

ON THE UNCLEFTABILITY OF DIRECT OBJECT IN CHINESE

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ABSTRACT

While Keenan and Comrie's (1977) Accessibility Hierarchy (AH) theory has been considered applicable to syntactic processes other than relativization, apparent counterevidence is not lacking which poses a potential threat to the validity of the theory. For example, while in general Chinese cleft sentences obey the AH, the uncleftability of the direct object (DO) poses a problem for the AH. This study, however, shows that DO uncleftability in Chinese follows not from overgeneralization of the AH, but from a language-specific constraint on linear order between the contrastive focus marker, or more generally the quasi-verb, and the main verb in Chinese. Thus while the AH attains some measure of plausibility as a universal tendency, it nevertheless can interact with, and be negatively affected by, language-specific constraints.

1. PRELIMINARIES

In their crosslinguistic study on relativization, Keenan and Comrie (1977) proposed a Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (AH), reproduced here as (1):

- (1) The Accessibility Hierarchy (AH):
SUB > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OCOMP

The AH is essentially a statement of a universal tendency in language, according to which the positions higher on the AH are universally more accessible for relativization than those lower. Thus subject (SUB) is easier to relativize than direct object (DO), indirect object (IO), oblique object (OBL), genitive NP (GEN), and object of comparison (OCOMP); DO is easier to relativize than any lower position on the AH, and so on.

The operation of the AH is governed by a principle known as the Continuity Constraint, given here as (2):

- (2) The Continuity Constraint:
Any relative clause-forming strategy must apply to a continuous segment of the AH, and strategies that apply at any one point of the AH may in principle cease to apply at any lower point. (Keenan & Comrie 1977: 67)

Thus languages may have relativization strategies which apply only to SUB, or to SUB and DO, or to the top three positions on the AH; but it is highly unlikely

that a language, for instance, can relativize SUB and OBL without also being able to relativize DO and IO. Generalizations like this determine constraints on the form and substance of possible human languages.

The AH has been claimed to be universally applicable to various other syntactic processes such as WH-question formation, topicalization, and clefting. Sometimes, however, linguistic data from some languages seem to present counterevidence to the proposed AH. The uncleftability of DO in Chinese offers such an example which merits scrutiny. The present study, therefore, addresses the issue of DO uncleftability in Chinese, to see whether such apparent counterevidence really invalidates the AH, and, if not, what causes DO uncleftability in Chinese.

2. THE PROBLEM OF DO UNCLEFTABILITY

A cleft sentence is defined as a construction in which a particular constituent is marked by means of a syntactic and/or morphological device 'for the purpose of focus, contrast, or emphasis' (Teng 1979: 101). In Chinese, the cleft focus¹ is marked by an immediately preceding contrastive focus marker (CFM) *shi*, which is identical in form to the copula verb. In addition, a modifier marker (MM)², *de* (Ross 1983), occurs toward the end of the cleft sentence, though sometimes optionally. This pattern is formally represented as (3), where F stands for the cleft focus, and X and Y, for any variable, respectively.

(3) X *shi* F Y (de)

The cleft focus usually receives some extra stress, and can be almost any constituent on the AH except DO, as shown in (4).

(4) a. Yuehan wei wo cong guowai ding le ji-piao.
John for 1s from abroad reserve Perf air=ticket

'John reserved an air ticket for me from abroad.'

b. *Shi* Yuehan wei wo cong guowai ding ji-piao de.
CFM John for 1s from abroad reserve air=ticket MM

'It is John who reserved an air ticket for me from abroad.'

¹While the working definition of clefts is largely functional here, Huang (1982a) argues, with particular reference to clefting, that languages like Chinese may involve movement in its LF (Logical Form) component even if no movement is apparent in SS (Surface Structure). Therefore, the term 'cleft' is considered justifiable here.

²This modifier marker (MM) is usually in complementary distribution with the perfective morpheme *-le*, as shown in later examples.

c. Yuehan *shi* *wei* *wo* cong guowai ding *ji-piao* de.
John CFM for 1s from abroad reserve air=ticket MM

'It is for me that John reserved an air ticket from abroad.'

d. Yuehan *shi* cong *guowai* *wei* *wo* ding *ji-piao* de.
John CFM from abroad for 1s reserve air=ticket MM

'It is from abroad that John reserved an air ticket for me.'

e. *Yuehan *wei* *wo* cong *guowai* ding *shi* *ji-piao* de.
John for 1s from abroad reserve CFM air=ticket MM

'It is an air ticket that John reserved for me from abroad.'

