A new passive form in Mandarin: Its syntax and implications

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A **New Passive Form in Mandarin: Its Syntax and Implications**

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Abstract: This paper discusses the syntax, semantics and historical source of the new *bèi XX* construction in Mandarin from a cross-linguistic perspective. We argue that *bèi XX* is not a special construction that involves the passivization of intransitive verbs. What is passivized in it is not XX itself but a null light verb with the elementary semantics of a causative, putative or activity predicate that takes XX as its complement or adjunct. Such null light verb constructions are abundant in Old Chinese and English, though often not in passive form. Different from them, the *bèi XX* construction does not have a grammatical active form. We attribute this difference to the difference between synthetic and analytic languages, and account for it by a parameter in derivational timing. The appearance of the *bèi XX* construction marks Modern Chinese as being at the early stage of a new cycle of change. The analysis of the *bèi XX* construction as proposed capitalizes on the role of light verb syntax as being the real essence of grammar, and lends important support to the non-projectionist theories of syntax-lexicon mapping such as Distributed Morphology.

1. *Introduction*

As is well known, normal passive constructions involve a transitive predicate with a missing object argument that somehow shows up in the subject position. According to

Huang, Li and Li (2009, hereinafter HLL) and the earlier works by Feng (1997), Ting (1998) and Huang (1999), there are two types of Chinese *bèi* 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: *bèi* NP-VP

张三被李四打了。

Zhāngsān bèi   Lǐsì dǎ le.

Zhangsan BEI Lisi hit PERF

'Zhangsan was hit by Lisi.'

(2)   The short passive: *bèi* VP

张三被打了。

Zhāngsān bèi   dǎ   le.

Zhangsan BEI hit PERF

'Zhangsan was hit.'

In both cases the main predicate is transitive but its expected object position is unfilled. Even in the case of indirect or adversative passives in languages that have them, the subject is somehow related to the predicate as some sort of an affectee of the event described.

    In recent years, a new type of passive construction has appeared in Mandarin on the internet that apparently departs from the above characterization. Some prominent examples are given in (3):[1]

(3) 被小康, 被自殺, 被自願, 被就業, 被旅遊, 被投票

bèi xiǎokāng, bèi zìshā, bèi zìyuàn, bèi jiùyè, bèi lǚyóu, bèi tóupiào

BEI middle-class BEI suicide BEI volunter BEI get-a-job BEI travel BEI vote

被死亡, 被失蹤, 被懷孕, 被增長, 被富有

bèi sǐwáng, bèi shīzōng, bèi huáiyùn, bèi zēngzhǎng, bèi fùyǒu

BEI die   BEI disappear BEI conceive-a-baby BEI increase, BEI rich

被隆重, 被潛規則, 被 67%, 被義務, 被專家

bèi lóngzhòng, bèi qiánguīzé, bèi 67%, bèi yìwù, bèi zhuānjiā

BEI ceremoniously BEI hidden-rule BEI 67% BEI obligation BEI expert

What makes these examples different from common passives is that the predicates below *bèi* are not transitive verbs but intransitive verbs, or even adjectives, adverbs or nouns. Although some verbal phrases are transitive, such as *jiùyè* 'get a job' or *huáiyùn* 'conceive a baby', according to their meanings they do not contain a Theme element which can be coindexed with the subject of the passive sentence. Following other linguists, we call this type of passive construction *bèi XX* construction in the remainder of the paper.

Apparently, the *bèi XX* construction violates the common principles of passivization in Chinese and other languages of world, and this is the part that interests us. The first question coming to mind is what each 'passive' example above means since it does not have an active source (a directly reconstructed active source is unacceptable or even gibberish). Further reading of the materials on the web reveals that *bèi XX* constructions are used in satirical writings and can be interpreted in three ways: (a) 'x gets reported or

regarded as having the property denoted by XX; (b) 'x is forced to acquire the property denoted by XX'; (c) 'x is treated, acted upon, in a way involving or described by XX'.

For instance, *bèi xiǎokāng* in (4), literally *bèi middle-class*, means 'x got reported or regarded (by, e.g., some government offices) as belonging to the middleclass'. It may be a good thing for the government officials because they can be rewarded for having presumably done a good job of raising the livelihood of the poor in their districts, but a misfortune for those who were reported as *xiǎokāng* 'middle class' since they in fact did not become richer but now have become ineligible for government relief funds due to their re-classification. *Bèi shīzōng* and *bèi lǚyóu* in (5-6) mean 'x was announced to have disappeared or gone on a trip'. *Bèi 67%* in (7) means that 67% of the public were reported to support the adjustment of Chinese characters.

(4)　我們又在數據上被小康了? … 這些年來不少人感覺…被幸福、被中產 ….

wǒmen yòu zài shùjù　 shàng bèi xiǎokāng　 le?　 … zhèxiē nián lái,

we　 again in statistics terms BEI middle-class PERF　 these years in

bù shǎo rén　　gǎnjué… bèi xìngfú, bèi zhōngchǎn…

not few people feel　　BEI happy　BEI middle-class (www.ce.cn 2011-12-23)

Lit.: 'Have we 'gotten middle-class-ed' again by the statistics? … these years, many people feel they have 'gotten happy-ed or middle-class-ed'. '

(5)　上海李天天律師, 被失蹤了嗎?

Shànghái LǐTiāntiān lǜshī, bèi shīzōng le　　ma?

Shanghai LiTiantian lawyer BEI disppear PERF Q　　(ifeng.com 2011-06-06)

Lit.:'Has the lawyer Tiantian Li in Shanghai 'gotten disappeared'?'

(6)　公安更包圍…如諾獎頒發前民運人士被旅遊。

　　gōngān　gèng bāowéi, … rú　nuòjiǎng　　bānfā qián　mínyùnrénshì　　　bèi

　　police　again surround　like Nobel-prize award before democracy activist BEI

　　lǔyóu.　　　　　　　　　　　　(RFI China 2010-12-14)

　　travel

　　Lit.:'The police surrounded [the residence] again…[it was] like when democracy

　　activists 'got traveled'right before the Nobel Prize award ceremony.'

