THE SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES OF THE CHINESE BEI PASSIVE AND THE ENGLISH BE-PASSIVE*

Na Liu
Tianjin Normal University

1. Introduction

There are two types of Chinese bei passives – the long passive and the short passive, as shown in (1-2) respectively, depending on whether the Agent phrase is present or not.

(1) The long passive: bei NP-VP
   Zhangsan bei Lisi da le.
   ‘Zhangsan was hit by Lisi.’

(2) The short passive: bei VP
   Zhangsan bei da le.
   ‘Zhangsan was hit.’

A significant word order difference between the English be-passive and the Chinese bei passive is that in English, the external argument occurs at the end of the sentence as in John was hit by Bill, while in Chinese, the external argument precedes the main verb as in (1). From the traditional view that took the agent phrase (by- or bei-phrase) to be an adjunct, the word order difference simply follows as a special case of the difference in the location of adjuncts between these languages. However, the recent research has shown that the external argument actually stays in its base position, for both English (Collins 2005, Gehrke and Grillo 2009) and Chinese (Huang 2011, Huang & Liu 2011). Given the basic SVO word order for both languages, the difference in surface word order between their passives needs an explanation.

Considering the word order of the English be passive, Collins (2005) offers a smuggling approach. Gehrke and Grillo (2009, G&G hereinafter) provide a similar VP movement approach with a different motivation for the movement. In this paper, I will argue that the Chinese bei passive does not have VP movement under either Collins’ or G&G’s account, and this explains the word-order difference. I also show how this difference arises the way it does between the two languages.

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1 Abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: CL: classifier; Exp: experiential aspect marker; FP: focus phrase; PERF: perfective aspect marker.
2. Reanalysis of the Structure of Chinese Long and Short Passives

2.1. The Previous Analyses of the Chinese Long and Short Passives

bei passive can be analyzed as a structure of complex predication, as shown in (3).

\[
\text{Zhangsan bei [IP NOP [IP Lisi da le ti]]}.
\]

\text{Zhangsan BEI Lisi hit PERF}

‘Zhangsan was hit by Lisi.’

In (3), the main verb \text{bei} selects an active IP as its complement, within which a null operator (NOP) moves from the object position of the base verb and adjoins to IP. The main verb \text{bei} and the complement IP form a complex predicate, which selects the matrix subject as its single argument. The moved NOP object is bound by the matrix subject under predication.

Huang (1999) and HLL (2009) propose a control analysis for the short \text{bei} passive, as shown in (4).

\[
\text{Lisi bei [VP PRO da-le ti]}.
\]

\text{Lisi BEI hit-PERF}

‘Lisi was hit’

In (4), \text{bei} is a light verb, selecting an Experiencer subject and a VP complement, in which the Theme object is an empty category PRO which moves into Spec, VP and is controlled by the matrix subject.

In summary, both long and short \text{bei} passives are covered by the control/predication analysis, which, according to Huang (1999) and HLL (2009), is motivated by the evidence that the subject of \text{bei} may take subject-oriented adverbs, such as \text{guyi ‘intentionally’} in (5).

Hence, it is base-generated as the subject of \text{bei} and assigned an Experiencer theta-role by it.

\[
\text{Zhangsan guyi bei (Lisi) da le.}
\]

\text{Zhangsan intentionally BEI Lisi hit PERF}

‘Zhangsan intentionally got hit by Lisi.’

The difference between the long and short passives is that the former involves NOP movement which is an A’-movement. This is evidenced by the following facts:

Firstly, Chinese long passives exhibit long-distance dependency, as shown in (6).

\[
\text{Zhangsan bei Lisi pai jingcha zhua-zou le. (HLL 2009: 125)}
\]

\text{Zhangsan BEI Lisi send police arrest-away PERF}

‘Zhangsan was “sent-police-to-arrest” by Lisi.’