While (4a) is a non-cleft with the basic proposition, (4b-d) respectively have as the contrastive focus the subject (4b), the indirect object (4c), and an oblique object (4d). Sentence (4e), where the direct object is in cleft focus, is ungrammatical.

DO uncleftability in Chinese as described above poses a problem for the AH: the fact that it is possible to cleft indirect objects and oblique objects but not direct objects contradicts the AH, which predicts just the opposite. This situation also results in a discontinuous segment on the AH in terms of the same clefting strategy, as in (5):

(5) SUB *DO IO OBL (GEN)³

which is an undesirable violation of (2) in the context of clefting. This problem of DO uncleftability was first recognized by Teng (1979: 104) as 'a perplexing problem', and was later on tackled briefly in Huang (1982: 291), to which we will return in Section 4.

There are at least two approaches to this problem. One is to treat direct objects in Chinese as inherently inaccessible to clefting and claim the inapplicability of the AH with Chinese cleft sentences as exceptional. The other is to examine factors other than the direct object and the AH, and claim that the deviation from the AH is due to the intervention of some other factor. The first approach is less advisable for two reasons. First, to claim that the AH is not applicable to Chinese clefting is too simplistic and adversely affects universality of the AH. Secondly, if we look at DO accessibility for other syntactic operations, we find that direct objects are easily accessible to processes such as topicalization (6a), relativization (6b), question formation (6c), and pseudo-clefting (6d). To use a term from phonology, by pattern congruity, it is not very plausible to claim that direct objects in Chinese are inherently inaccessible to clefting.

³Clefting of GEN NP frequently involves long distance dependency relations and pronoun retention strategy in Chinese. Therefore, it is less relevant here.

- (6) a. Ji-piao ta yijing ding le.
 air=ticket 3s already reserve Perf
 'The air ticket, he already reserved.'
- b. Zhe shi ta ding de ji-piao.
 this is 3s reserve RM air=ticket
 'This is the air ticket he reserved.'
- c. Ni ding le shenme?
 2s reserve Perf what
 'What did you reserve?'
- d. Ta ding de shi ji-piao.
 3s reserve Nom is air=ticket
 'What he reserved was an air ticket.'

Given such facts, the first approach would require an *ad hoc* statement on the inaccessibility of DO to clefting and therefore is less desirable if we can find non-*ad hoc* alternatives. On the other hand, the second approach does not necessarily require any *ad hoc* solution or affect universality of the AH.

Therefore, instead of simply abandoning the AH, I will adopt the second approach and contend that DO uncleftability in Chinese stems not from over-generalization of the AH, but from a language-specific linear constraint in Chinese.

3. THE SOLUTION

Synchronically, Chinese has an unmarked order of SVO⁴ (Sun & Givón 1985, Li 1990: 23, Travis 1984), with direct objects unmarkedly occurring postverbally. Linearly, the contrastive focus marker (CFM) *shi*, must invariably occur *before* the main verb of the sentence. In other words, the CFM *shi* as a rule can not occur after the main verb. This constraint, implicitly stated in Huang (1982: 291), can be formally stated as (7):

- (7) *X MAIN VERB *shi* Y

Constraint (7) stipulates that no postverbal CFM is permitted in Chinese. This potentially conflicts with (3), which says that the CFM must immediately precede the cleft focus. Now if we consider (3) and (7) in terms of word order in Chinese, we have an account of DO uncleftability. For a direct object, which occurs

⁴On the other hand, Li & Thompson (1975) and Tai (1973) hold that Chinese is changing from an SVO to an SOV language. Despite the controversial views, it is generally accepted that the direct object unmarkedly occurs after the verb.

postverbally, to be clefted, the CFM must immediately precede it, resulting in a postverbal CFM *shi*, which violates (7).

