zhangsan cared Lisi a lot.'
- b. *Zhangsan dui yi-ge ren hen guan-xin.
Zhangsan to one-CL person very care
'Zhangsan cared a person a lot.'

THE COMMON PROPERTY – INTERNAL TOPICALIZATION

- External topicalization in Mandarin Chinese (see Li and Thompson 1981, Liu 1997, Bender 2000 and many others):

(18)

- a. Gou/Zhe-zhi gou, Zhangsan hen xihuan.
dog/this-CL dog Zhangsan very like
'Zhangsan likes dogs/this dog very much.'
- b. *Yi-zhi gou, Zhangsan hen xihuan.
one-CL dog Zhangsan very like
'Zhangsan likes a dog very much.'

- Internal Topicalization in Mandarin Chinese:

- Tsao (1987): the BA NP is a topic
- Paul (2002, 2005) and Hsu (2008): the preposed NP between the subject and the verb is an internal topic
- The preverbal objects in these three constructions exhibit the same properties as the external topic.

- The BA construction

(19)

- a. Zhangsan (ba) shu/zhe-ben shu shuai-chuqu-le.
Zhangsan (BA) book/this-CL book throw-out-ASP
'Zhangsan threw the book/this book away.'
- b. *Zhangsan ba yi-ben shu shuai-chuqu-le.
Zhangsan BA one-CL book throw-out-ASP
'Zhangsan threw a book away.'

- The verb copying construction

(20)

- a. Zhangsan (fan) shu/zhe-ben shu fan-de hen yong-li.
Zhangsan (flip) book/this-CL book flip-DE very hard
'Zhangsan flipped the book/this book very hard.'
- b. *Zhangsan fan yi-ben shu fan-de hen yong-li.
Zhangsan flip one-CL book flip-DE very hard
'Zhangsan flipped a book very hard.'

- The transitive V-O compound verb construction

(21)

- a. Zhagnsan (dui) shi/zhe-jian shi hen guan-xin.
Zhangsan (to) matter/this-CL matter very care
'Zhangsan cared about the matters/this matter a lot.'
- b. *Zhagnsan dui yi-jian shi hen guan-xin.
Zhangsan to one-CL matter very care
'Zhangsan cared about a matter a lot.'

THE DIFFERENCE 1/2

- The syntactic domain:
 - BA and the BA NP is in the vP domain.
 - The object NPs in the verb copying construction and the transitive V-O compound construction can be higher than the vP domain.
- Interaction with modals:
 - Tsai (2010): deontic modals in Mandarin Chinese mark the vP periphery.

○ The BA construction

- (22) Zhangsan (bixu) ba zhe-jian shi
 Zhangsan must BA this-CL matter
 (*bixu) zuo-wan.
 must do-finish
 'Zhangsan must finish this matter.'

○ The verb copying construction

- (23) Zhangsan (bixu) qi na-pi ma
 Zhangsan must ride that-CL horse
 (bixu) qi de hen quai.
 must ride DE very fast
 'Zhangsan must ride that horse very fast.'

○ The transitive V-O compound verb construction

- (24) Dongni (bixu) [dui Kate] (bixu)
 Tony must to Kate must
 duo guan-xin yi-dian.
 much care one-point
 'Tony must care about Kate more.'

THE DIFFERENCE 2/2

- The formation of internal topics:
 - The BA construction: base-generation or movement
 - The verb copying construction: base-generation (Cheng 2007)
 - The transitive V-O compound verb construction: movement

○ The BA construction

- (25)
 a. Zhangsan mai-le yi-ben shu.
 Zhangsan sell-ASP one-CL book
 'Zhangsan sold a book.'
 b. Zhangsan **ba** yi-ben shu mai-le.
 Zhangsan BA one-CL book sell-ASP
- (26) Zhangsan **ba** zhi-men ti-le yi-ge dong.
 Zhangsan BA this-door kick-ASP one-CL hole
 'Zhangsan kicked a hole on the paper door.'

○ The verb copying construction

(27)

- a. K = [VP ride [_{deP} de very fast]]
 b. L = [_{NP} (that) horse]

(28)

- a. K = [VP ride [_{deP} de very fast]]
 b. M = [VP **ride** [_{NP} (that) horse]]

(29) [[_{VP} **ride** [_{NP} (that) horse]] [_{VP} ride [_{deP} de very fast]]

○ The transitive V-O compound verb construction

(30)

- a. Zhangsan hen guan-xin Lisi.
 Zhangsan very care Lisi
 'Zhangsan cares Lisi a lot.'
 b. Zhangsan **dui** Lisi hen guan-xin.
 Zhangsan to Lisi very care

○ The external topic

(31) Meiguohua, wo hen xi-huan.
 rose I very like
 'I like roses a lot.'
(32) Hua, wo zui xi-huan meiguohua.
 flower I most like rose
 'As for flowers, I like roses most.'

THE TP INTERNAL-ONLY RESTRICTION

○ The differential object marking is not available in external topicalization.

- The object in the transitive V-O compound verb construction can become external topics as well.
- There is no [±specificity] and [±animacy] differences for external topics.

○ The transitive V-O compound verb construction

(33)

- a. (dui) Kaite, Dongni hen guan-xin.
 to Kate Tony very care
 'Tony cares about Kate a lot.'
 b. (dui) zhe-jian shi, Dongni hen guan-xin.
 to this-CL matter Tony very care
 'Tony cares about Kate a lot.'

CONCLUSION

- In this paper I discuss the phenomena of differential object marking in Mandarin Chinese.
- The DOM phenomena can be observed in the BA construction, the verb copying construction, and the transitive V-O compound verb construction respectively.

-
- The shared syntactic property of these three constructions and the DOM phenomena is internal topicalization.
 - This then echoes the observations in García García (2005) for Spanish, Guntsetseg (2009) for Mongolian, Dalrymple and Nikolaeva (2011) for Tundra Nenets (Uralic) and Tigre.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Dalrymple, Mary and Irina Nikolaeva 2011. *Objects and Information Structure*. Cambridge University Press.
- García García, Marco. 2005. Differential object marking and informativeness. In *Proceedings of the Workshop "Specificity And The Evolution Emergence Of Nominal Determination Systems In Romance"*. Arbeitspapier 119. Konstanz: Universität Konstanz.
- Guntsetseg, Dolgor. 2009. Differential Object Marking in (Khalkha-)Mongolian. In: R. Shibagaki & R. Vermeulen (eds.). *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics (MWPL) 58, Proceedings of the 5th Workshop on Formal Altaic Linguistics (WAFAL 5)*, 115-129.
- Hsu, Yu-Yin. 2008. The sentence-internal topic and focus in Chinese. In *Proceedings of the 20th NACCL*, 635-652.

-
- Li, Charles N. and Sandra A. Thompson. 1981. *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Paul, Waltraud. 2002. Sentence-internal topics in Mandarin Chinese: the case of object preposing. *Language and Linguistics* 3.4: 695-714.
- Tsao, Feng-fu. 1987a. A Topic-Comment Approach to the *Ba* Construction. *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 15.1, 1-55.
- Tsao, Feng-fu. 1987b. On the so-called Verb-Copying construction in Chinese. *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association* 22.2: 13-44.
- Yang, Ning and Geertje van Bergen 2007. Scrambled objects and case marking in Mandarin Chinese. *Lingua* 117.9: 1617-1653.

Thank you for your attention!