(7)　教育部稱 67%公眾贊成漢字調整，網友調侃被 67%。 (騰訊網 2009-08-25)

　　Jiàoyùbù chēng 67%　gōngzhòng　zànchéng　hànzì　　　　　tiáozhěng,

　　MOE　　claim 67% public　　　agree　　Ch-character　adjust

　　wǎngyǒu　tiáokǎn　bèi　67%.

　　netizen　joke　　BEI　67%　　　　　(www.QQ.com 2009-08-25)

　　Lit.:'The Ministry of Education claimed 67% of the public were in favor of the

　　adjustment of Chinese characters. Some netizens joked that they got '67%-ed'.'

The phrase *bèi jiéhūn* 'bei-marry' has two interpretations: 'x is said to have been married'
and 'x is forced to marry someone', as shown in (8-9) respectively:[2]

(8)　在一次又一次地被結婚後，這或許是無奈的趙薇的心聲吧。

　　zài yí-cì　　yòu yí-cì　　de bèi jiéhūn hòu, zhè huòxǔ　shì　wúnài　de

　　at one time again one time DE BEI marry after this perhaps is　helpless DE

　　Zhào Wēi de　xīnshēng　ba

　　Zhao Wei DE inner-voice SFP　　　　　　　(Nandu Daily 2009-07-31)

'After being [reported] again and again to have gotten married, this is perhaps the inner voice of the helpless Zhao Wei.'

(9) 什麼叫被結婚?… 他和妻子的婚姻就屬於被結婚。

   shénme jiào bèi jiéhūn? … tā hé qīzi de hūnyīn jiù shǔyú bèi jiéhūn.

   what   call   BEI marry   he and wife DE marriage just belong BEI marry

<div align="right">(Xinkuaibao 2010-09-15)</div>

   Lit.:"What is 'BEI-marry'? … his marriage with his wife belongs to the 'BEI [forced-to-get] married' type."

More examples with the interpretation of 'being [forced to] X' include *bèi tuìxiū* 'being forced to retire', *bèi mǎnyì* 'being forced to be satisfied' and *bèi zìyuàn* 'being forced to volunteer, *bèi juānkuǎn* 'being forced to donate' (see Huangxin 2013). However, the *bèi XX* in all these examples can also bear the meaning of 'being reported to or regarded as …' with the development of the event to a certain stage. Take *bèi juānkuǎn* 'being forced to donate' for example. When people got listed as donors involuntarily, they were simply reported to be voluntary donors. But the same expression could also mean that they were involuntarily made to donate.

The XX in *bèi XX* could be adjective or adverbial phrases, as *bèi lóngzhòng* 'bei-ceremonious(ly)' in (10).

(10) 2010 年 11 月，托爾斯泰必將再"被隆重"一次。

   2010 nián 11 yuè   tuōérsītài bì jiāng zài "bèi lóngzhòng"   yí-cì

   2010 year 11 month Tolstoy   sure will   again BEI ceremoniously one-time

'In November, 2010, Tolstoy will definitely be [e.g., commemorated]

ceremoniously once more.'

A number of linguists in China have studied the *bèi XX* construction, relating some of

their properties to the social-political circumstances that they often describe the sarcastic

style, and the implicit feelings of helplessness, etc. These will not, however, concern us

here. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the syntax of the *bèi XX* construction and its

implications for the theory of grammar. Basically, it will touch on the following

questions: (a) How is this construction to be analyzed and represented syntactically in

order to derive its semantic properties? (b) What are some of its significant properties

(e.g., distributional and semantic restrictions), and how can they be explained? (c) How

can a construction like this emerge? Are there similar cases of emergence in other

languages? (d) What implications can be drawn for the theory of syntax-lexicon mapping,

language variation and change?

Our proposed answers to these questions will be as follows: (a) The *bèi XX*

construction involves a null light verb (LV), and XX is the complement or the adjunct of

this light verb. There is no passivization of an intransitive verb as such, at a deeper level

of analysis. What is passivized is the light verb predicate--hence a transitive predicate but

not the XX. (b) Similar cases can be found in Old Chinese and other languages, so this is

not a particularly 'exotic' linguistic phenomenon. (c) What makes the *bei XX*

construction different is that it does not have grammatical active sources. We liken this

property to that of the 'retained object construction', which also cannot be reconstructed

into active form. Together, these constructions reflect the high analyticity of modern

Chinese. (d) In this paper, the analysis of the syntax of the *bèi XX* construction adopts lexical decomposition and certain tenets of Distributed Morphology, and the results of our analysis further support these theories.

2. ***The syntactic representations of the bèi XX construction***

To study the syntax of the *bèi XX* construction is to answer how an intransitive, especially an unaccusative verb, or even a noun, an adjective, or an adverb can apparently be passivized. Through a close observation of the semantics of the *bèi XX* construction and the contexts in which it is used, we propose that what is passivized is not the XX (= an intransitive verb, a noun, an adjective, or an adverb) but the predicate phrase superimposed on the XX. Its head is a null light verb with the elementary semantics CAUSE and DO, referring to several causative or executive events.

2.1 *The causative type: physical causative and mental causative*

When we say that the events denoted by the light verb in the *bèi XX* can be classified into the causative and executive types, we mean that they refer to two types of event which involve Proto Agents (Dowty 1991).[3] Similar to thematic roles (such as Agent, Causer, Experiencer, Affectee, Recipient, Theme, etc.) which cannot be defined precisely, their corresponding light verbs do not have clear cut semantic bandwidths either. As for causative verbs, it has long been pointed out that they have both physical and mental senses in Archaic Chinese, as shown in (11-12).

