

Double Object Construction with Applicative in Mandarin Chinese

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Minnesota Undergraduate Linguistics Symposium
April 17, 2021 Carleton College



Key words: Semantics; Applicatives; Double object construction; Mandarin Chinese

Research Question

In Mandarin Chinese (MC), both ditransitive and transitive verbs can appear in double object construction (DOC). There are two kinds of transitive verbs being examined here, namely compound verb and consumption verb. This research investigates how Pyllkkänen's (2008) analysis of applicative applies with MC. I present evidence that ditransitive verbs and compound verbs should take the High Applicative (HA) approach, and transitive consumption verbs fit with the Low Applicative (LA) approach better.

Background

Pyllkkänen's proposal on double object construction (2008) :

High Applicative:

The HA attaches the Appl above the verb and demonstrates the relation between the IO and the event.

(1a) Chaga

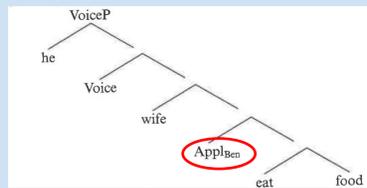
Na-a-i-lyi-i-a m-ka k-elya
FOC-1SG-PRES-eat-APPL-FV 1-wife 7-food
'He is eating food for his wife.' (Pyllkkänen (2008), pp.11 EX2)

Low Applicative:

The LA attaches the Appl below the verb and focuses on the relation between the DO and the IO.

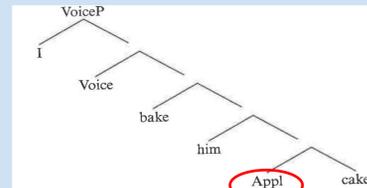
(2a) English

I baked my friend a cake.
'I baked a cake and the cake was to the possession of my friend.' (Pyllkkänen (2008), pp.15 EX7b)



(1b) High Applicative

(Chaga: Pyllkkänen (2008), pp. 11 EX 2)



(2b) Low Applicative

(English: Pyllkkänen (2008), pp. 15 EX 7b)

Double object construction in Mandarin Chinese:

There are four structures for sentences with two explicitly stated objects (DO and IO):

I. S + V + DO + (Prep) IO

(3) wo song shu gei ta
I present book Prep she
'I present a book (as a gift) to her.'

II. S + (Prep) IO + V + DO

(4) wo gei ta song shu
I Prep she present book
'I present a book (as a gift) to her.'

III. S + (Prep) DO + V + IO

(5) wo ba shu song ta
I Prep book present she
'I present a book (as a gift) to her.'

IV. S + V + IO + DO

(6) wo song ta shu
I present she book
'I present her a book (as a gift).'

Note: *Gei* and *ba* are notated prepositions here. *Gei* introduces the IO and *ba* introduces the DO.

- Only **structure IV** is considered as **DOC**. (Wei, 2006)
- Not all ditransitive verbs can appear in structure IV**; at least half of verbs that imply 'the subject is getting something' cannot use structure IV. (Zhang & Zhou, 1998)
- In MC, **DOC does not mean the verb has to be ditransitive**; DOC is a structure while ditransitive, intransitive, and transitive are the properties of verbs. (Wei, 2006)

Abbreviation Gloss:

- MC: Mandarin Chinese
- HA: High Applicative
- LA: Low Applicative
- Appl: Applicative head
- DO: Direct Object
- IO: Indirect Object
- S: Subject
- V: Verb
- Prep: Preposition
- Quan: Quantifier
- DOC: Double Object Construction: DOC

Verbs in Double Object Construction

Ditransitive verb (HA)

- Some ditransitive verbs can take three arguments by themselves;
- The DO has a closer relation to the verb than IO does. (Lu, 2015)

(7a) wo wenni yi ge wen ti
I ask you one Quan question
'I ask you a question'

Sentence (7a) can be represented as in (7b):

- The **DO** 'a question' is initially merged nearer to the verb 'ask' and formed a **VP** constituent 'ask a question';
- The Appl introduces the **IO** 'you' to the **VP** event of 'asking a question';
- The **verb** 'ask' moves up to Appl and ends up in v.

HA demonstrates that DO is close to the verb in semantic level. Thus, I argue that **HA explains ditransitive verb in DOC**.

