

ON THE SYNTACTIC REPRESENTATION OF CHINESE-STYLE TOPIC CONSTRUCTIONS AND THE RELATED TYPOLOGICAL VARIATION

Jie Xu¹ Jie Cheng²

¹ *University of Macau, Macau*


² *South China Normal University, Guangzhou*

ABSTRACT

Researchers have long reached the consensus that in a Chinese-style topic construction the comment says something about the topic, but they are still divided as to how the semantic function of aboutness should be represented in syntax. The most up-to-date analyses of the construction, postulating a topic projection within the CP layer, does not supply a syntactic structure that can underpin the aboutness meaning or provide an adequate account of the essential semantic and syntactic properties of the construction. This study proposes a double-Infl configuration for Chinese-style topic constructions, i.e., an Infl projects an InflP, selecting a light verb phrase V_{ABOUT}P as its complement and a TopicP as its specifier; V_{ABOUT} connects the comment ForceP to the TopicP, thus underpinning the aboutness meaning. This proposal can account for both the essential semantic and syntactic properties of Chinese-style topic constructions and the variation between topic-prominent and subject-prominent languages. The grammatical component of subject-prominent languages has a strong Infl,

Acknowledgements The authors thank the JCL reviewers for their insightful comments on the manuscript and the JCL editors for their patient guidance for perfecting the format of this article.

Jie Cheng (程杰; Corresponding author) [chengjie@m.scnu.edu.cn]; School of Foreign Studies/Center for Language Cognition and Assessment (Guangdong Provincial Key Research Base for the Humanities and Social Sciences in Universities and Colleges), South China Normal University, No. 55 Zhongshan Avenue West, Guangzhou, Guangdong, P. R. China.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0830-6085>