In (6), Zhangsan was arrested by the police, but Lisi was the person who sent the police to arrest him. Hence, there are two embedded clauses. The \text{pai ‘send’} clause embedded under \text{bei} with Lisi being its subject, and the \text{zhua ‘arrest’} clause embedded under \text{pai ‘send’} with the police being its subject. This structure of the long \text{bei} passive is akin to English tough sentences (Feng 1995, Ting 1995, 1996, Huang 1999, HLL 2009). Chomsky (1981) analyzes tough construction as involving NOP movement and predication, as shown below.
(7) This problem is too easy \([\text{CP NO}\text{P}i]_{t}\) for me to ask the teacher to help me solve \(t_i\).

Secondly, Chinese long-distance passives exhibit island effects and allow the occurrence of resumptive pronouns. These are the diagnoses for \(\text{A'}\)-movement.

(8) \((\text{HLL} 2009: 125)\)

Zhangsan bei wo tongzhi Lisi ba zanmei *(ta) de shu dou mai-zou le.
Zhangsan BEI me inform Lisi BA praise him DE book all buy-away PERF
‘Zhangsan had me inform Lisi to buy up all the books that praise [him].’

The ungrammaticality of (8) can be explained if the object of the verb zanmei ‘praise’ in the relative clause modifying ‘book’ is assumed to undergo \(\text{A'}\)-movement which is blocked due to the violation of the Complex NP constraint proposed by Ross (1967). The fact that the derivation can be saved with a resumptive pronoun in that position further supports the \(\text{A'}\)-movement hypothesis because such a pronoun always appears in an \(\text{A'}\)-bound position.

Thirdly, Huang (1999) cited the following example from Chiu (1995) to support the \(\text{A'}\)-movement hypothesis in the complement clause of long passives. Chiu strongly argues that the particle \(\text{ suo}\) is only involved in long passives and relative clauses, and it is triggered by the existence of \(\text{wh}\)-movement in both cases.

(9) zhexie shiqing bu neng bei tamen suo liaojie. \((\text{HLL} 2009: 126)\)
these thing not can BEI they SUO understand
‘These things cannot be understood by them.’

Despite the extensive evidence for a control/predication analysis, more recent research has shown that a raising analysis should also be made available for certain \(\text{bei}\) passives, according to which the surface subject of \(\text{bei}\) is not base-generated, but is derived by movement.

2.2. The Possibility of Raising Analysis for \(\text{Bei}\) Passives

Huang (2011) and Huang & Liu (2011) observe that both short and local long \(\text{bei}\) passives allow idiom-chunks to be fronted under passivization, as in (10). Such examples imply a raising analysis for the subject of \(\text{bei}\):

(10) pianyi dou bei (ta) zhan-guang-le
advantage all BEI he take-away-PERF
‘All the advantage was taken by him.’

In the case of short and local long passives without any subject-oriented adverbs, logic does not preclude a raising analysis, either. Hence such sentences as (11) may have to allow either a raising or a control/predication analysis:

(11) shu bei (Lisi) si-po-le.
book BEI Lisi tear-break-PERF
‘The book got torn by Lisi.’

Based on these and other considerations, Huang (2011) and Liu (2011) concluded that:

A: Raising analysis is required for short and local long passives with idiom-chunk subjects;
B: Raising analysis is possible for short and local long passives with no subject-oriented adverbs;
C: The following types of passive continue to require a control or predication analysis:
   a) In the short and long passives with subject-oriented adverbs;
   b) In the long distance passives that exhibit A'-bar movement properties.

3. The Newly Proposed Structures of Short and Local Long Bei Passives

In this section, I will consider new structures for the short and local long passives, like (11), with both control and raising possibilities. They have similar underlying structures with the English be passive proposed by Collins’ (2005). In Section 3.1, I will introduce Collins’ smuggling approach to the English be passive. In Section 3.2 & 3.3, I will argue that the smuggling operation does not apply for Chinese passives and propose the structures for the Chinese short and local long bei passives.