Compound verb (HA)

- Compound verb: verb (some transitive verbs) + *gei* (to imply a **direction of transfer**);
- The argument capacity extends to three. (Paul & Whitman, 2010)

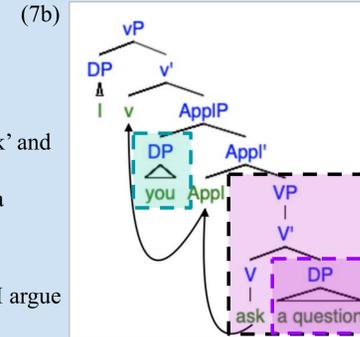
(8a) wo xie-GEI ni yi feng xin
I write-GEI you one Quan letter
'I write you a letter'

(8b) *wo xie ni yi feng xin
I write you one Quan letter

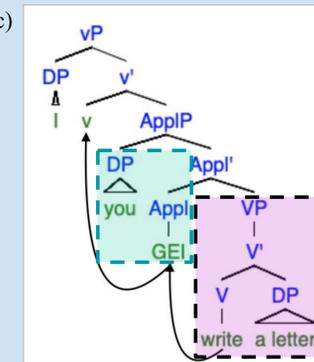
While the transitive verb *xie* in sentence (8b) cannot take three arguments, the compound verb *xie-gei* in (8a) can have an "extra entity" as in (8c):

- The **DO** 'a letter' is initially merged nearer to the verb 'write' and formed a **VP** constituent 'write a letter';
- The light verb *gei* functions as the Appl in HA and introduces the **IO** 'you' to the event of 'writing a letter';
- The verb moves up to Appl, merges with the *gei*, and ends up in v.

HA demonstrates how *gei* introduces the direction of transfer -- the IO. Thus, I argue that **HA fits the compound verb in DOC**.



(7b)

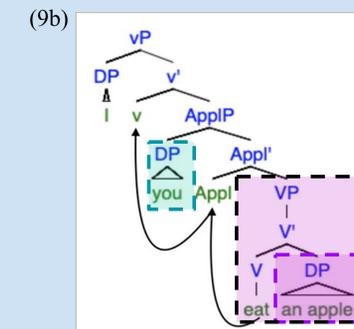


(8c)

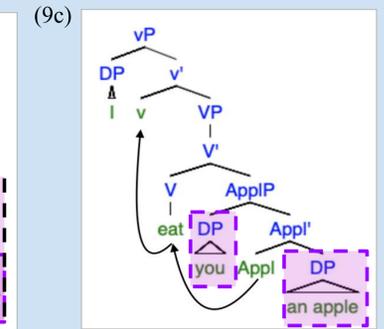
Transitive consumption verb (LA)

- Transitive consumption verb can have a potential direction of transfer;
- If a transitive consumption verb appears in a DOC, it indicates that the IO is being affected. (Wei, 2006)

(9a) wo chi ni yi ge ping guo
I eat you one Quan apple
'I eat an apple (your apple)'



(9b)



(9c)

Sentence (9a) fits with HA and LA from different perspectives:

If we use HA structure as shown in (9b):

- The **DO** 'an apple' is initially merged nearer to the verb 'eat' and formed a **VP** constituent 'eat an apple';
- The Appl introduces the **IO** 'you' to the event of 'eating an apple', indicating that the consumption of 'apple' affects the **IO**;
- The **verb** 'eat' moves up to Appl and ends up in v.

If we use LA structure as shown in (9c):

- The Appl introduces the **IO** to **DO**, indicating **possessive relation** between **IO** and **DO**.
- The verb completes the event of 'I eat an apple (your apple), which consumes something (belongs to you).'

Supports of LA:

- Transitivity restriction** does not allow the verb to be unergative in LA. (Pyllkkänen, 2008)
 - Since the transitive consumption verb is transitive and requires two arguments, it cannot be unergative.
- Verb semantics restriction** does not allow the verb to be static in LA. (Pyllkkänen, 2008)
 - Since the transitive consumption verb often causes consumption, it is not static and can imply a transfer of 'possession.'

HA interpretes the sentence as the IO being affected by the event, while LA focuses on the the IO's possession which is the patient of the event. Since transitive consumption verb follows Pyllkkänen's restriction on LA strictly, I argue that **LA fits the transitive consumption verb in DOC better**.

Conclusion & Future Studies

Conclusion:

In MC, HA appears in DOC with **some ditransitive verbs** and **compound verbs**, while LA fits better with **transitive consumption verbs**.

Future studies:

- What types of transitive verbs can form compound verbs?
- What types of transitive verbs can have a potential direction?
- Will different types of transitive consumption verbs have distinct relationships between between the DO and the IO? If so, which structure fits better?

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my special thanks to professor Cherlon Ussery who encouraged me to attend this conference and helped me revise my abstract. I really appreciate the comments and feedback. I also want to thank anonymous reviewers of this poster. Last but not least, thank you to the MULS Organizing Committee for holding this fabulous conference.

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