(11) a. 匠人斫而小之。《孟子•梁惠王下》

      jiàngrén zhǎn ěr   xiǎo   zhī   (*MengZi•Liang Hui Wang II*)

      craftsman cut   and small it

'The craftsman cut it and made it small.'

b. 天將降大任於斯人也，必先苦其心志，勞其筋骨，餓其體膚…。

《孟子•告子下》

tiān jiāng jiàng dà rèn yú sī rén yě, bì xiān kǔ qí xīnzhì

god will give big task to this person SFP must first suffer his will-power

láo qí jīngǔ, è qí tǐfū, …. (*MengZi•Gaozi II*)

exhaust his muscles hunger his body

'When God is about to give an important task to a certain person, the first thing he

does is to make his will suffer, his muscles exhausted, his body hungry…'

(12) a. 孔子登東山而小魯，登泰山而小天下。《孟子•盡心上》

kǒngzǐ dēng dōngshān ér xiǎo Lǔ, dēng tàishān ér xiǎo tiānxià

Confucius climb east-mountain and small Lu climb Mt.-Tai and small world

(*MengZi•Jinxin II*)

'When Confucius climbed up East Mountain, he considered Kingdom Lu to be

small; when he climbed up Mount Tai, he considered the world to be small.'

b. 孟嘗君客我。《戰國策•齊策》

Mèngchángjūn kè wǒ (*Zhanguoce•Qice*)
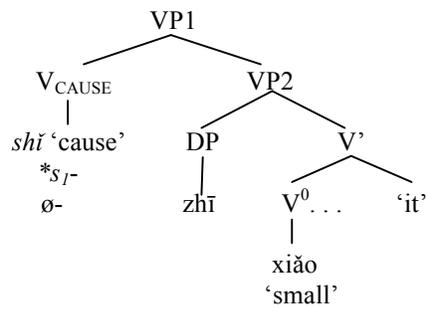
Mengchangjun guest me

'Mengchangjun took me as his guest.'

The predicates *xiǎo* 'small', *kǔ* 'suffer', *láo* 'tired' and *è* 'hungry' in (11a, b) are all

physical causatives, denoting 'cause x to be small, exhausted, tired and hungry'. The

sentences in (12) are the instances of 'mental causatives', in that the change-of-state of the object only occurs in the mind (or words) of the speaker. *Xiǎo* 'small' in (12a) is mental causative, meaning 'consider x to be small'. When Confucius climbed up East Mountain, he got a bird's eye view of Kingdom Lu and thought it small. When he climbed up Mount Tai, he felt as if the whole world were smaller. In (12b), *kè wǒ* 'guest me' means 'to consider me as a guest'. The difference between the physical causative and the mental causative is that the former means 'to make something to be small physically or in reality', while the latter means 'to consider something small but the actual thing does not change in size.' One might also call the mental causative an 'Akiu-type causative'.[4] Besides the meaning of 'considering x as', the mental causative can also refer to 'reporting or stating that….' Therefore, (12a) could also be interpreted as 'when Confucius got up on East Mountain, he claimed that the Kingdom Lu was small; when he climbed up Mount Tai, he stated that the whole world was small. ' Hence, mental causatives are sometimes referred to as 'putatives' by some authors in the literature.

It is plausible to assume that the derivations of the *bèi XX* constructions with the interpretations of 'being forced to…' and 'being reported or regarded as…' should involve the passivization of the causative structures similar to the physical and mental causatives in Archaic Chinese. As for the word formation system of Old Chinese, Mei (1989, 2012 and references) has postulated a causative prefix and executive prefix, both reconstructed in the form of $*s$-, to be referred to below as $*s_1$- and $*s_2$-. In terms of lexical decomposition, modern linguists often decompose a causative verb into a light verb structure, as in (13), with Mei's affix being a possible instantiation of a light verb.
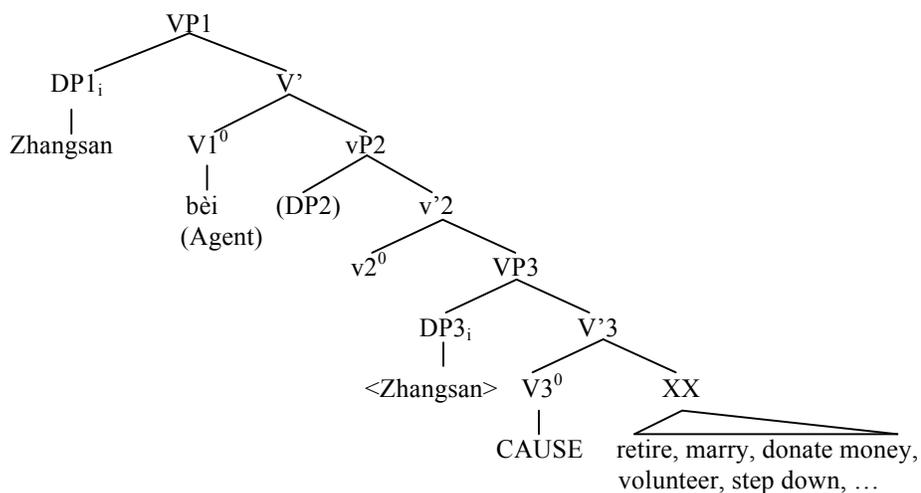
(13)

```
                        VP1
              ┌──────────┴──────────┐
          V_CAUSE                   VP2
             │              ┌────────┴────────┐
        shǐ 'cause'        DP               V'
           *s₁-            │          ┌──────┴──────┐
            ø-            zhī         V⁰...        'it'
                                      │
                                    xiǎo
                                   'small'
```

If the light verb is the lexical verb *shǐ* 'cause', we get the periphrastic (analytic) form *shǐ zhī xiǎo* 'cause it to be small'; when the light verb is an affix $*s_1$- or a null affix, the verb *xiǎo* 'small' moves into the light verb CAUSE and we get the lexical (synthetic) form *xiǎo zhī* 'small it'.[5]

Based on the above analysis, we submit that the *bèi XX* construction denoting 'be forced to…' involves a causative light verb phrase, superimposed by the passive verb *bèi* and the subject it selects, as shown in (14).[6] (The elements in angle brackets designate traces of movement, and all-caps denote null light verbs.)

