

# Verb Copying Construction in Chinese: Weak Head and Labeling

Wenjun Shi & Satoshi Oku

(Hokkaido University & Hokkaido University)

**Key words:** verb copying construction, labeling, weak/strong head, Chinese, postverbal complement

Chinese has a peculiar construction, called “verb copying construction” (VCC) (e.g., Cheng 2007, Huang 1982, Kuo 2015, Zhao 2022), which appears as “Subj V<sub>1</sub> Obj V<sub>2</sub> XP” where V<sub>1</sub> and V<sub>2</sub> are copies of an identical verb and XP (postverbal complement: PVC) is obligatory.

(1) Zhangsan **xie** baogao \*(**xie**) [XP de hen lei]  
Zhangsan **write** report (**write**) DE very tired  
'Zhangsan wrote reports and got tired.'

In this paper, we propose:

a weak head (Chomsky 2015) must be phonologically realized to be a label and:

(A) [VP XP] complex is selected by a weak head v  
(B) the head X<sup>0</sup> of PVC (= XP) is also a weak head

We argue that (A) explains why V<sub>2</sub> in VCC must be pronounced and (B) explains internal structure patterns observed in PVC.

**[New Data & Discussion]** Under the labeling approach (Chomsky 2013, 2015), Zhao (2022) claims that when XP is introduced as PVC in (2), V moves to v as in (3-i) and is pronounced there; VP also moves out of  $\alpha$  as in (3-ii), which makes XP as the label of  $\alpha$ .

(2) [v [ $\alpha$  [VP V<sub>1</sub> obj] XP]]  $\rightarrow$  (3) ... [VP V<sub>1</sub> obj] ... [v-V<sub>2</sub> [ $\alpha$  [VP V<sub>1</sub> obj] XP]]  
(i) (ii)

We propose that movement (i) is not the only option to make v realized; the insertion of a dummy verb *gao* 'do' is another option as in (4).

(4) Zhangsan **xie** baogao [v-**gao** [XP de hen lei]]  
Zhangsan **write** report **do** DE very tired  
'Zhangsan wrote reports and got tired.'

Proposal (B) explains why *de* must appear in (1). Given (5) as the underlying structure of PVC, *de* insertion as in (1) makes X<sup>0</sup> overt and label  $\beta$  is identified as XP. Furthermore, assuming that *le* 'asp' is an affix and *lei* 'tired' and *le* make a verbal complex V<sup>0</sup> [lei-le], it raises to X<sup>0</sup> to make it overt as shown in (6a). However, since [hen lei] 'very tired' is phrasal, it cannot be incorporated into X<sup>0</sup>; X<sup>0</sup> stays covert and thus (6b) is ungrammatical.

(5) PVC = [<sub>b</sub> X<sup>0</sup> YP]  
(6) a. Zhangsan **xie** baogao **xie** [<sub>b</sub> X<sup>0</sup>-[lei-le] [YP ... lei-le ... ]]  
tired-asp  
'Zhangsan wrote reports and got tired'

b. \*Zhangsan xie baogao xie [b X<sup>0</sup> [VP ... [hen lei] ... ]]  
 \* very tired

We will further explore implications of our proposal for labeling as well as other secondary predicate structures in Chinese (cf. Sybesma 1999). (400 words)

\*This work is supported in part by the JSPS KAKENSHI #24K03883 (Project Leader: Oku)

## References

Cheng, Lisa (2007), Verb Copying in Mandarin Chinese. In: Norbert Corver and Jairo Nunes (eds.) *The Copy Theory of Movement*, 151-174. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Chomsky, Noam (2013), Problems of Projection, *Lingua* 130, 33-49.

Chomsky, Noam (2015), Problems of Projection: Extensions, in Elisa Di Domenico, Cornelia Hamann and Simona Matteini (eds), (2015), *Structures, Strategies and Beyond: Studies in Honor of Adriana Belletti*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1-16.

Huang, C.-T., James (1982), Logical Relations in Chinese and the Theory of Grammar, Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT.

Kuo, Pei-Jung (2015), The Components of Sideward Movement in the Verb Copying Construction in Mandarin Chinese, *Studies in Chinese Linguistics* 36, 35-58.

Sybesma, Rint (1999), *The Mandarin VP*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Zhao, Chen (2022), Chinese Verb Copying Constructions: A Labeling Account, *Lingua* 269, 1-39.