According to Collins (2005), the problem of the traditional analysis of the be-passive under the Government and Binding (GB) theory of the framework of Principles and Parameters (P&P) is that the external argument is generated in Spec, TP in the active, but in a completely different position, i.e. complement of the preposition by, in the passive. This is a violation of UTAH (Uniformity of Theta-Assignment Hypothesis) (Baker 1988:46, 1997:74). In the spirit of UTAH, the external θ-role should be assigned in the passive in the same way as in the active. To solve this problem, Collins proposes a smuggling approach to the English be passive. The derivation of (12a) is illustrated in (12b).

(12) a. The book was written by John.

As shown in (12b), the external argument is merged in Spec, vP in the same way as in the active. By in the agentive by-phrase is the head of the VoiceP and takes a vP as its complement. If the internal argument the book moves to Spec, IP directly, a wrong word order will be produced, as in the ungrammatical sentence *The book was by John written. In addition, such a movement crossing the external argument violates Minimal Link Condition...
The Syntactic Structures of the Chinese *Bei* Passive and the English *Be*-passive (N. Liu)

(Chomsky 1995) or Relativized Minimality (Rizzi 1990, 2000). Therefore, movement of the internal argument the book to Spec, IP position is carried out in two steps: first, the participle phrase (PartP) written the book is moved to Spec, Voice, and then the book is moved out of the PartP to Spec, IP. The two-step process effectively smuggles the internal argument to Spec, IP position without violating minimality conditions.

I assume that Chinese short and local long passives also involve a VoiceP which is headed by the passive marker *bei*, though the displacement of the internal argument to Spec, IP does not involve smuggling, thus keeping the VP in its base position following the external argument.

### 3.2. No Smuggling Occurs in the Chinese *Bei* Passive

The word order difference between English and Chinese passives seems to imply that smuggling does not occur in Chinese. I assume that the absence of smuggling in Chinese is related to another property of Chinese, i.e., Chinese allows object to be preposed to a post subject but preverbal focus position (Shyu 1995), as illustrated in (13). However, such movement is not available in English.

(13) a. Lisi kan-guo le naben shu (Shyu 1995:100)
   Lisi read-Exp PERF that-CL book
   ‘Lisi has read that book.’
   b. Lisi naben shu kan-guo le ti
   Lisi that-CL book read-Exp PERF

I assume the derivations of (13a,b) are as in (14).

(14)

As for (13a), no object preposing occurs. V selects its complement DP *na-ben shu* ‘that book’. V moves to v and the external argument *Lisi* which is base-generated in Spec, vP moves to Spec, TP for reason of Case. To derive (13b), the object *na-ben shu* ‘that book’ is preposed to the Spec of a focus phrase (FP), which is above vP but below TP. If the object moves from the complement position of V to Spec, FP directly, crossing the Agent argument merged in
Spec, vP. Relativized Minimality (RM) will be violated. Following Ura (2000), I assume that v has some strong nominal feature (Case feature or scrambling feature (Grewendorf & Sabel 1999)) that requires the internal argument to move to inner Spec, vP. From there it moves to Spec, FP. Such movement does not fully cross the external argument. Therefore, no violation of RM occurs. In addition, based on Shyu’s (1995) argument that object preposing in (13b) is an A-movement, I deduce that the whole movement chain must be an A-chain, and every intermediate landing site including the inner Spec, vP is an A-position.

In summary, I propose that since object can be preposed to an A-position above vP and below TP in Chinese passives, there exists an extra Spec, vP which can serve as an intermediate landing site for the object to take on its way of moving to Spec, TP without violating minimality conditions. Hence, there is no need for the less economic smuggling operation to apply, which requires more things to move together with the object. On the other hand, English does not have such kind of object preposing, the extra Spec, vP position is not available in the passive structure. In order to avoid violation of minimality, smuggling has to apply, as a last resort.

3.3. The Derivations of Chinese Short and Local Long Passives

According to Alexiadou (2005), passive sentences have been classified into two kinds: canonical passives and non-canonical passives, typically manifested by the English be and get passives respectively. Huang (1999), HLL (2009) and Liu (2012) observe that Chinese bei passives are akin to English get passives but different from English be passives. Hence, Liu (2012) classifies Chinese bei passives as non-canonical passives. In order to explain why non-canonical passives can be analyzed as either control or raising structures while canonical passives cannot, Huang (2012) assumes that non-canonical passives are formed by superimposing on the core predicate a semi-lexical verb, such as get and bei, whose meaning may include one or more points in the causative-unaccusative spectrum as shown in (15).