(14)

```
                    VP1
          ┌──────────┴──────────┐
        DP1ᵢ                    V'
          │            ┌─────────┴─────────┐
      Zhangsan        V1⁰                 vP2
                       │           ┌───────┴───────┐
                      bèi        (DP2)            v'2
                     (Agent)              ┌────────┴────────┐
                                         v2⁰              VP3
                                                  ┌────────┴────────┐
                                                DP3ᵢ              V'3
                                                  │         ┌───────┴───────┐
                                            <Zhangsan>     V3⁰            XX
                                                            │
                                                          CAUSE    retire, marry, donate money,
                                                                   volunteer, step down, …
```

The whole configuration means 'Zhangsan was caused to retire, marry, volunteer, step down…by some external force'. Hence, the 'be-forced-to' reading of *bèi XX* can be easily worked out from it.

Causative structures that involve movement to null light verbs are, of course, not in short supply in other languages. Although some verbs, such as *break*, *open*, *shorten*, and *lengthen* in English, may not have the 'force' reading in their causative uses, verbs like *volunteer* and *step down* do have this reading, as in (15).

(15) a. I volunteered John to help them.

 b. John was volunteered for parachute training by friends.

 c. We decided to step down the director.

 d. The chairman was stepped down by us.

It seems that the 'force' reading does not come from the physical causative light verb but from the main verbs *volunteer* and *step down*. We may hence deduce that the 'force' reading of the *bèi XX* is from the particular choice of XX as appropriate for a given situation and that the null light verb has only the general causative meaning.

The *bèi XX* construction denoting 'be reported or regarded as…' can be analyzed in a similar way with the light verb having the semantics CONSIDER. The mental causative in Old Chinese is suggested to be derived in the way from "*yǐ* X *wéi* Y 'consider X as Y'" to "Y-X". For instance, *xiǎo tiānxià* 'small the world' comes from *yǐ tiānxià wéi xiǎo* 'consider the world small', and *kè wǒ* 'guest me' comes from *yǐ wǒ wéi kè* 'consider me as guest'. Feng (2005) points out that the verb 好 *hào* in *hào zhī* 'like it', *hào xué* 'fond of learning', *hào dòu* 'like fighting' etc., is derived from the adjective 好 *hǎo* 'good' which

moves first to a light verb to become a verb and then raises to adjoin to a mental

causative light verb, as in (16). *Hào zhī* comes from *yǐ zhī wéi hǎo* 'consider it to be

good', and hence means 'like it'.

(16) [LV<CAUSE> [zhī [LV<BE> [AP hǎo]]

There are also mental causative verbs in English such as *belittle*, *slight* and *befriend*, etc.

Belittle him and *slight him* are equivalent to *xiǎo zhī* in Old Chinese. *Befriend X* means

'consider X to be friend'. Similar expressions can be found in Old Chinese: 友風而子雨

yǒu fēng ér zǐ yǔ '[The cloud] befriends the wind and considers the rain his son'. Even the

word *friend* can be used as a causative verb. For instance, we may say "to friend

somebody" on the Facebook. When people try to invite someone to be their Facebook

friend, the word *friend* has a mental causative reading; when the invitation has been

accepted, it becomes a physical causative verb. Therefore, both mental and physical

causative verbs are accomplishment verbs, and their difference lies in the degree of

accomplishment. A mental *bèi XX* construction has the syntactic structure as in (17).

(17) [Zhāngsān [bèi [DP_Agent [DP_Zhāngsān [LV CONSIDER][xiǎokāng,   zìshā,   shīzōng]]]]]
       Zhangsan BEI   middle-class suicide disappear

This structure is almost the same as (14). The only difference is that the light verb (LV)

in (17) is interpreted not as physical causative but mental causative. We follow the

researchers of Old Chinese to treat both mental and physical causatives as causatives

because they do not have much difference. A mental causative becomes a physical one

with an event developing to a certain stage. We also treat mental causative as the result of

further grammaticalization of the physical causative: within a certain semantic spectrum, the physical sense gets weakened or generalized to include the mental sense, an instance of what Peyraube (2007) terms 'exaptation'. This idea makes an important prediction in the study of the path of grammaticalization (see Chappell & Peyraube 2011 a.o.): physical causatives appear earlier in a language then mental causatives. A language with mental causative constructions must also have physical causative constructions.[7]

English and German have the cases similar to Chinese *bèi XX* constructions, in which intransitive verbs are passivized. Wanner (2009:136) points out that unaccusative verbs are passivized quite deliberately in contexts like (18).

(18) a. It didn't happen to me, it was happened upon me! (from Helen Fielding, Bridget
        Jones's Diary).

     b. Thirty thousand people—a whole generation—were 'disappeared' in seven years
        of military rule. (from an online article on a human rights website).

Apparently, the passive forms of *was happened* in (18a) and *were disappeared* in (18b) should be interpreted as 'was made to happen' and 'were made to disappear', which imply that they involve causative structures.

The example (19) is from the memoirs of Vicktor Klemerer (1881-1960), a German philologist of Jewish descent (see Wanner 2009:138):

(19) Eine Frau . . . kommt . . . ins Konzentrationslager, wo   sie gestorben wird.
       one   woman   comes . . . into concentration-camp where she died   becomes
       'A woman comes into the Concentration Camp, where she is killed.'

The author passivizes the unaccusative verb *sterben* 'die' in order to make a distinction between what is claimed (that people die of natural causes in concentration camps) and what really happens (that they were cruelly murdered). This sentence has a hidden mental causative element and should be interpreted as '… where she was [claimed to have] died', and is hence a German version of *bèi XX*--e.g., *bèi sǐwáng* 'BEI die' or *bèi zìshā* 'BEI commit suicide' from among the examples in (3) above.

