

Mandarin long bei passive

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April 2, 2016

1 Basic structure

The long bei passive is one of the canonical passives in Mandarin Chinese: DP₁ bei DP₂V ...

- (1) Bi'er bei Yuehan da le.
Bill BEI John hit PRF
Bill was hit by John.

2 Where the problem arises

It's hard to adopt the English passivization analysis for the long bei passive:

- The subject argument doesn't seem to be 'demoted'; it doesn't show patterns consistent with demotion.
 - bei-DP doesn't behave like an adjunct:

(2) Bi'er_i gen Yuehan_j taolun le ziji_{i/*j} de xiangfa.
Bill with John discuss PRF self POSS opinions.
Bill_i discussed himself's_{i/*j} opinions with John_j.

(3) Bi'er_i bei Yuehan_j jieshao gei ziji_{i/j} de lingdao.
Bill bei John introduce to self POSS boss.
Bill_i was introduced by John_j to himself's boss.

☞ Looks like the subject argument after 'bei' is still active for binding.

- Coordination test shows bei-DP may not form a constituent at all:

- (4) Bi'er bei Yuehan ma le yisheng, Mali da le liangxia.
Bill bei John scold once PRF, Mary hit PRF twice
Bill was scolded by John once and was hit by Mary twice.

☞ If dropping 'bei' in some environments (e.g. the second conjunct here) is permitted, the idea that 'bei' assigns Case to the external argument is less convincing.

Then what motivates the movement? Is there movement at all?

3 The derivation: A or A-bar

- Clearly there's a dependency relation: always leaves a gap at the object position; inserting a bare pronoun at the gap position is never allowed.

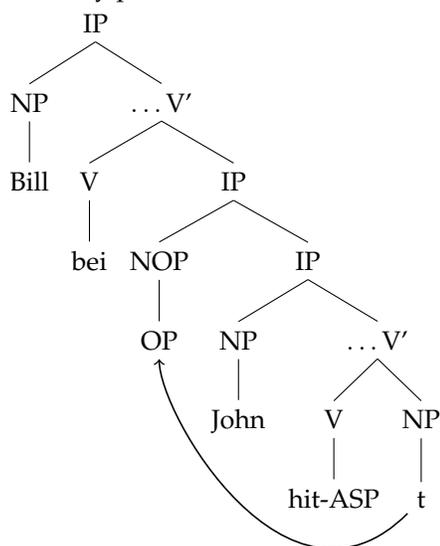
(5) *Bi'er bei Yuehan da le ta.
 Bill bei John hit PRF him.

*intended meaning: Bill was hit by John. (But good without 'ta'.)

- There must be some kind of 'movement' to account for the dependency between the pre-bei argument and the lower gap, the question is which kind.

- Proposal 1: A'-movement – The NOP analysis** (Feng 1995, Ting 1998, Huang et al. 2009, among many others)

It analyzes the long bei passive as being derived through a null operator movement followed by predication.



'Bill was hit by John.'

Main arguments: A'-characters of the long bei passive.

- sensitive to island effects (Huang et al. 2009):

(6) *Bi'er_i bei wo tongzhi Yuehan ba [zanmei t_i de shu] dou mai-zou le.
 Bill bei I inform John ba praise POSS books all buy-away PRF.
 intended meaning: 'something happened to Bill, which is that I informed John to buy all the books that praise him(Bill).'

- allows 'resumptive pronoun' in restricted cases:

(7) Bi'er bei ren da-duan le ta yi tiao tui.
 Bill bei someone beat-break PRF him one CLF leg.
 'Bill was beaten-to-break-a-leg by someone.'

- compatible with volitional adverbs, suggesting it can be assigned a non-Patient theta-role at the initial position:

(8) Bi'er **guyi** bei Yuehan da le yi dun.
 Bill intentionally BEI John hit PRF one time.
 Bill intentionally got hit by John.

- 'long distance dependency' (LDD):

(9) Bi'er bei **Yuehan** jiao jingcha zhuazou le.
 Bill BEI John ask police arrest-away PRF
 'Bill was arrested by John-ask-the-police-to.'

(10) Bi'er bei **Yuehan** tuo **Mali** zhao **ren** da le yidun.
 Bill BEI John ask Mary find someone hit PRF once
 'Bill was hit by John-ask-Mary-to-find-someone-to.'

☞ The initial argument seems to be able to link to the lower gap over any number of intervening arguments!