(15) THE CAUSATIVE-UNACCUSATIVE CONTINUUM:
cause > let > witness > undergo > be affected by > become > exist > be

He further proposes that the semi-lexical verbs get and bei may occupy more than one point in the continuum in (15). When occupying the point ‘undergo’, they select an Experiencer subject and form control structures. When being located at the point of ‘become’, they do not introduce any thematic subject and form raising structures. Furthermore, Liu (2012) supposes that both get and bei can be decomposed into EXPERIENCE (Exp) and BECOME (Bec),2 which are projected in syntax as the Experience phrase (ExpP) and the Become phrase (BecP). VoiceP is embedded under BecP which is embedded under ExpP. In the get passive, the VoiceP is headed by by in the agentive by phrase, but in the bei passive, I assume what heads the VoiceP is bei. Such an assumption can help settle a long-existing argument among

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2 Huang (1999) implies that the Experiencer subject of the get-passive is introduced by the Become head (Bec). The causative-ergative alternation such as Mary got John blamed for the mistake vs. John got blamed for the mistake depends on whether there is a CauseP layer in the derivation. Richards (2001) and Harley (2002, 2004) assume that get in the get+DP structure can be decomposed into a light verb BECOME in its semantics. Orfitelli (2011) assumes that all get-constructions include the light verb \( v_{become} \). Along with them, we assume that get in the get-passive contains a Become (Bec) component. Different from them, we make a finer analysis in which get also involves an Experience (Exp) component, and the Experincer subject is introduced by Exp. Considering bei in the bei passive, since the bei passive has much resemblance to the get passive in meaning, and get and bei are both grammaticalized from a causative verb, denoting ‘to get’ or ‘to receive’ (Liu 2012), we assume that bei can also be decomposed into EXPERIENCE and BECOME.
Chinese linguists about whether *bei* is a verb or a preposition: *bei* is base-generated in Voice, functioning like the English *by* which checks the Accusative Case feature of the external argument base-generated in the Spec of its complement vP (Collins 2005). Then, *bei* moves from Voice to Bec and Exp which are verbal heads. Therefore, *bei* seems to have the properties of both a verb and a preposition.

Based on the above arguments, I propose that the raising and control structures of the local long *bei* passive (1), repeated as (16), are shown in (17) and (18) respectively.

(16) Zhangsan bei Lisi da le.
    Zhangsan BEI Lisi hit PERF
    ‘Zhangsan was hit by Lisi.’

(17) The tree (17) shows the derivation of the raising structure of (16). To begin the derivation, the internal argument *Zhangsan* is based-generated as the object of the base verb *da* ‘hit’. Due to the lack of Case, it has to move. It first moves to inner Spec, vP, an available intermediate landing site, given our derivation of (13b) in (14). The external argument is merged in outer Spec, vP. The Voice head *bei* is merged with vP and checks its accusative Case feature with the external argument *Lisi* which is in outer Spec, vP and closer to it, and then moves to Bec. The internal argument moves to Spec, VoiceP and then to Spec, BecP and Spec, TP to get Nominative Case. There is no violation of minimality and hence smuggling is not needed.
The tree (18) shows the control structure of (16), in which the passive verb *bei* is base-merged in Voice and moved to Bec, head of BecomeP, and Exp, head of Experience phrase. I assume that in the control structure, *bei* is decomposed into an Experience, a Become, and a Voice component. The derivation is carried out in the following way. First, the verb *da* ‘hit’ selects a null pronominal PRO as its internal argument to form VP. PRO must be vacated from the object position for reason that it cannot occur in a governed position. It moves to inner Spec, vP, Spec, VoiceP and Spec, BecP. The Exp head introduces the Experiencer argument *Zhangsan* in its specifier, which finally moves to Spec, TP to get nominative Case and controls PRO which is in Spec, BecP. For the case involving control, there is no movement of an overt object beyond *bei*. No minimality issues arise, and smuggling is not needed.