Summarizing, physical and mental causatives exist in Old Chinese, Modern Chinese and other languages. From Middle Chinese to Modern Chinese, although most sentences are formed in an analytic way with an overt light verb followed by a lexical verb, with the widespread occurrence of resultative compounds, a number of pure causative sentences are constructed through the strategy of synthesis. For example, 豐富了我們的常識 *fēngfù-le wǒmen de chángshí* 'enrich-PERF our knowledge', 難過死了她的男友 *nánguòsǐ-le tā de nányǒu* 'sadden-to-death-PERF her boyfriend', 勞累了你們 *láo-lèi-le nǐmen* 'tired-PERF you', 醉倒了李四 *zuìdǎo-le Lǐsì* 'drunk-fall-PERF Lisi', etc. All these sentences involve a lexical verb moving to a null light verb of CAUSE. They are similar to the expressions of 苦其心志 *kǔ qí xīnzhì* 'suffer his will power', 勞其筋骨 *láo qí jīngǔ* 'exhausted his muscles and bones' and 餓其體膚 *è qí tǐfū* 'hungry his body' in (12b). When physical causative light verbs become more semantically bleached and generalized, exaptation (the addition of new functions) occurs and mental causative usages may emerge without surprise. What makes the mental causative structure in *bèi XX* different from that in Old Chinese is that the former can only appear in passive but not active constructions.

2.2 *The executive type: DO*

Now consider the *bèi XX* construction like *bèi lóngzhòng* 'BEI-ceremoniously' in (10), repeated as in (20).

(20) 2010 年 11 月，托爾斯泰必將再 "被隆重" 一次。

    2010 nián 11 yuè   tuōérsītài bì   jiāng   zài   "bèi   lóngzhòng"   yí-cì

    2010 year 11 month Tolstoy   sure will   again BEI ceremoniously one-time

                                                (www.news.qq.com, 2010-11-10)

    'In November, 2010, Tolstoy will definitely be [e.g., commemorated]

    ceremoniously once more.'

This sentence involves a null action light verb semantically akin to 'do-(to)' or 'treat'. *lóngzhòng* 'ceremoniously' is an adverb that modifies the null light verb: Tolstoy is treated ceremoniously. Noun phrases can also serve as the modifiers of action light verbs as in the *bèi XX* sentence (21).

(21) 深度反思近四成藝校女生被潛規則。（中國藝人網 2008-09-20）

    shēndù fǎnsī   jìn   sì-chéng   yìxiào   nǚshēng   bèi   qiánguīzé

    deep   reflect about 40%   art-school female-student BEI hidden-rule

    (www.300hu.com 2008-09-20)

    Lit.:'[Let's] deeply reflect on 40% female art-school students being 'hidden-

    ruled'.'

The noun phrase *qiánguīzé* literally means 'hidden rules', and (21) says that almost 40% female art-school students have gotten some hidden rules [applied to] them. In the

particular cases of female graduates of performing arts schools, the hidden rules refer to taking the notorious 'casting couch'. (In some other situations, the unwritten rules do not necessarily refer to the casting couch.) In (21), then, *bèi XX* means 'get treated with XX', where 'treat' is an instance of light verb DO, taking XX as an adjunct. The case presented by *qiánguīzé* 'hidden rule' is a bit special for it can also appear in active sentences (unlike the previous cases, which must occur in passive form with *bèi*).

(22) 當你把 … 錢送到別人手裡的時候，你其實就是在潛規則！(同上)

    dāng nǐ bǎ… qián sòng dào bié rén shǒu-lǐ de shíhòu, nǐ qíshí

    when you BA money send to other person hand-in DE time you actually

    jiùshì zài qiánguīzé (same source as above)

    just PROG hidden-rule

    Lit.: 'When you deliver money to the person, you were actually 'hidden-rule-ing.'

Here 'hidden-rule-ing' means 'practicing the hidden rules', with the implicit light verb DO covering the meaning of 'practice'. In the following interesting example, we see that the first syllable 'qian' occupying the position of DO meaning 'practice' can stand alone with the understood object 'guize' omitted:

(23) 就算我潛了，我也只是眾多潛俠中的一位，怎麼紅？（同上）

    jiùsuàn wǒ qián le, wǒ yě zhǐ shì zhòngduō qián xiá zhōng de

    even-if I hide PERF I also only am many hidden master among DE

    yí-wèi, zěnme hóng? (same source as above)

    one-CL how popular

Lit.:'Even if I have '*qián*-ed', I am only one of hundreds of '*qián*-masters' [Kung-fu masters practicing the art of *qián*]. How can I become a popular star?'

In the sentence above, the speaker is lamenting that, despite having taken to the casting couch herself, she is only one among the many more masterful actresses who have taken to the couch.

We assume that all the above examples involve a null light verb with the elementary semantics of DO regardless of whether the light verb is interpreted as 'treat, perform, use, apply' or whatever. It is equivalent to the affix *$*s_2$-* postulated by Mei (1989, 2012).[8] Different from physical and mental causatives (which are accomplishment verbs), the action light verbs instantiating DO are activity verbs.

Old Chinese abounds in the examples that involve the null light verb DO. In comparison with *dǎ yú* 'to fish' and *chī fàn* 'to eat' in Modern Chinese,[9] Old Chinese employs nouns *yú* 'fish' and *fàn* 'rice' directly as verbs, as in *yú yú jiāng* 'fish on the river' and *fàn shū shí* 'eat vegetables and whole grains'. Similar examples can also be found in the language of the Neo generation, such as *qǐng duǎn wǒ* 'please short-message me', *qǐng call wǒ* 'please call me' and *wǒ xiǎng facetime nǐ* 'I want to facetime you' etc. The verbs in these examples are derived by noun incorporation into the light verb DO. The sentences (22)-(23) belong to this type.

In addition, Old Chinese also has abundant expressions with nouns being used as adjuncts, as shown in (24).

(24) 食而弗愛, 豕交之也; 愛而不敬, 獸畜之也。《孟子•盡心上》

    shí ér fú ài, shǐ jiāo zhī yě; ài ér bù jìng, shòu xù zhī yě

food but not love pig interact him SFP love but not respect animal raise him SFP

<div align="right">(*MengZi•Jinxin I*)</div>

'If you feed someone but do not love him, you interact personally with him in a
way as if he were a pig; if you love someone but do not respect him, you raise him
like a domestic animal.'