Possible Objections to this A'-movement proposal:

- Is the island effect a reliable diagnostics for A'-movement?

(11) *John_i seemed the belief *t_i* was smart was false. (Biggs 2013)

- Does the so-called 'resumptive pronoun' really have to do with A'-movement and island effects?

Those 'resumptive pronoun's can always be deleted:

(12) Bi'er bei Yuehan da-duan le yi tiao tui.
 Bill bei John hit-broken PRF one CLF leg
 'Bill was hit-to-break a leg by John.'

Sometimes it's hard to reconstruct the pre-movement island:

(13) Bi'er bei Yuehan da le ta **yixia**.
 Bill bei John hit PRF he once
 'Bill was hit by John once.'

▷ John hit PRF [Bill once] ??

- Similar uses of volitional adverbs show up in the English be passive as well:

(14) Katherine intentionally was seduced by John. (Jackendoff 1972)

(15) Katherine willingly was hired by the contractor. (Ernst 2001)

- If the intervening arguments are somehow inert to movement, LDD doesn't exclude the possibility of A-movement.
- More importantly, the NOP analysis fails to capture some A-movement behavior of the construction.

A-movement behavior of the long bei passive:

- Does not license parasitic gaps:

(16) Shui_i, Yuehan zai jian guo t_i zhiqian jiu kaichu le t_i?
 Who John at see PRF before already fire PRF
 'Who_i has John fired t_i before seeing t_i?'

(17) *Shui_i bei Yuehan zai jian guo t_i zhiqian jiu kaichu le t_i?
 Who bei John at see PRF before already fire PRF
 intended meaning: 'Who was fired by John before being seen by him?'

- Sensitive to verb classes: 'real' unaccusative verbs are not allowed (Laws & Yuan 2010), suggesting the movement is still Case/Agree related.

(18) Jianyu li si le wuge fanren.
 prison inside die PRF five prisoners
 'Five prisoners are dead in the prison.'

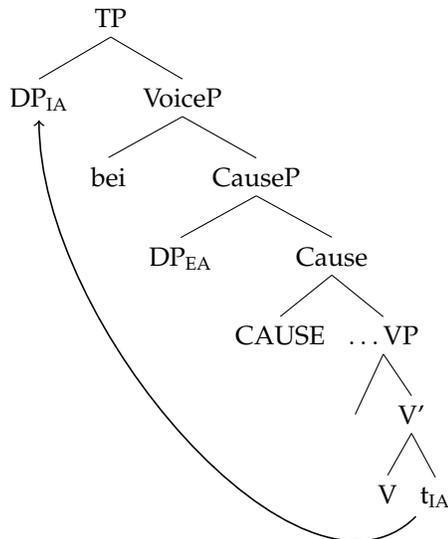
(19) *Wuge fanren dahuo yihou (dou) bei si le.
 five prisoners big-fire after (all) bei die PRF
 intended meaning: 'Five prisoners are dead after the big fire.' (fine without 'bei!')

☞ Despite the complexity of data on the surface, there's no stable evidence to rule out the normal A-movement passivization approach.

☞ Two questions seem to be important: 1) What's the syntactic category of bei-complement?
 2) Is it possible to maintain A-movement with LDD?

• **Proposal 2: A-movement– the CauseP analysis** (Biggs 2013)

Core proposal: VoiceP of the bei-construction obligatorily selects a CausativeP as its complement, and the agent (the external argument) is introduced in its specifier. Crucially, each 'intervening argument' between the initial landing site and the lower object position Agrees with a null functional head under CauseP, thus becomes inert to movement.