The derivations of short (agentless) *bei* passive under raising and control analyses are similar to that of the local long passives in (17-18), except that the external argument is null.

3.4. More Evidence for the Lack of Smuggling in Chinese *Bei* Passives

In this section, I will present two tests – the quantifier floating test and “by-DP” constituency test to show the absence of smuggling operations in Chinese *bei* passives.

3.4.1. The Quantifier Floating Test

Quantifiers immediately precede the DPs they quantify and can be stranded after the DPs move. The distributions of the floated quantifiers in Chinese *bei* and English *be* passives as in (19-20) respectively can be explained if we assume that Chinese does not have smuggling...
while English does.

(19) a. pingguo bei Lisi quanbu mai-zou-le
    apple BEI Lisi all buy-away-PERF
    ‘The apples were all bought by Lisi.’

b. pingguo quanbu bei Lisi mai-zou-le.
    Apple all BEI Lisi buy-away-PERF
    ‘The apples were all bought by Lisi.’

(20) a. *They were arrested by the police all.
    b. They were all arrested by the police.

In Chinese bei passives, the floated quantifier quanbu ‘all’ appears below the external argument, as in (19a), or above “bei+external argument”, as in (19b). However, in English be passives, *all can only float between auxiliary and the participle but not below the agentive by-phrase, as in (20a, b). I assume that the derivations of (19a, b) are illustrated in (21a, b) respectively, and that of (20b) is in (22). In (21a), the quantifier phrase quanbu pingguo ‘all apples’ is based-generated in the complement position of V and moves first to inner Spec, vP, where the quantifier quanbu ‘all’ is floated, with the DP pingguo ‘apples’ it quantifies moving on its own to Spec, VoiceP and then to Spec, TP. In (21b), quanbu ‘all’ is floated in the Spec, VoiceP position. The positions where the floated quantifier can appear show that on its way to move to Spec, TP, the object has moved through these positions and left traces.

(21) a. 

While Chinese does
The above tree (22) shows the derivation of the English passive (20b), in which the PartP smuggles the object to Spec, VoiceP, a position above the Agent by-phrase. That’s why all cannot float below the external argument. Again, the difference comes from the fact Chinese allows object preposing, while English does not.3

3 It can be noticed that the quantifiers cannot be floated in the positions where the internal argument is base-generated in both English and Chinese, as in (i) and (ii).

(i) *They were arrested all by the police.

(ii) *pingguo bei Lisi mai-zou-le quanbu apple BEI Lisi buy-away-PERF all
3.4.2. The “By-Phrase” Constituency Test

According to Huang (1999) and HLL (2009), unlike the by-phrase in English passives, the string of bei-DP does not behave as a constituent, as shown in (23).

    Zhangsan yesterday BEI Lisi hit-PERF
    (cf. John was hit by Bill yesterday.)

b. *Zhangsan bei Lisi zuotian da-le.
    Zhangsan BEI Lisi yesterday hit-PERF
    (cf. John was hit yesterday by Bill.)

c. *bei Lisi Zhangsan zuotian da-le.
    BEI Lisi Zhangsan yesterday hit-PERF
    (cf. It was by Bill that John was hit yesterday.)

(23b) and (23c) show that unlike the by-phrase by Bill in the English translation, bei-DP cannot move as a constituent across a time phrase or prepose to a sentence initial position. These facts can be explained if we assume that the English passive has smuggling while the Chinese one does not. As shown in (22), after the movement of PartP, the rest of VoiceP which includes by, the Agent DP the police and the trace of PartP, is a constituent. The trace of PartP is silent. That’s why the by-DP behaves like a constituent. However, since there is no smuggling in the Chinese passive, as shown in (17), bei, the head of VoiceP cannot form a constituent with the Spec of vP.

There seems to be a counter-example to this explanation given by Shi & Hu (2005), quoted from Chen (2001), as shown in (24).