In (24), the nouns *shǐ* 'pig' and *shòu* 'animal' are used as adjuncts to modify the verbs
jiāo 'interact' and *xù* 'raise'. If the verbal heads are replaced by a light verb in the form
of the prefix $*s_2$- or a null DO, we get such sentences as the familiar (25-26):

(25) 君君、臣臣、父父、子子。《論語•顏淵》

jūn   jūn, chén   chén, fù   fù,   zǐ   zǐ   (*Lunyu•Yanyuan*)

king king courtier courtier father father son son

'A king should behave like a king, courtier like a courtier, father like a father, son
like a son.'

(26) 老吾老以及人之老，幼吾幼以及人之幼。《孟子•梁惠王上》

lǎo   wú lǎo yǐjí   rén   zhī lǎo,   (*MengZi•Lianghuiwang I*)

aged our aged reach people 's   aged

yòu   wú yòu yǐjí   rén   zhī yòu

young our young reach people 's   young

'Respect the aged in our family and extend this respect to those of other families;

love the young ones in our family and expand this love to that of other families.'

In (25), *jūn jūn* forms a subject-verb structure. The first *jūn* 'king' is the subject, and the second *jūn* a verb meaning 'to king', i.e., to behave in the manner of a king. In other words, the second *jūn* is an adverbial noun modifying an implicit light verb DO. The same structure holds of *chén chén, fù fù, zǐ zǐ*. In (26), *lǎo wú lǎo* is a verb-object structure. The first *lǎo* meaning 'to treat (=DO) x in a manner appropriate for the aged' is a verb involving a null DO modified by the adjunct noun *lǎo* 'the aged'.

English abounds in the structures in which nouns are used as verbs, such as *fish*, *telephone*, *text* and *joke* which mean 'to fish, make a phone call, send x a text message and make a joke. They are analyzed as the results of noun incorporation into the verb DO (Hale & Keyser 1993 a.o.), i.e., as cases of denominalization. A similar case is the English *food* > *feed* (e.g., on bread) which contains the null element equivalent to *s_2-. English also sees many structures in which nouns are used as adjuncts. The syntactic operation "Chomsky-adjoin" means 'adjoin x, Chomsky style'. In this structure, the noun *Chomsky* modifies the verb *adjoin*. When the modified verb is the silent DO, we have the following sentences:

(27) a. You should not try to mother your husband.

b. He is trying to fool me.

The verb *mother* in (27a) involves the noun *mother* (oriented to the subject *you*)+DO. The whole sentence means 'you should not try to treat your husband in the way a mother treats her son'. In (27b), the verb *fool* contains the noun *fool* (oriented to the object *me*)+DO. The whole sentence means 'he is trying to treat me as if I were a fool'. The

examples in (28) all involve a null verb DO modified by an object-oriented noun. The existence of such examples has greatly enriched the verbal lexicon in English.

(28) To hammer the nail, to nail the door, to saddle the horse, to shelve the book, to shoulder the burden, etc.

These examples can be translated into well-formed Old Chinese:

(29) 錘其釘、釘其門、鞍其馬、架其書、肩其重任…

 chuí qí dīng, dīng qí mén, ān qí mǎ, jià qí shū, qiān qí zhòngrèn…

If we translate these expressions in the same way that Zhao Qi annotated *Meng Zi* during the late Eastern Han dynasty, in his 孟子章句 *Interpretive Essays on Meng Zi*, then *chuí zhī* 'hammer it' would be annotated as *shī zhī yǐ chuí* 'do it with a hammer', *dīng zhī* 'nail it' as *shī zhī yǐ dīng* 'do it with a nail', etc. That is to say, all the examples in (29) involve a null light verb DO modified by a nominal adjunct.

Proper nouns can also be used as modifiers of the light verb DO to produce the examples like (30) and (31).

(30) John got Dick Cheney-ed last week.

(31) She got Lewinsky-ed again.

In (30), the proper noun *Dick Cheney* occupies the position of DO and modifies it as its adjunct, and the sentence means John got 'done' (treated) in the same way Dick Cheney was treated'.[10] The whole sentence means 'John got a stent implanted in his artery yesterday'. Similarly, in (31), the verb *Lewinsky* means 'treat x in the way Lewinsky was treated (by Bill Clinton)'.[11] If someone was treated in the same way by her boss, we could say that she got Lewinsky-ed.

In the above examples, the proper nouns serving as the adjuncts of the null light verb DO are object-oriented. The subject-oriented ones can also be found in a number of examples in both Chinese and English, as in (32-33).

(32) 他們又被奧巴馬了一番。

  tāmen yòu bèi Obama-le yìfān

  they again BEI Obama-PERF once

  'They just got Obama-ed again.'

(33) 李四又被 Jackendoff 了兩次。

  Lǐsì yòu bèi Jackendoff-le liǎng cì

  Lisi again BEI Jackendoff-PERF two time

  'Bill got Jackendoff-ed twice again.'

In (32), *bèi Obama* could mean 'x was treated (fooled or persuaded, depending on the real context) in Obama style, the same way Obama treats others'. In (33), *bèi Jackendoff* means 'x was done-to in some way, Jackendoff style, depending on whatever experience

the speaker and hearer have about it. The verbs in these sentences involve the meaning of 'do', with its real meaning depending on concrete situations.

The examples we have seen in this sub-section show that the executive type of *bèi XX* construction involves a null action verb DO. The XX is either the object/complement of DO, or a manner/instrumental adjunct of the light verb, i.e. the object of DO-WITH. In the general structure (34), what is passivized is the light verb DO-WITH.

(34) 張三［被［LV_{＜施(以)＞}［隆重、萊溫斯基、Dick Cheney…］］］

     Zhāngsān [bèi [LV_{＜DO –(WITH)＞} [lóngzhòng,   Lewinsky, Dick Cheney…]]]

     Zhangsan   BEI   ceremoniously Lewinsky Dick Cheney

2.3 *Summary*

As we mentioned in this section, the *bèi XX* construction involves a null physical or mental causative verb or a null action light verb. These light verbs stand for the elementary semantics CAUSE and DO in two prototypical events involving two proto-Agents. A large number of structures with null light verbs can be found in Old Chinese, Modern Chinese and other languages. Therefore, *bèi XX* is not a particularly exotic construction peculiar to Modern Chinese, and it can be analyzed in terms consistent with normal linguistic principles.