The implications of the formulation of (7) go beyond the scope of direct objects, since Y can stand for any postverbal constituent. More specifically, (7) predicts that not only direct objects, but all postverbal constituents are subject to the same linear constraint, *viz.*, no postverbal constituents are cleftable. This is borne out by examples like (8), which would all be grammatical as non-clefts if *shi* were omitted:

- (8) a. *Yuehan zhao le ni shi liang ci de.
 John look=for Perf 2s CFM two time MM
 'It is twice that John has looked for you.'
- b. *Ta huai de shi hen.
 3s bad Resultative CFM very
 'He's indeed very bad.'
- c. *Ta re de shi han dou liu le chulai.
 3s hot Resultative CFM sweat all flow Perf come=out
 'He was so hot that he was wet with sweat.'

Sentence (8a) has a postverbal quantifier phrase, (8b), a postverbal degree adverb, and (8c), a postverbal S. Like direct objects, all such postverbal constituents are uncleftable. Also like direct objects, they can undergo other syntactic processes; for example, the quantifier phrase in (8a), *liang ci*, can be fronted (9a), relativized (9b), questioned (9c), and pseudo-clefted (9d).

- (9) a. Ta liang ci zhao ni ni dou bu zai.
 3s two time look=for 2s 2s all not in
 'Twice when he looked for you, you were not in.'
- b. Wo shengbing de na liang ci
 1s be=sick MM that two time
 'the two times when I was sick'
- c. Ta zhao le ni ji ci?
 3s look=for Perf 2s how=many time
 'How many times did he look for you?'
- d. Ta zhao ni de cishu shi liang ci (bushi yi ci).
 3s look=for 2s MM time=number be two time not be one time
 'The number of times he looked for you is twice, not (just) once.'

Constraint (7) therefore not only accounts for uncleftability of direct objects, but also for that of all postverbal constituents.

There are several pieces of evidence in support of this analysis, the first of which involves preposed direct objects. Recall (6a), which has a preposed topicalized object. Chinese has another means of preposing postverbal direct objects with definite reference: the *ba* construction, whereby a direct object occurs preverbally and is immediately preceded by a preposition-like object marker (OM) *ba*. In both preverbal positions, the direct object becomes more cleftable:

- (10) a. Yuehan *shi ba ji-piao* cong guowai ding hao le.
 John CFM OM air=ticket from abroad reserve Compl. Perf
 'It is the air ticket that John reserved from abroad.'
- b. †*Shi ji-piao* Yuehan cong guowai ding hao le.
 CFM air=ticket John from abroad reserve Compl. Perf
 'It is the air ticket that John reserved from abroad.'

In (10a), a preposed object in the *ba*-construction is fully cleftable. For the topicalized (10b), given appropriate stress on *ji-piao* 'air ticket' and a short pause after it, the sentence is much more acceptable than (4e), which has a postverbal focus. Therefore, both support (7).

The second kind of evidence has to do with indirect objects headed by *gei* 'to, for' and oblique objects headed by *zai* 'at' or *dao* 'to'. Such phrases can occur either preverbally or postverbally, with a slight semantic difference sometimes (Chao 1968). When such a phrase occurs preverbally, it is cleftable, as in (11a); however, when it occurs postverbally, it is not cleftable, as in (11b):

- (11) a. Yuehan *shi gei ta* ji xin de.
 John CFM to 3s mail letter MM
 'It is to him that John mailed a letter.'
- b. *Yuehan *ji shi gei ta* yi feng xin de.
 John mail CFM to 3s one M(classifier) letter MM
 'It is to him that John mailed a letter.'

Cleftability in such cases depends entirely on whether the focused constituent is preverbal or postverbal, as predicted by (7).

The third piece of evidence comes from an infrequent variation of cleft sentences, wherein the direct object is cleftable but must receive extra stress, as in (12).

- (12) Yuehan *shi ji le yi feng xin*.
 John CFM mail Perf a M letter
 'It's a letter that John mailed.'