(24) yihuir, zhe meimiao de shengyin bei shu, bei cao, bei (Chen 2001)
    a while this beautiful DE voice BEI trees BEI grass BEI
    yi-ge guangmo de kongjian tuoshi-le
    one-CL wild DE space swallow-PERF
    ‘Not for a while, this beautiful voice got swallowed by trees, grass and a wild space.’

In (24), bei and the Agent DP are coordinated with the element of the same type, which seems to show that bei-DP is a constituent. However, this example should not be treated as a coordination test for the constituent status of “bei+DP”. It is a phenomenon of right node raising (RNR), as argued by Huang (1999) and Xiong (2010). It is similar to (25) which is a typical case of RNR:

(25) [John loves and Mary hates] oysters.

According to Huang (1999:7), the function of RNR is to identify whether the raised rightmost part (oysters) is a constituent or not, but not that of the remnant (John loves or Mary hates).

In this section, the extra evidence from the quantifier floating test and “by-DP” constituency test supports the hypothesis that smuggling operations occur in English passives but not in Chinese ones.

‘The apples were all bought by Lisi.’

We treat this as a case of the generalized phenomenon mentioned by Bošković (2004:685) that “Quantifiers cannot be floated in θ-positions”. The quantifier all and quanbu are in the complement positions (i.e. θ-positions) of the verbs arrested in (i) and mai-zou-le ‘buy-away-PERF’ in (ii).
4. On the Structure of Chinese Passives from G&G’s Perspective

In the next section, I will show that under G&G’s approach, the VP movement (or smuggling) is not possible in Chinese passives either.

4.1. Gehrke and Grillo’s (G&G 2009) Analysis

G&G (2009) pointed out the problem of Collins’ approach, i.e. it is hard to tell the limits of the smuggling operation. According to them, the motivation of the movement of VP to Spec, VoiceP is not to smuggle the internal argument crossing the external one but to promote a result state subevent to meet the temporal requirement of event structure. The details of their assumption are shown in (26).

\[(26)\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{AspP} \\
\text{ASST-T} \quad \text{Asp}’ \\
\text{Asp} \quad \text{VoiceP} \\
\text{EVT-T} \quad \text{Voice’} \\
\text{Voice} \quad \text{VP1} \\
\text{DP}_{\text{ext}} \quad \text{V1’} \\
\text{V1} \quad \text{VP2} \quad \text{DP}_{\text{int}} \quad \text{V2’} \\
\text{V2} \quad \text{(XP)}
\end{array}
\]

Based on the theory of decomposition of event types, they assume that a BECOME component is associated with the lower VP-shell, i.e. VP2 in (26), which introduces the internal argument DP$_{\text{int}}$. VP1 is associated with the component CAUSE and introduces the external argument DP$_{\text{ext}}$. Getting insights from Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria (2000), G&G propose that in passives, Voice has the responsibility for grounding the event time (EVT-T) which is anchored within the resultative state subevent. This feature of Voice triggers the movement of VP2 which is associated with BECOME component to Spec, VoiceP to anchor the event time so as to make VoiceP available to the next temporal domain of the clause, i.e. the Aspect domain, where the assertion time (ASST-T) is located.

One piece of evidence for the decomposition of the BECOME component in the lower VP predicate given by G&G is that only those transitive verbs associated with some kind of resultative meaning (or involving BECOME) can form passives. Those verbs associated with simple event structures cannot, as shown in (27).

\[(27)\]

a. This laptop weighed two kilos. \hspace{1cm} (G&G 2009:11)
   b. *Two kilos were weighed (by this laptop).

4.2. The Non-VP Movement Analysis of Chinese Passives under G&G’s Approach

Under G&G’s (2009) account, movement of the lower VP shell, i.e. VP2 in (26), is to
convey the BECOME component associated with VP₂ to Spec, VoiceP where it can anchor the Event Time and make it available to operate with the Assertion Time in AspP. However, in Chinese, as assumed in Section 3.3, the passive verb bei can be decomposed into a BECOME component. I assume that this BECOME is projected into a Become phrase (BecP) between AspP and VoiceP as in (28). The event time is located in this Become phrase and is associated with the Assertion time in AspP. Hence, there is no need for the movement of the lower VP to Spec, VoiceP. However, in the be passive, the BECOME component is within the lower VP, so the VP has to be promoted to Spec, VoiceP.

