

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The present study examines the syntactic behaviour of transitive verb-object phrases (henceforth VOP) in modern spoken (Mandarin) Chinese (pǔtōnghuà). These VOPs, which consist of a verb and an object, are called transitive because they allow for another object. Thus in (1), bìngrén 'patient' is the "outer" object of the VOP kāi dāo 'to open knife' = 'to operate on', whereas dāo 'knife' is the "inner" object of the VOP kāi dāo:

- (1) 醫生給病人開刀  
 Yisheng gei bingren kai dao  
 doctor for/to patient open knife

The doctor operates on the patient.

I have excluded from my investigation intransitive VOPs like bì yè 'to finish studies' = 'to graduate', shāng fēng 'to hurt wind' = 'to catch a cold', chū shì = to produce world' = 'to be born', as well as verb-object compounds (like chū-bǎn 'to produce-printing plate' = 'to publish') whose objects can immediately follow and which therefore show the same behaviour as simple verbs, e.g. mǎi 'to buy':

- (2) 他買了/出版了一本書  
 Ta mai-le /chu-ban-le yi-ben shu  
 3SG buy-PERF/publish-PERF 1 -CL book

He has bought/published a book.

In the case of the VOPs, however, the position to the right of the VOP is unacceptable for the outer object, and the unacceptability of the structure 'Subject verb inner Object outer Object' thus serves as a criterion to distinguish between V-O phrases and V-O compounds:

- (3) \*醫生開刀病人  
Yisheng kai dao bingren  
doctor open knife patient

The unacceptability of (3) can be accounted for if we compare it to (2): the outer object bìngrén 'patient' is not allowed to follow the VOP kāi dāo 'to open knife' = 'to operate on' because the object position is already taken by the inner object, dāo.

This explanation is based on the "Phrase Structure Condition" (PSC) proposed by James C.T. Huang(1982). According to the PSC, the internal structure of a phrase XP in Chinese is always head-final, except on the lower level where it may be head-initial. (This does, however, not hold for the NP which is always head-final.) Applied to the VP, the PSC predicts, roughly speaking, that a verb can only be followed by one constituent, for with more than one postverbal constituent we obtain the structure  $[_V[_V V NP] NP]$ . Such a structure is ruled out by the PSC, because not only is the head of the lowest level  $\bar{V}$  on the left, but also the head of the next higher level  $\bar{V}$ . It is the PSC which will serve as our working hypothesis and whose predictions will be compared with the data.

With the aid of the Xiàndài hànyǔ cídiǎn (Peking 1978) and the Chinese-English Dictionary (Peking 1978), a corpus of about 400 VOPs has been established not including dialectal expressions and expressions belonging to the written language.

While concentrating on the syntactic behaviour of VOPs, this study is at the same time an exploration of the Chinese syntax in general. This is also reflected in the organization of this work: chapters devoted to particular problems of the VOPs alternate with chapters of a more general nature which go beyond the domain of the VOPs.

Thus, chapter 2 explains why in most of the sinological literature, the verb-object phrases have been incorrectly analysed as verb-object compounds.

In chapter 3, the PSC and the different phenomena it can account for are discussed at length. We particularly concentrate on the repetition of the verb when followed by two constituents, i.e. the direct object and a complement of duration (or of frequency) or a complement of manner. This process called "verb copying" can save structures otherwise ruled out by the PSC. Another way to make a structure with two postverbal constituents conform to the PSC is restructuring modeled on the double object construction, double object verbs allowing two NPs in the postverbal position. Furthermore, I explain why the second verb in the verb copying construction cannot mark the outer object, although the resulting structure would be well-formed with respect to the PSC.

Chapter 4 gives a complete overview of the forms available for the outer object, marking with gěi (cf. (1)) being only one of several possible forms. On the basis of these data, I then discuss whether there is a relation between a given VOP and the form of its outer object and whether the form of the outer object can be predicted for each VOP. I also inquire into the underlying representation for the VOPs and I give arguments in favour of the representation  $[_V[_V \text{ verb inner Object}] \text{ outer Object}]$ .

In chapter 5, I explain why the outer object marked by gěi is only allowed in the preverbal position (cf. (1)), and unacceptable in the postverbal position:

- (4) \*醫生開刀給病人  
Yisheng kai dao gei bingren  
doctor open knife to/for patient

The unacceptability of (4) is surprising in so far as the postverbal gěi-phrase is not only allowed for verbs of giving, but also for verbs like qī (chá) 'to brew (tea)' and dǎ (máo yī) 'to knit (a sweater)' which do not belong to the class of verbs of giving: qī chá gěi Zhāngsān 'to make tea for Zhangsan'.

Given the complexity of the problems linked to gěi, I first give a detailed summary of the most exhaustive study on gěi, i.e. that of Zhu Dexi(1979, 1983). I then criticize it point by point and propose my own analysis which differs from Zhu's, especially in the analysis of complex sentences with a purposive clause introduced by gěi: NP V NP gěi NP V (NP)'. Whereas Zhu considers these complex sentences as the extension of a corresponding sentence with a postverbal gěi-phrase: NP V NP gěi NP', I show that for verbs which are not verbs of giving the sentence with a postverbal gěi-phrase is in fact derived from the sentence with a purposive gěi-clause, and not the other way round, as Zhu suggests.

On the basis of this new analysis, it is now possible to explain why the outer object marked by gěi is confined to the preverbal position. VOPs do not allow their outer objects marked by gěi to be in the postverbal position because they are not compatible with a purposive gěi-clause from which the postverbal gei-phrase would have to be derived.

In chapter 6, I introduce the distinction between "syntactic restructuring" and the "thematic reanalysis". We have an example of restructuring in (5) where the complement of duration, sān-ge zhōngtóu 'three hours', appears as the modifier of the direct object. Sentence (6), on the other hand, illustrates a case of reanalysis: the outer object tā 'he' occupies the modifier position of the inner object, i.e. it takes on the form of the

"possessive object":

- (5) 我看了三個鐘頭的書  
 Wo kan -le san-ge zhongtou-de shu  
 1SG look-PERF 3 -CL hour -SUB book

I read for three hours.

- (6) 上級革了他的職  
 Shangji ge -le ta -de zhi  
 boss expel-PERF 3SG-SUB work

The boss fired him.

Though superficially the NP resulting from restructuring, sān-ge zhōngtóu-de shū, and the NP resulting from the reanalysis, tā-de zhí, have the same structure, I show them to behave differently with respect to the deletion of the head noun in coordinated structures, taking the behaviour of a NP with a real modifier (like wǒ-de shū '1SG-SUB book' = 'my book') as the standard of comparison. Since in the deletion of the head noun, the outer object displays the same behaviour as a NP with a real modifier, I examine whether the reanalysed NP 'o.O.de i.O' can be passivised and topicalised to the same extent as a NP with a real modifier. The chapter closes with a comparison between the possessive object and the "possessive subject", i.e. the reanalysis of the subject as the modifier of the object moved to the preverbal position.

In chapter 7, we abandon our working hypothesis, the PSC, because the discussion of the data related to the VOPs has proven the PSC to be inadequate. We propose instead two other conditions, the "Bi-uniqueness Condition" and the "Condition of Predication", which together account for the constraints governing the postverbal position.