Theoretically, DO clefting brings (3) and (7) into conflict with each other, in that while (7) prohibits a postverbal CFM, the immediate precedence requirement of (3) necessitates a postverbal CFM for DO clefting. This conflict is resolved by letting (7) override (3): while (12) respects the word order constraint (7) in that the CFM occurs before the main verb, it violates (3) insofar as the cleft focus is not adjacent to the CFM. This violation, however, is prosodically compensated for by the heavy stress on the focused DO. What (12) shows, then, is that DO uncleftability is due not to the object itself, but to the word order constraint specified in (7), in the sense that as long as the CFM *shi* occurs before the main verb and constraint (7) is respected, the sentence is grammatical even if the focus is discontinuous from the CFM⁵.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, all postverbal constituents are uncleftable, a fact that is most elegantly accounted for by (7), but is not accounted for with an *ad hoc* statement about the direct object.

One may think of sentences like the following as counterexamples to (7):

- (13) Yuehan cong guowai ding de shi ji-piao.
 John from abroad reserve Nom Copula air=ticket

'What John reserved from abroad is an air ticket.'

In (13), it seems that *shi* occurs after the main verb yet the sentence is still grammatical. However, as indicated by the translation, this construction is in fact not a cleft sentence, but a pseudo-cleft sentence, where *shi* is used as a copula equative verb, i.e., a main verb, rather than a CFM. The difference is that, with *shi* as a main verb, the sentence would be ungrammatical without it, whereas with *shi* as a CFM, the sentence would still be grammatical as a non-cleft even without it. This is seen in (14) (compared with (13)), where absence of *shi* results in a (verbless) non-sentence, possibly rendered as 'an air ticket that John reserved from abroad' on a different reading:

- (14) *Yuehan cong guowai ding de ji-piao.

Additional evidence is seen in the occurrence of the nominalizer *de* (Ross 1983), which nominalizes the clause before it as a subject NP, the whole sequence before *de* being a headless relative clause. This being the case, the only main verb candidate in the remaining part of the sentence is *shi*.

⁵I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out an analogous structure in English where the focus is discontinuous from its marker. A sentence like 'Brian doesn't *only* want to satisfy Quebec', with emphatic stress on *Quebec*, will have the NP as the exclusive focus of *only*.

Another kind of apparent counterexample is one like (15), where it seems that *shi* occurs after the main verb *kanjian* 'see', a violation of constraint (7), yet the sentence is still grammatical:

- (15) Wo kanjian ta shi zai ji tian yiqian.
 1s see 3s CFM at a=few day ago
 'It is a few days ago that I saw him.'

A more plausible analysis of (15), however, would be in terms of topic-comment structure, treating *shi*, again, as the main verb of the sentence. I will argue that the constituent before *shi* in (15), *wo kanjian ta*, is a topical clause which represents known information, and the part that follows *shi*, the comment which represents new information, with *shi* as the equative main verb. The whole sentence should have been translated as 'That I saw him was several days ago.' The alternative analysis as suggested by the dubious translation in (15) would have *wo* as the subject-topic and *kanjian* as the main verb. Therefore, it is essential to find out whether the subject-topic is *wo* or *wo kanjian ta*. I will provide arguments for the latter against the former.

As suggested by Li & Thompson (1981), two formal devices can be used to distinguish a topic in Chinese: sentence-initial position, and the optional occurrence of pause or pause particles. In Chinese, a topic almost invariably occurs in sentence-initial position, and can be optionally separated from the comment 'by a pause or by one of the pause particles (Ptc) [*a*, *ya*, *me*, *ne*, or *ba*]' (p.86). With respect to (15), the first criterion does not apply since both *wo* and *wo kanjian ta* are sentence-initial. Applying the second criterion, we get:

- (16) a. Wo kanjian ta me, shi zai ji tian yiqian.
 1s see 3s Ptc Copula at a=few day ago
 'As for my seeing him, it was several days ago.'
- b. ??Wo me, kanjian ta shi zai ji tian yiqian.
 'As for me, (I) saw him several days ago.'

While the topical status of *wo kanjian ta* in (16a) is clear by virtue of its sounding perfectly natural, (16b) suggests the dubiousness of *wo* as a subject-topic. The implausibility of a pause particle between *wo* and *kanjian ta* suggests their integrity as a constituent, *viz.*, the topic.

Morphologically, one of the topical features is that the verb in a clausal topic tends to show reduced 'verbness' by virtue of being rendered aspectless or tenseless (Givón 1984). This is exactly what we find in regard to (15). Consider (17):

- (17) *Wo kanjian le ta shi zai ji tian yiqian.
 1s see Perf 3s Cpl at a=few day ago

'(As for) my seeing him, it was several days ago.'

