

On the flexibility of argument realisation in Mandarin V-V resultatives

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In Mandarin V-V resultatives, V1 may fail to project its agent (1), its theme (2), or both (3).

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| (1) <i>Tūdòu dùn-làn-le.</i>
potato stew-pappy-PFV
'The potatoes were stewed
pappy.' | (2) <i>Ākiū tī-pò-le</i>
Akiu kick-break-PFV
'The sneakers broke from Akiu
kicking (something).' | (3) <i>Qiúxié tī-pò-le.</i>
sneakers kick-break-PFV
'The sneakers broke from
kicking.' |
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Agent omission is not restricted to V-V resultatives, but is more widely attested in Mandarin, including in phrasal *V-de* resultatives. However, omission of an otherwise obligatory theme is unexpected.

Main claim: In Mandarin V-V resultatives, V1 does not project any arguments.

Proposal: In line with previous work, I assume that V-V resultatives are compounds. They contain a null head that selects a main 'become' event to its right (V2) and a subordinate causing event to its left (V1), as well as a Causer argument when present. Since this head must be compatible with V1s of different arities, it cannot select for any argument variables in V1. Any argument variables of the subordinate causing event must therefore undergo existential closure. The arguments projected by the compound can, but need not, be interpreted as identical to the existentially closed arguments of V1.

Prediction 1: Mandarin V-V resultatives are inaccessible to syntactic operations

V1 and V2 cannot be (i) independently modified, (ii) independently coordinated or (iii) separated by an aspectual marker (see Fan 2016).

Prediction 2: Since *V-de* resultatives are not compounds, V1 must project its internal argument

At first glance, *V-de* resultatives appear to be as flexible as V-V resultatives in terms of argument realisation. Indeed, Williams (2005) makes precisely this claim and argues that V1 does not select any arguments in either *V-de* or V-V resultatives. This claim is supported by examples like (4), where the overt DP following *de* (hereafter "DP2") cannot be interpreted as the internal argument of V1 but must be contained in the result phrase.

- (4) *Wǒ pāi Lǎo Wéi de mǎ pì, kuā-de lián tā tàitai yě bùhǎoyìsì le.*
1s smack Lao Wei DE horse rump praise-DE even 3s wife also embarrassed PRT

'Flattering Lao Wei, I praised [him] such that even his wife got embarrassed.' (Williams 2005:86)
Thus, for Williams, all resultatives are essentially strong resultatives. But this analysis fails to explain why weak *V-de* resultatives with obligatorily transitive V1 are degraded compared to strong ones with intransitive V1 (5). This contrast is strongest when DP2 is non-specific (Zhang 2001) and weaker when it is specific and/or discourse-prominent. There is no comparable contrast in V-V resultatives (6).

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| (5) A. { <i>chàng/*dǎ</i> }- <i>de liǎng gè hái zi kū-le.</i>
A. sing/beat-DE two CL child cry-PFV
'A. {sing/ beat (two children)} and as a result
two children cried.' | (6) A. { <i>chàng/dǎ</i> }- <i>kū-le liǎng gè hái zi.</i>
A. sing/beat-cry-PFV two CL child
'A. {sing/ beat (two children)} and as a result
two children cried.' |
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This contrast can be explained if we assume that *V-de* and V-V resultatives have different structures, and that V1 must project its internal arguments in *V-de* but not in V-V resultatives. Suppose we assume that an obligatorily transitive V1 invariably projects its theme in a *V-de* resultative. We may then derive three predictions. (i) If this theme intervenes between *de* and its phonological host V1, it cannot be overt, but must be *pro*. (ii) *pro* is not licensed by a non-specific antecedent. (iii) Although *pro* would not c-command DP2, in the absence of an appropriate context, it could be linked to DP2 in violation of the Leftness Condition. We therefore expect the contrast in (5) to be weaker in contexts where DP2 is already active in the discourse. These predictions seem to be correct.

Conclusion: Whether V1 projects its arguments in a Mandarin resultative depends on the the structure of the resultative in which V1 appears. It may be possible to generalise this conclusion to explain the differences between compound and phrasal resultatives cross-linguistically.

Selected refs: Fan, Ying. 2016. Serial verb constructions in Mandarin Chinese and Jinjiang Southern Min. U of Manchester dissertation. • Williams, Alexander. 2005. Complex causatives and verbal valence. UPenn dissertation. • Zhang, Niina Ning. 2001. The structures of depictive and resultative constructions in Chinese. *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 22:191-221.