A Case of V2 in Chinese

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Abstract

As far as the left periphery is concerned, there is a conspiracy between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics to make sure the success of sentence formation. We would like to put forward the claim that EPP features play an important role in this endeavor, which can be checked by either external Merge or internal Merge (i.e., Move) according to the parameter-settings of individual languages. Chinese provides substantial evidence for this proposal from obligatory topicalization in high applicative, realis modal, and outer reflexive adverbial construals.

The central idea of our proposal is that Peripheral EPP features are motivated by the information structure (e.g., presupposition, contrastive foci, and speaker-orientation) and semantic considerations (e.g., predication and modification) with respect to Interface Economy in Reinhart's (1997) sense. In this light, one may well envision the so-called topic prominence to be the result of EPP feature-checking, and the null topic hypothesis in Huang's (1984) sense can be reinvented as a null operator merger to license a topic feature in the left periphery. In relation to Miyagawa's (2010) recent proposal that, in discourse configurational languages, topic and focus construals are licensed through agreement-like functional relations, we may also venture to compare Chinese obligatory topicalization to Germanic V2, as well as English *wh*-movement and negative inversion, all being manifestation of the Strong Uniformity: That is, every language shares the same set of grammatical features, and every language overtly manifests these features.