

Abstract

Mandarin topic construction is much more flexible and diverse in form compared to topicalization in other languages, and thus is of high research value. How to generate Mandarin non-dangling topic constructions has been a highly controversial issue. Based on the review of the past research, this paper points out many weaknesses of both the base-generated view and the traditional movement-derived view. Also, many results of psychology experiments, like an ERP study recently, tend to support it's derived through movement, but they usually lack theoretical analysis to support it. Thus, after the investigation of the characteristics of Mandarin non-dangling topic constructions, including their special movement performance and TOP and REL's independent properties, the study proposes a new label-driven mechanism for deriving non-dangling topic constructions in Mandarin, under the latest research results of Minimalist Program. It argues that TOP and REL are two noun phrases, differing from each other structurally only in functional layers. They are merged as {NP, NP} first in the same position, i.e. vP's complement position, thus assigned the same thematic roles, the same case, etc., which is equivalent to {argument, predicate} construction. This symmetric stable construction cannot be syntactically labeled, so TOP has to be moved to T-edge position to achieve labeling, thus generating Mandarin non-dangling topic construction. In addition, label proceeds phase by phase: TOP goes to T-edge position in the second phase CP via vP-edge in the first phase vP, thus exactly explaining the special cases of this topic construction this study found before, i.e. providing more possibilities for Mandarin non-dangling topic constructions, including compounding objects restriction on topicalization, sub-topic phenomenon, special Mandarin non-dangling topic constructions with a resumptive pronoun, etc. Finally, other cross-linguistic examples are given in an attempt to verify the rationality and generality of this derivation process. The study to some extent remedies the weaknesses of the traditional movement-derived view and validates some ideas in Minimalist Program. And also importantly, it provides some much more convincing theoretical supports for the results of some psychological experiments.