

Mandarin verb doubling involves A-movement of VP

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Under the copy theory of movement, it has been recently argued that VP in Mandarin Chinese can move to either a clause-internal position or a left peripheral position when there are postverbal duration/ frequency adverbials, leaving a verb copy in a lower position and thus deriving verb doubling effect. This movement analysis is supported by island effects and the lexical identity between the two verbs.

(1) **Low VP-fronting:** Zhangsan [du zhe ben shu] du=le liang ge xiaoshi.
Z(name) read this CL book read=Perf two CL hour
'Zhangsan read this book for two hours.'

High VP-fronting: [du zhe ben shu], Zhangsan du=le liang ge xiaoshi.
read this CL book Z read=Perf two CL hour
'Zhangsan read this book for two hours.'

Baseline: Zhangsan du=le zhe ben shu liang ge xiaoshi.
Z read=Perf this CL book two CL hour
'Z read this book for two hours.'

Based on the tests for A/A'-distinction in van Urk (2015), the current study proposes that these two types of VP-fronting involve distinct types of movement. Low VP-fronting in Mandarin involves A-movement, for it cannot cross finite clause boundaries, shows no reconstruction in terms of Principle C, destroys pre-established antecedent-anaphor relation, and induces no obvious discourse-related interpretation in comparison with its baseline. In addition, the interaction between VP-fronting and modality elements shows that there is no reconstruction in terms of scope, for VP above modality elements is always interpreted out of its scope, yielding *de re* interpretation. Specifically, for epistemic modality, which is compatible with perfective aspect, this would be the presupposition of perfectivity. For deontic and dynamic modality, this would be a conditional interpretation. For future plan modality, a bound-to-happen interpretation can be observed. In contrast, high VP-fronting is argued to involve A'-movement (topicalization in previous proposals) following low VP-fronting, for it freely crosses finite-clause boundaries, shows reconstruction effects, and carries topic interpretation, but only reconstructs to a clause-internal position. The A-movement of VP in Mandarin Chinese independently favors a featural view of A/A'-distinction that all differences between A- and A'-movement derive from the features involved in Agree: A-movement involves agreement of obligatory features of the goal, while A'-movement involves optional ones (van Urk 2015). Following this thread, the current proposal is that low VP-fronting involves the agreement of [PRED] feature and targets SpecFP, a functional projection between TP and AspP, and that high VP-fronting, or VP-topicalization, involves the agreement of [TOP] feature targets SpecTopP in left periphery. Notably, FP must be distinct from IP-internal TopicP for VP-fronting can occur within complement clauses of restructuring predicates, which has been argued to disallow IP-internal topicalization for lacking of relevant functional projection.

This proposal correctly captures the recursiveness of landing site of VP-fronting that has not been explored before. In multiple modality sentences, low VP-fronting can land above, in-between or below the modality elements. Assuming that Mandarin modality elements are base-generated below TP, behave like control verbs and take complement clause with TP (Lin 2012; Lai & Li 2024, cf. Tsai 2015), this recursiveness of landing site naturally correlates with the presence of TP. Similarly, in coordinate structures, low VP-fronting can only occur in conjuncts at least as big as TP. If low VP-fronting targets FP below than TP, all these observations follow.

In sum, this study claims that VP-fronting in Mandarin further supports the featural view of A/A'-distinction, and argues that A-movement is not intrinsically related with phi-agreement and therefore is not restricted to nominals, which has been recently argued independently based on cross-linguistic evidence.