If *kanjian* were the main verb, it would not only allow for, but require, a perfective marker in this context. The impossibility of the perfective *le* in (17) further suggests that what precedes *shi* in (15) is topical.

Finally, as we observed earlier, the absence of *shi* as a CFM will not affect grammaticality of the remaining part of the sentence as a non-cleft, whereas the absence of *shi* as a main verb will. Given this difference, if *shi* were analyzed as the CFM in (15), the sentence, without *shi*, would still be grammatical as a non-cleft without *shi*. But this is not the case, as (18) shows:

- (18) *Wo kanjian ta zai ji tian yiqian.
 1s see 3s at a=few day ago

'I saw him several days ago.'

This is because the temporal phrase as a rule should occur not after, but before, a non-copula verb. In other words, for the sentence to be grammatical, *shi* has to occur as a copula verb (= main verb), which can then take a temporal phrase as its complement.

In sum, sentences like (13) and (15) are in fact not counterevidence to the structural constraint (7).

4. IS *SHI* AN ADVERB?

So far, all the evidence has suggested that DO uncleftability in Chinese is caused not by any *ad hoc* constraint with respect to the object *per se*, but by a constraint with respect to the linear order between the CFM and the main verb. Consequently, the problem of DO uncleftability in Chinese has no bearing on the proposed AH; rather, it stems from a more superficial word order constraint in Chinese which overrides the effect of the AH. However, this linear constraint has so far only referred to the order between the CFM and the main verb. The account would be more elegant if we could show that (7) is part of an independently motivated constraint and that the solution of the problem follows automatically from something already existing in the language without recourse to any *ad hoc* constraint.

One possibility, as suggested in Huang (1982b), is to treat the CFM *shi* as an adverb which, like most other adverbs, occurs before the main verb. However, there are some problems with this analysis, according to the criterion that, syntactically, members of a class are expected to behave similarly and are in general mutually exclusive. More specifically, the CFM *shi* shows some important syn-

tactic differences from preverbal adverbs such as *jiu* 'just', *zhen* 'really' and *zhi* 'only'. First, while no adverb of the kind represented by *jiu*, *zhen* and *zhi* can occur in the A-not-A construction, a typical verbal construction⁶, *shi* can, as in (19):

(19) a. **Ta zhen bu zhen qu?*
3s really not really go

'Is he really going?'

b. *Ta shi bu shi wei Yuehan ding de ji-piao?*
3s CFM not CFM for John reserve MM air=ticket

'Is it for John that he reserved an air ticket?'

Clearly, the CFM *shi* behaves differently from the adverbs with respect to this verbal feature.

A similar difference is seen in their respective ability to occur independently as a short answer to yes/no questions. The CFM *shi*, like full verbs in Chinese, can stand alone as a short answer to yes/no questions, whereas the adverbs can not. Compare

(20) a. A: *Ni qu ma?*
2s go Q
'Are you going?'

B: *Qu.*
go
'Yes.'

b. A: *Ta shi wei Yuehan ding de ji-piao ma?*
3s CFM for John reserve MM air=ticket Q
'Is it for John that he reserved an air ticket?'

B: *Shi (de).*
CFM MM
'Yes.'

⁶Again, I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out A-not-A as a typical main verb property. However, I share in part Li's (1990: 63) view that the A-not-A test is also a very common test for verbhood in general. In fact, I hold that A-not-A is better regarded as a test for general verbhood, for the reason that, although it represents a typical feature of the main verb, not all elements that can be used in the A-not-A construction are necessarily main verbs. This is seen in the use of modal verbs, which can take the A-not-A form and function as simple answers to questions (Li 1990: 149), the latter being another alleged main verb feature. It is for this reason that I have so far restrained myself from using A-not-A as an argument for or against the main verb status of certain verbal elements.

c. A: Ni zhen qu ma?
2s really go Q

'Are you really going?'

B: *Zhen.
really

'Yes.'

The form of the short answer is a full verb in (20a), a CFM in (20b), and an adverb in the ungrammatical (20c). Thus the CFM *shi*, again, behaves differently from adverbs by virtue of showing a higher degree of 'verbness' than the latter. Given such important syntactic differences, it is not very plausible if we treat *shi* as an adverb.

