Null Object Extent Resultatives in Chinese
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Abstract

Previous analyses of Chinese de-resultatives (Huang 1988, Huang 1992, Sybesma 1999, Gu and Pan 2001) have not dealt with data where complement/resultative clauses contain a null object. To date, the literature has offered much insight into the relation between the matrix predicate and the result clause as well as the proper treatment (control or raising) of the de-resultatives. However, the core data examined in the previous work have not included what I refer to as “Null Object Extent Resultatives” (NOER). In this paper, I will investigate the properties of NOER and propose a Null Operator Movement account for the phenomena observed in this particular construction.

Extent Resultatives are constructions which describe the degree to which a matrix predicate extends (c.f. Li & Thompson 1982). Structurally, they are complex resultative constructions composed of a stative verb (V1) with a postverbal de (“to the extent of”) followed by a verb phrase (V2). As their name imply, NOER are different in that the verb phrase contains a null object.

(1) Mali xiong-de (V1) [wo wufa kaojin e] (V2)
   Mali mean p.    I unable near
   “Mary is so mean that I cannot be near her”

(2) Zhe haizi tiaopi-de (V1) [wo buneng guanjiao e] (V2)
   This child mischievous p. I cannot discipline
   “This child is so mischievous that I cannot discipline him”

As the examples illustrate, Null Object Extent Resultatives are characterized by an object gap in the embedded complement clause. Moreover, the empty category occupying the object position appears to be coreferential with the matrix subject, suggesting that some sort of movement or binding relationship may be involved.

In this paper, I propose that indeed, movement is involved in this construction. Specifically, I suggest that NOER are the result of A’-movement of a null operator, or Null Operator Movement, where a null operator (OP) is said to move above the complement clause, resulting in an effect of coferentiality due to the formation of a λ-predicate in the sentences (Chomsky 1977, Browning 1987).

(3) Malii [DegP [Deg xiong-de] [CP OPi [IP wo [IP wufa kaojin tii]]]]

In particular, I show that null objects are interpreted as variables just like wh-traces. Furthermore, I present evidences that NOER exhibit properties typically found in A’-movement constructions. In addition, I compare NOER constructions with English comparatives. Integrating all the analyses, I propose a syntactic representation of NOER constructions which, like the construction of its English counterparts, include a projection DegP but whose head is phonetically null and selects a stativeP. The study, then, not only
offers an account of the behaviors of the Null Object Extent Resultatives constructions but also seeks to unify crosslinguistic analyses of comparatives.

Reference