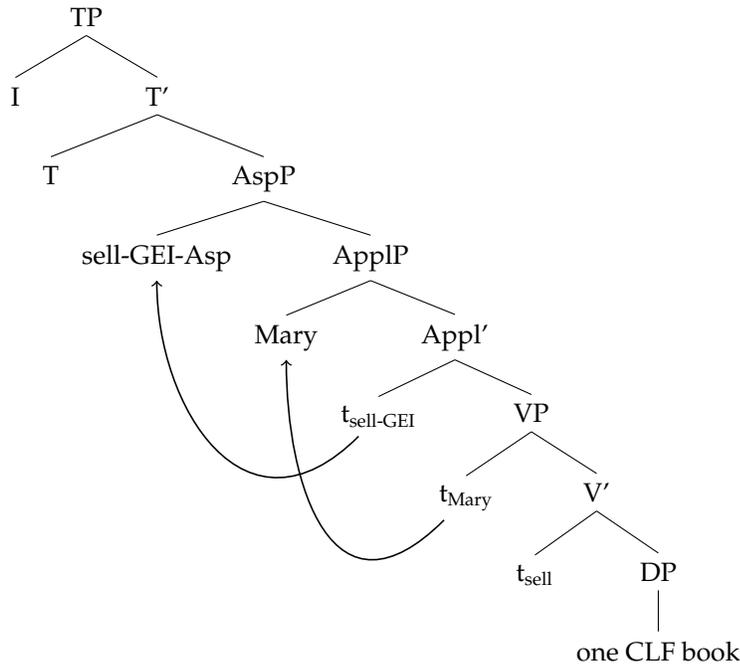


Main Observations:

- The syntactic environments licensing LDD are in fact very restricted.
- ✗ Non-control verbs like attitude verbs are strictly out:
 - (20) *Na feng xin bei wo **renwei** Bi'er ji-zou le.
 that CLF letter bei I plan ask Bill send-away PRF
 intended meaning: 'that letter was thought by me that John sent away.'
- ✗ Subject control verbs are also impossible:
 - (21) *Na feng xin bei wo **dasuan** jiao Lisi ji-zou le.
 that CLF letter bei I plan ask Lisi send-away PRF
 intended meaning: 'that letter was sent away by I-plan-to-ask-Lisi-to.'
- ✓ Only ditransitive verbs and object control verbs are allowed: 'qing'(ask), 'tuo'(request), 'pai'(send), 'bipo'(force), etc.
- Always preposes the most deeply embedded argument.
 - (22) **Na feng xin_i** bei Bi'er jiao Yuehan tuo Mali ji-zou le **t_i**.
 that CLF letter bei Bill tell John ask Mary send-away PRF
 'That letter was sent away by Bill-told-John-to-ask-Mary-to.' Compare to:
 - (23) ***Mali_i** bei Bi'er jiao Yuehan tuo **t_i** ji-zou le na feng xin.
 Mary bei Bill tell John ask send-away PRF that CLF letter
 intended meaning: 'Mary was asked by Zhangsan-tell-Wangwu-to send the letter.'

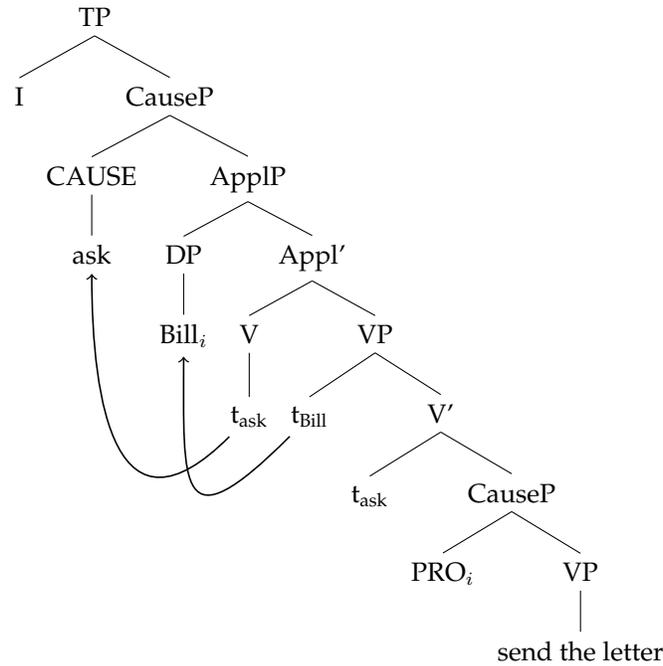
Explaining the absence of intervention effects:

- Paul & Whitman (2010)'s analysis for Mandarin double object construction points a way out. For the sentence 'I sold Mary a book', their analysis is the following:



Using evidence from the placement of adverbs and the positions of distributive quantifiers, they independently argue that the recipient raises out of VP; an crucially, the recipient then enters an Agree relation with the Applicative projection.

- Biggs(2013) adopts this analysis, and argues whatever $u[F]$ feature (presumably Case) the recipient 'Mary' bears, it should have been checked inside the ApplP. That's why the recipient is always inaccessible to passivization.
- Biggs also extends the idea to object control constructions:



'I ask Bill to send the letter.'