Another argument against treating *shi* as an adverb is that while the adverbs are mutually exclusive among themselves, they can nevertheless cooccur with *shi*, as in (21):

(21) a. *Ta zhen jiu qu.
3s really just go

'Is he really just going?'

b. Zheng / jiu shi ta wei Yuehan ding de piao.
right just CFM 3s for John reserve MM ticket

'It is (none other than) he who reserved a ticket for John.'

Since one of the important criteria for establishing membership of a morpho-syntactic class is mutual exclusiveness, or complementarity, the fact that *shi* cooccurs with this subclass of adverbs suggests that the former cannot be a possible member of the latter. Therefore, evidence in terms of both the nature of *shi* and syntactic mutual exclusiveness indicates that the analysis of *shi* as an adverb is problematic.

5. QUASI-VERBS

Alternatively, I will propose that the CFM *shi* belongs to a class of 'quasi-verbs' whose distribution is restricted to the preverbal position, on the basis of syntactic complementarity and the fact that they share many verbal and non-verbal properties. These quasi-verbs include modal auxiliary verbs as well as the CFM *shi*.⁷ Modal auxiliary verbs are words like *neng* 'can', *ken* 'will', *keyi* 'may', and *ying* (*gai*) 'should', whose preverbal distribution is exemplified in (22).

⁷Given that in general preposition-like co-verbs in Chinese also share the verbal and non-verbal properties to be discussed below, one would be tempted to include them as

(22) a. Ta neng qu.
3sg can go
'He can go.'

b. *Ta qu neng.

Syntactically, modal auxiliary verbs and the CFM are mutually exclusive, as in (23):

(23) a. *Wo neng shi zai jieshang kanjian ta de.
1s can CFM on street see 3s MM
'It's on the street that I could see him.'

b. *Wo shi neng zai jieshang kanjian ta de.
1s CFM can on street see 3s MM

The classification of modal verbs and the CFM as 'quasi-verbs' is also based on a number of verbal and non-verbal features shared by the two categories. Firstly, a verb, or sometimes the first syllable of a verb, can occur in the A-not-A structure (Huang 1988), as in (24a), as is also the case with modal verbs and the CFM ((24b) and (24c), respectively).

(24) a. A: Ni ding bu ding piao?
2s reserve not reserve ticket
'Will you reserve a ticket?'

B: Bu ding.
not reserve
'No.'

b. A: Ni neng bu neng wei wo ding piao?
2s can not can for 1s reserve ticket
'Can you reserve a ticket for me?'

B: Bu neng.
not can
'No.'

c. A: Ni shi bu shi wei wo ding de piao?
2s CFM not CFM for 1s reserve MM ticket
'Is it for me that you reserved the ticket?'

quasi-verbs as well. However, this would cause problems in terms of complementarity and subcategorization, problems which deserve further studies in the future. Therefore, I have excluded co-verbs from consideration, with the hope that future studies will shed light on co-verbs either as or not as quasi-verbs.

B: **Bu shi.**
 not CFM
 'No.'

B's responses in (24) also show two other verbal features shared by modal verbs and the CFM – that they can be used as a short answer to yes/no questions, and that they can be negated by one of the negative forms *bu*, *mei* (you) or *bie*.

Moreover, like full verbs, the modal auxiliary and the CFM can cooccur with a delimiting or emphasizing adverbs such as *zhi* 'only', *zhen* 'really' and *jiu* 'just', as in (25):

- (25) a. Ta **zhi / zhen** wei wo **ding** le piao.
 3s only really for 1s reserve Perf ticket
 'He only/really reserved a ticket for me.'
- b. Ta **zhi / zhen neng** weiwo ding piao.
 3s only really can for 1s reserve ticket
 'He can only/really reserve a ticket for me.'
- c. Ta **zhi / zhen shi** wei wo ding de piao.
 3s only really CFM for 1s reserve MM ticket
 'It is only/really for me that he reserved a ticket.'