(28)

```
  AspP
     ASST-T
     Asp
       BecP
         EVT-T
         Bec'
           Bec
           VoiceP
```

This assumption can also explain why some stative verbs such as ‘fear’ are allowed in the be-passive but not in the bei passive, as shown in (29-30).

(29) a. John was frightened by Bill.
    b. Bill was feared by John.

(30) a. Zhangsan bei Lisi xia-le yi-tiao.
    Zhangsan BEI Lisi frighten-PERF a jump
    ‘Zhangsan got frightened by Lisi.’

    b. *Lisi bei Zhangsan pa-le henju
       Lisi BEI Zhangsan fear-PERF long time
       ‘Lisi got feared by Zhangsan for a long time.’

The verb "frighten" in (29a) and its Chinese counterpart "xia" in (30a) are causatives which denote a heterogeneous event that satisfy the requirements of BECOME components in these passives. As for (29b), G&G propose that the "fear"-type stative verbs can undergo verbal passivization because they have the possibility of being interpreted as resultant state by means of type shift from states to achievements when they combine with the BECOME component in the lower VP shell in (26), thus meeting the requirement of the BECOME component in a passive construction.

However, as I assumed, in Chinese passives, the BECOME component does not exist in the lower VP because a BECOME component is with the BecP above VoiceP but below AspP, and thus there is no need to add such a semantic element to VP for its promotion to Spec, VoiceP to anchor the event time. In addition, there cannot be two BECOME components in the structure since we cannot get the meaning of ‘become a becoming’.

Why is (30b) ungrammatical? Why cannot ‘fear’ verbs appear in the bei passive? I assume that immediately after this type of verbs enter into the computation, the BECOME component has to be added to coerce the result state meaning of the verbs. This can be done in the be passive in which the BECOME component is within the lower VP. However, in the bei passive, since the BECOME component is above VoiceP, it is too late for type shift to work.
Remaining as stative verbs, *fear*-type verbs are not compatible with the BECOME component in BecP above VoiceP, which require accomplishment predicates. Hence, stative verbs such as ‘fear’ cannot enter into the formation of Chinese *bei* passives.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I studied the word order differences between the Chinese (short and local long) *bei* passives and English *be* passives based on the smuggling approach (Collins 2005) and a similar VP-movement approach (G&G 2009). The conclusions are drawn as follows:

First, the local long and short Chinese *bei* passives have the same underlying structure with the English *be* passive proposed by Collins (2005). However, different from English, Chinese does not involve smuggling.

Secondly, under the raising analysis of Chinese short or local long *bei* passives, since Chinese allows an object to be preposed to a position above VP but below TP, the VP can have an extra Spec to serve as the intermediate landing site for the internal argument to take, so its promotion does not really cross the external argument and hence no economy condition is violated. English does not have such kind of object preposing, no extra Spec, VP is available. Therefore, smuggling is adopted by the English *be*-passive as a last resort.

Thirdly, under the control analysis of Chinese short or local long *bei* passives, there is no movement of an overt object beyond *bei*. No island or minimality issues arise, so smuggling is not needed, hence disallowed.

Fourth, under G&G’s account, the BECOME component is as a decomposed component of *bei* which is above VoiceP. It can be associated with the temporal information directly without moving VP to Spec, VoiceP to satisfy the requirement of the event structure. However, in English, the BECOME element is within the lower VP which has to move to Spec, VoiceP to anchor the event time. This can also help explain the distribution of ‘fear’ verbs in English *be* passives and Chinese *bei* passives.

These circumstances then allow the Chinese passives to maintain ‘Kaynean word order par excellence’ as opposed to English (Huang 2008).

References


