

Verb Copying Construction in Chinese: Weak Head and Labeling

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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_1 Obj V_2 XP” where V_1 and V_2 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:

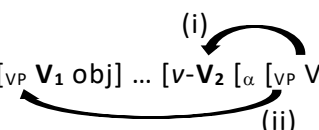
a weak head (Chomsky 2015) must be phonologically realized to be a label and:

(A) [VP XP] complex is selected by a weak head v

(B) the head X^0 of PVC (= XP) is also a weak head

We argue that (A) explains why V_2 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 α as in (3-ii), which makes XP as the label of α .

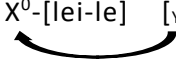
- (2) [v [α [_{VP} V_1 obj] XP]] → (3) ... [_{VP} V_1 obj] ... [v - V_2 [α [_{VP} V_1 obj] XP]]
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We propose that movement (i) is not the only option to make v realized; the insertion of a dummy verb *gao* ‘do’ is another option as in (4).

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

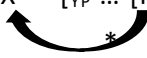
Proposal (B) explains why *de* must appear in (1). Given (5) as the underlying structure of PVC, *de* insertion as in (1) makes X^0 overt and label β is identified as XP. Furthermore, assuming that *le* ‘asp’ is an affix and *lei* ‘tired’ and *le* make a verbal complex V^0 [*lei-le*], it raises to X^0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

- (5) PVC = [_b X^0 YP]

- (6) a. Zhangsan **xie** baogao **xie** [_b X^0 -[*lei-le*] [_{YP} ... *lei-le* ...]]
tired-asp
- 

‘Zhangsan wrote reports and got tired’

b. *Zhangsan xie baogao xie [_b X⁰ [_{YP} ... [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)

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