Apart from the above verbal features shared by modal auxiliaries and the CFM, there are also several non-verbal features shared by them. First of all, while a full verb used as the main verb in a sentence can generally take any of the aspectual morphemes such as the perfective *-le*, the progressive *-zhe*, and the experiential *-guo*, as can be seen in (25a), no aspectual morpheme can be used with a modal auxiliary ((26a)) or the CFM ((26b)):

- (26) a. *Ta zuotian **neng-le** wei ni ding piao.
 3s yesterday can-Perf for 2s reserve ticket
 'He could reserve a ticket for you yesterday.'
- b. *Ta **shi-le** wei ni ding de piao.
 3s CFM-Perf for 2s reserve MM ticket
 'It was for you that he reserved a ticket.'

Also, a full verb is morphologically reduplicatable in full or in part for various purposes, whereas neither modal auxiliaries nor CFM can be reduplicated. For example, a volitional verb may be reduplicated to mark a delimitative aspect (Li & Thompson 1981: 232-26), as in (27a), but this is not possible with modal verbs or the CFM, as in (27b) and (27c), respectively.

- (27) a. Ni kankan zhe ben shu.
2s look-look this M book
'You read this book (for a while).'
- b. *Ta nengneng kan zhe ben shu.
3s can-can look this M shu
'He can read this book.'
- c. *Shishi ta kan zhe ben shu de.
CFM-CFM 3s look this M book MM
'It is he who read this book.'

Finally, while the verb is usually an indispensable constituent in a grammatical sentence⁸, a modal auxiliary or the CFM is dispensable in that its absence would generally not affect grammaticality, although the resulting sentence may to some extent differ semantically from the original one. This is shown in (28):

- (28) a. Tamen (neng) tan gangqin.
3p can play piano
'They (can) play the piano.'
- b. (Shi) tamen zai tan gangqin.
CFM 3p Prog play piano
'(It is) they (who) are playing the piano.'

Table 1 summarizes the shared verbal and non-verbal features of modal auxiliaries and the CFM. Since they both show positive values for some of the parameters but negative values for the others, the term 'quasi-verb' is employed to attempt a unification between the two categories. Table 1, then, provides a valid basis for classifying modal verbs and the CFM *shi* as a class of 'quasi-verbs', which occur preverbally. Given these quasi-verbs, we are now able to generalize the linear constraint (7) as (29), which states that a quasi-verb must occur before the main verb in a sentence.

- (29) X QUASI-VERB Y MAIN VERB Z

(29) exists independently as a word order constraint between a quasi-verb and the main verb⁹ in Chinese. Since it rules out the possibility of a quasi-verb

⁸Like many other languages, verbless sentences exist in Chinese, especially in the colloquial variety. However, since what we are concerned with here is whether *in general* a sentence should require the presence of a verb, we will not consider possible verbless sentences in the language.

⁹I realize that identification of the main verb in a Chinese clause is a difficult issue. Li (1990: 100) mentions three criteria: a) aspect marker, b) the A-not-A form, and c) simple answer, the last two of which have been shown in the above discussion to be more appropri-

occurring postverbally, DO uncleftability is automatically accounted for, and no other *ad hoc* explanation is needed.

Table 1:
Shared verbal and non-verbal features of
modal auxiliaries & the CFM in Chinese

	Verb	Quasi-verb	
		Modal	CFM
1. A-not-A	+	+	+
2. Short answer	+	+	+
3. Negation	+	+	+
4. Cooccurrence with adverb	+	+	+
5. Cooccurrence with aspect marker	+	-	-
6. Reduplication	+	-	-
7. Dispensability	-	+	+

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, DO uncleftability in Chinese as apparent counterevidence to the Accessibility Hierarchy has been shown to be due not to the inherent property of direct objects nor to inapplicability of the AH itself, but to a constraint on the linear structure which is in conflict with, and overrides the effect of, the AH. Since the constraint, which crucially involves the order of a quasi-verb and the main verb in Chinese, is independently motivated in the language, no *ad hoc* account is needed to account for DO uncleftability in Chinese.

In conclusion, while the Accessibility Hierarchy attains some measure of plausibility as a language universal, it nevertheless can interact with, and be negatively affected by, language specific constraints.

ately used as tests for general verbhood rather than main verbhood. As for the first one, Li (1990) notes that some verbs can not take aspect markers. Such fuzzy areas, though not posing a big problem to the present analysis, have been, and will probably remain to be, areas of controversy.

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