☞ The CauseP analysis gets us LDD in A-movement by assuming a feature-checking ApplP outside of VP (which has been independently argued for anyway). Most of the observations so far follow straightforwardly.

4 More on the complement type

The two analysis depart away on the syntactic category of the bei-complement. While the NOP analysis proposes a full-fledged embedded clause for the bei-complement, the CauseP analysis suggests that the long distance behavior comes from having recursive vP shells in the construction.

My position: bei-complement has the flavor of 'restructuring', it is structurally deficient.

- Embedded clauses in Mandarin Chinese can have inner topics (see (24)), but this is strictly banned in the bei-complement, suggesting there might be no CP layer to host the topic position ((25)).

- (24) Wo zhidao [_{CP} Pijiu_i Yuehan juede [_{CP} nimen dou xihuan t_i]].
 I know beer John think you-PL all like
 'I know that beer is such that John thinks you all like.'

(25) *Bi'er bei [jingcha_i Yuehan pai zhuazou le t_i].
 Bill bei police John send arrest-away PRF
 intended meaning: 'Bill was arrested by the police such that John sent away.'

- Obligatorily non-finite (cf. Ting 1998, Huang 1999)

- Incompatible with temporal adverbs (inside the bei-complement):

(26) Bi'er **zuotian xiawu** bei Yuehan daduan le yi tiao tui.
 Bill yesterday afternoon bei John hit-break PRF one CLF leg
 'Bill was hit-to-break a leg by John.'

(27) *Bi'er bei *(**zuotian xiawu**) Yuehan *(**zuotian xiawu**) daduan le yi tiao tui.
 Bill bei yesterday afternoon John yesterday afternoon hit-break PRF one CLF leg
 'Bill was hit-to-break a leg by John.'

- the root/embedded distinction on the scope of question particles is suspended in the long bei construction.

In Mandarin, the sentence final particle scopes over the matrix CP to the exclusion of the embedded CP (Li & Thompson 1981 see (28)); however, question particles in passive structures appear to be ambiguous ((29)).

(28) Ni pai jingcha zhuazou le Yuehan ma?
 you send police arrest-away PRF John PRT
 ✓'Have you sent (or not) the police to arrest John?'
 ✗'Have you sent the police to arrest (or not) John?'

(29) Yuehan bei ni pai jingcha zhuazou le ma?
 John bei you send police arrest-away PRF PRT
 ✓'Have you sent (or not) the police to arrest John?'
 ✓'Have you sent the police to arrest (or not) John?'

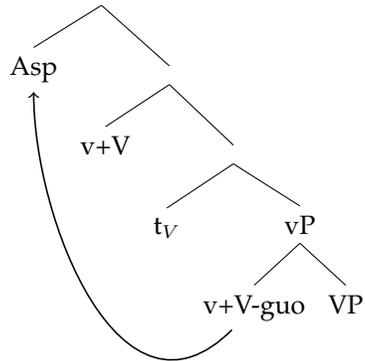
- The aspect marker 'guo' is past-oriented to some anchor t_0 (Lin 2006, Rubinstein & Hashimoto 2010). When inside the bei-complement, it is not compatible with the progressive marker 'zai' in the matrix clause, while this is generally allowed in other embedding clauses of Mandarin (see (31)).

(30) *Wo **zai** bei ta quanshuo shenqing **guo** yinyue xueyuan.
 I zai bei he talk-into apply guo music school
 intended meaning: 'I am being talked into by him that I have applied to music school.'

(31) Ta **zai** gaosu Bi'er wo shenqing **guo** yinyue xueyuan.
 He zai tell Bill I apply-to guo music school
 'He is telling bill that I have applied to a music school.'

☞ Following Grano (2015), this should be expected if the bei-complement doesn't have enough space to host AspP, and the 'guo' there is actually realizing the aspect projection

of the matrix clause:



Crucially this requires the *bei*-complement to be as deficient as a *vP*: otherwise the projection to the matrix clause violates Phase Impenetrability Condition!

- Finally, what is 'bei'? It used to be a motion verb (meaning 'reach to') before becoming a passive morpheme, and motion verbs are known to have restructuring properties (Landau 2004).

5 (Even more) remaining puzzles

- Is restructuring a property of 'bei', or a property of object control (CauseP) in Mandarin?
- Do we really have to have a short/long *bei* distinction?
- How to account for those 'resumptive pronouns'?