

## The Co-Existence of Multidominance and Movement in the Syntax of Chinese Bi-Comparatives

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**Abstract :** This paper puts forward a syntactic analysis involving multidominance and rightward movement in Chinese bi-comparatives, as in 'Yuehan bi Mali gao (John is taller than Mary).' It is argued here that the predicate of comparison is a shared constituent in two small clauses, namely one for the target and one for the standard; and then it moves rightward to form a degree phrase with the comparative morpheme. This proposal comes from four aspects. First, the example above can also be expressed in this way, 'A: Yuehan he Mali, shui gao? (John and Mary, who is taller?) B: Yuehan gao./Yuehan geng gao. (John is taller).'

This shows that the gradable adjective is predicated of the target. In addition, according to a constraint on Chinese bi-comparatives, namely the target and the standard must be arguments of the predicate simultaneously, it is not unreasonable to assume that the gradable adjective may also be predicated of the standard. Second, subcomparatives are totally disallowed in Chinese, as in '\*zhe-zhang zhuzi bi zhe-zhang yizi kuan chang. (This table is longer than this chair is wide.)' In order to save it from ungrammaticality, the target and the standard should be compared along the same dimension denoted by the gradable adjective. It may follow that in Chinese comparatives, having equal roles in the same eventuality, the target and the standard bear the same thematic relationship with the predicate of comparison. Third, verb-copy can appear in Chinese bi-comparatives, as in 'Yuehan qi ma bi Mali qi ma qi de kuai. (John rides horses faster than Mary does.)' The predicate qi seems to form a small clause with both the target and the standard. This might be supporting evidence that both the target and the standard share the predicate of comparison. Fourth, Chinese comparatives do have comparative morphemes, as in 'Yuehan bi Mali geng gao. (John is taller than Mary)', which is semantically equivalent to the first example above. Thus, it follows that one feature of Chinese comparative morphemes is that they can remain overt or covert in the syntax, which will not affect semantics. This further shows that comparative morphemes in bi-comparatives may not be able to saturate the degree argument denoted by the predicate of comparison due to its optionality in the structure. These four aspects present a challenge to the Direct Analysis used in Chinese comparatives since this approach would presume that the target and the standard somehow show independency with the predicate in the syntax. Meanwhile, this study also rejects the previous analysis of multidominance in bi-comparatives in which the degree phrase comprised of the comparative morpheme and the gradable adjective may be shared by the standard when the comparative morpheme is covert. This syntactic analysis proposed in this study will therefore offer a different perspective of how to treat degree phrase in Chinese comparatives and may offer evidence to argue whether there is degree phrase movement in bi-comparatives as in its English counterparts.

**Keywords :** Chinese comparatives, degree phrase, movement, multidominance, syntactic analysis

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