We have seen that the XX in a *bèi XX* construction may take a variety of forms: an intransitive or unaccusative verb phrase, an adjective or adverbial phrase, or even a noun phrase. Appearances notwithstanding, however, we have shown that, once a null light verb is postulated as the head of the predicate that undergoes passivization, the examples are not unlike much of what is found in other languages (e.g., English and Old Chinese).

There is an important restriction that makes the *bèi XX* construction special, however: they cannot be 'restored' to an active form as normal passives can be, as shown below:

(35) Mental causative:

*他們小康了許多農民、*自殺了五個囚犯…

*tāmen xiǎokāng-le   xǔduō nóngmín; *zìshā-le   wǔ-ge qíufàn

 they   middle-class-PERF many peasant   suicide-PERF 5-CL   prisoner

'They (reported) many peasants to be middle-classed, and (claimed) five prisoners

 to have committed suicide.'

(36) Physical causative:

*他們下臺了總經理、*退休了三個員工….

*tāmen xiàtái-le   zǒngjīnglǐ,   *tuìxiū-le   sān-ge yuángōng...

 they   step-down-PERF general-manager retire-PERF three-CL employee

'They stepped down the general manager, and retired three employees.'

(37) Action DO-(TO/WITH):

*今年又將隆重托爾斯泰一次、 *你不應該 Lewinsky 自己的實習生…

*jīnnián   yòu jiāng lóngzhòng   tuōérsītài yí-cì;

 this-year again will ceremoniously Tolstoy   one-time

*nǐ   bù   yīnggāi Lewinsky zìjǐ-de shíxíshēng

 you not   should Lewinsky self's   intern

 'This year, (people) will (commemorate) Tolstoy ceremoniously once again.'

 'You should not Lewinsky your own intern.'

This restriction distinguishes Chinese from English and Old Chinese quite sharply. For example, all our earlier examples of Old Chinese causatives and putatives are given in the active form—as shown in (11)-(12) and (24)-(26). The same is true of most of the English examples, as in (15), (27)-(28).

In the next section, we shall address this cross-linguistic difference from the perspective of parametric theory.[12]

3. *Bei XX in parametric variation*

What is it that prevents the *bèi XX* construction from having a grammatical active 'source'? A quick explanation at hand could be that the passive *bèi XX* form is the most appropriate in expressing the events about which people feel helpless, unhappy and frustrated. This account seems plausible at the sight of the examples collected. However, with a deeper thinking, it cannot be the real reason for *bèi XX*'s being lack of active sources. Firstly, the normal passive sentence *bōlí bèi dǎ-pò-le* 'the glass got broken' also expresses an unhappy event, but it has a natural active form (*tā dǎ-pò-le bōlí*). Secondly, even if the *bèi XX* construction can be used to express an event with some positive result (for instance, *bèi xiǎokāng* 'be reported as middle class' could bring a person some benefits such as the enhancement of social status or dignity, if not in actual income), its active form (*xiǎokāng x* 'middle-class x') is still ungrammatical.

We propose attributing this restriction on the *bèi XX* construction to the high analyticity of Modern Chinese, in contrast to the considerable degree of syntheticity of Old Chinese and English. In the restriction under consideration, the *bèi XX* is in fact not alone. There are many other structures in Chinese that may take the passive or occur in

the form of a *bǎ*-construction, but cannot be 'restored' to their supposed active sources. One familiar example is the 'retained object construction'.

(38) a. 橘子被張三剝了皮。

　　　júzi　　bèi　Zhāngsān　bō-le　　　　pí.

　　　orange BEI Zhangsan remove-PERF skin

　　　'The orange got peeled by Zhangsan.'

　　b. 張三把橘子剝了皮。

　　　Zhāngsān　bǎ　júzi　　bō-le　　　　pí.

　　　Zhangsan　BA orange remove-PERF skin

　　　'Zhangsan peeled skin off the orange.'

　　c. *張三剝了皮橘子。

　　　*Zhāngsān　bō-le　　　　pí　júzi

　　　　Zhangsan　remove-PERF skin orange

　　　　'Zhangsan peeled the orange.'

(39) a. 紙門被李四踢了一個洞。

　　　zhǐmén　　　bèi　Lǐsì　tī-le　　　yí-ge　　dòng

　　　paper-door BEI Lisi　kick-PERF one-CL　hole

　　　'The paper door got kicked a hole by Lisi.'

　　b.李四把紙門踢了一個洞。

　　　Lǐsì　bǎ　zhǐmén　　tī-le　　　　yí-ge　　dòng

　　　Lisi　BA　paper-door　kick-PERF　one-CL　hole

'Lisi did kicking-a-hole to the paper door.'

c. *李四踢了一個洞紙門。

　　*Lǐsì tī-le　　　yí-ge　dòng　zhǐmén

　　Lisi kick-PERF one-CL hole　paper-door

　　'Lisi kicked a hole in the paper door.'

(40)　a. 這籃蘋果被他們吃掉了兩個。

　　zhè-lán　　píngguǒ bèi　tāmen chī-diào-le　　liǎng-ge

　　this-basket apple　　BEI them eat-off-PERF　two-CL

　　'Two of the apples in this basket got eaten by them'

b. 他們把這籃蘋果吃掉了兩個。

　　tāmen bǎ　zhè-lán　　píngguǒ chī-diào-le　　liǎng-ge

　　they　BA this-basket apple　　eat-off-PERF two-CL
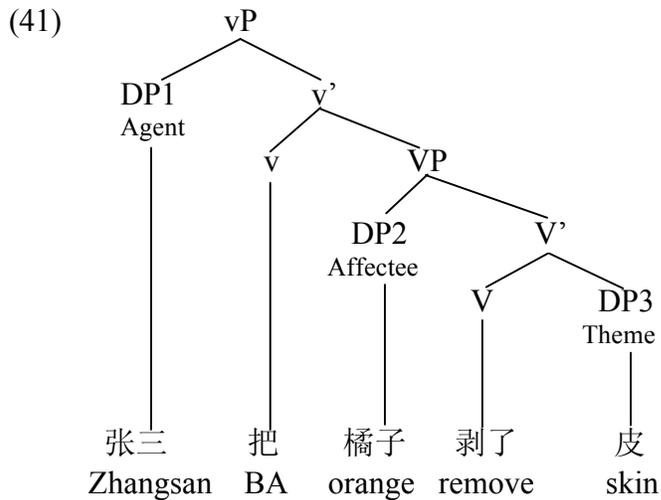
　　'They ate two of the apples in this basket.'

c. *他們吃掉了兩個這藍蘋果。

　　*tāmen chī-diào-le　　liǎng-ge zhè-lán　　píngguǒ

　　they eat-off-PERF　two-CL　this-basket apple

　　'They ate two of the apples in this basket.'

