

## On the So-called Verb-duplication Construction in Mandarin Chinese

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The purpose of this paper is two-fold, first, to argue that “the verb duplicated construction” in Mandarin should be analyzed as having the original VP (henceforth VP1) base-generated in the INFL domain and the so-called duplicated verb as the predicate of the sentence (i.e. (1)); second, to argue that two distinct sentence internal functional heads can license internal topic and internal focus respectively, with fixed ordering, and that the VP1 can be licensed at one of such internal positions. For example, in (2a) the VP1 *xue diannao* ‘learn computer science’ serves as the Topic of the sentence and the other preverbal phrase being the Focus has to follow VP1. However, in (2b) the same VP1 contrasts with *xue yuyan* ‘learn language’, and therefore, VP1 should follow the other sentence internal phrase *qu meiguo* ‘go to the USA’, but not precede it. In other words, sentence internal Topic must precede Focus, not vice versa. The result of this study will support Tang’s (1990) observation that sentence internal elements are licensed by functional projections in the INFL domain, but conflict with Huang’s (1982) V’-duplication tradition or other types of VP analyses. This study will further demonstrate that the long lasting dispute over the ambiguous interpretation of preverbal phrases, i.e. the VP1 here, as Topic vs. Focus, comes from the failure to differentiate distinct licensing positions. We will start with the examination of properties of VP1 and show that it behaves on a par with INFL elements rather than constituents within VP, e.g. *ba*-phrases must follow VP1 (e.g. (3a)), while sentential adverbs like *dagai* ‘probably’ can either precede or follow VP1 (e.g. (3b)). We will then argue that treating the sentence internal elements as involving either topic (cf. Paul (2002)) or focus (cf. Tsai (1994) and Shyu (1995)) is only partially correct, and that different layers for the sentence internal licensing of Topic and Focus is needed. The proposed analysis and its supporting evidence further suggest that Rizzi’s (1997) “fine structure of the left periphery” can be adopted in the analysis of the lower INFL domain with slight adjustments made for the Mandarin Chinese data.

- (1) [IP Ta [<sub>VP1</sub> **xue diannao**] [<sub>VP</sub> [<sub>V2</sub> **xue le**] san ge yue ]]  
he learn computer learn PERF three CL month  
‘He has been studying computer science for three months.’
- (2) a. Ta (\*xie chengshi) **xue diannao** xie chengshi zongshi **xue** bu hao (, da diandong dao hai xing)  
he write program learn computer write program always learn not well play PCgame rather still can  
‘As for studying computer science, it is programming that always bothers him (, although he is rather good at playing computer games).’
- b. Ta (\*?xue diannao) qu meiguo **xue diannao xue le** si nian (, bu shi xue yuyan)  
he learn computer go USA learn computer learn PERF four year not be learn language  
‘It is computer science that he learnt for four years while being in the states (, not language study).’
- (3) a. Ta (\*ba ma) **xulian ma** (ba ma) **xunlian le** san ge xiaoshi  
he BA horse train horse BA horse train PERF three CL hours  
‘He has been training horses for three hours.’
- b. Ta (dagai) **qi ma** (dagai) **qi le** san ge xiaoshi  
He probably ride horse probably ride PERF three CL hour  
‘He probably rode horse for three hours already.’