With regard to the semantics of argument structure, the sentences in (38) contain two

objects, the inner object *pí* 'skin' of the verb *bō* 'remove' and the outer object *júzi*

'orange' of the verb phrase *bō pí* 'remove skin'. The syntactic structure of (38b) is shown

in (41). (See Huang 2007 and references for details.)

(41)

```
                     vP
              /            \
           DP1              v'
          Agent         /        \
                       v          VP
                             /          \
                          DP2           V'
                         Affectee    /       \
                                    V          DP3
                                             Theme

        张三        把      橘子    剥了        皮
      Zhangsan     BA     orange  remove     skin
```

Example (41) has an argument structure not unlike that of English examples in (42) at the appropriate level of representation. In (42), *peel* and *skin* are the counterparts of the Chinese expression *bō pí* 'remove skin'.

(42) John peeled the orange, skinned the cat, etc.

The difference is that the English nouns *peel* and *skin* are incorporated into light verbs and hence used as transitive verbs, while *bō pí* 'remove skin' in Chinese is a V-O phrase, a case of pseudo noun-incorporation (Massam 2001). The transitive verbs *peel* and *skin* can assign Accusative Case to their objects *the orange* and *the cat* in (42), but the phrase *bō pí* cannot. Besides, the transitive verb *bō* 'remove', having assigned Accusative Case to *pí* 'skin', cannot assign Case to its outer object *júzi* 'the orange' any more. Therefore, (38c) is ungrammatical due to the caseless outer object *júzi* 'the orange'. However, if this outer object appears as the subject of a passive sentence or as the object of the verb *bǎ*, it can get Nominative or Accusative/Oblique Case and we get the grammatical sentences (38a, b). This explanation is also applicable to the sentences in (39-40).

The retained object construction is a hallmark of high analyticity of Modern Chinese. Many verbs in present-day English are formed by noun incorporation into a light verb DO. For example, *peel* and *skin*, originating as nouns, become verbs after moving into the light verb DO, as shown below:

(43) [LV_{＜DO＞} [[_Npeel]] → [[_Vpeel]]

Similarly, the noun *fan* 'rice' in Old Chinese is incorporated into the light verb DO (= *s-^{2}) and gives rise to *fàn shū shí* 'eat vegetables and whole grains' and *fàn jì bì* 'eating is done'. However, in Modern Chinese, the verbal use of *fàn* has been replaced by a V-O phrase *chī fàn* 'eat rice', another case of pseudo noun-incorporation. All in all, the fact that retained object constructions can occur in the form of passives or *bǎ*-constructions but not in active form is due to the high degree of analyticity of Modern Chinese.

The sentences in (44) are the retained object constructions involving physical or mental causative verbs *dāng* 'treat as', *biān chéng* 'organize into' and *kàn chéng* 'regard as'. Similarly, they do not have grammatical active sources, as shown in (45).[13]

(44) a. 他們簡直把下流當有趣。

  tāmen jiǎnzhí bǎ xiàliú   dāng yǒuqù

  they   simply BA obscenity treat interesting-thing

  'They simply treat obscenity as an interesting thing.'

  b. 他們被編成了小組。

  tāmen bèi biānchéng le   xiǎozǔ

  they   BEI organize   PERF group

'They were organized in groups.'

c. 他被人看成了瘋子。

   tā bèi rén   kànchéng le   fēngzi

   he BEI people regard   PERF   madman

   'He was regarded as madman.'

(45) a. *他們簡直當有趣下流。

   *tāmen jiǎnzhí dāng yǒuqù   xiàliú

   they   simply treat interesting-thing obscenity

   b. *我們編成了小組他們。

   *wǒmen   biānchéng le   xiǎozǔ tāmen

   we   organize PERF   group   them

   c. *你們看成了瘋子他。

   *nǐmen kànchéng le   fēngzi   tā

   you   regard   PERF madman   him

We deduce that the *bèi XX* construction does not have active forms for the same reason, as shown in (46-48):

(46) a. *他們說成小康了許多農民。

   *tāmen shuōchéng xiǎokāng-le   xǔduō nóngmín

   they   report   middle-class-PERF many   peasant

   'They reported many peasants to be middle-classed.'

b. *他們 LV_{〈說成〉}小康了許多農民。

　　*tāmen LV _{〈shuōchéng〉} xiǎokāng-le　　　　xǔduō　nóngmín

　　they　　　report　　middle-class-PERF　many　peasant

(47)　a. *他們弄成下臺了總經理。

　　*tāmen　nòngchéng　xiàtái-le　　　　　zǒngjīnglǐ

　　they　　force　　　step-down-PERF　general-manager

　　'They forced the general manager to step down.'

　b.*他們 LV_{〈弄成〉}下臺了總經理。

　　*tāmen LV_{〈nòngchéng〉} xiàtái-le　　　　　zǒngjīnglǐ

　　they　　　force　　step-down-PERF　general-manager

(48)　a. *你不應該施以潛規則自己的下屬。

　　*nǐ　bù　yīnggāi shīyǐ　qiánguīzé　　zìjǐ de xiàshǔ

　　you　not　should　apply　casting-couch　self DE subordinate

　　'You should not apply the hidden rule to your subordinate.'

　b. *你不應該 LV_{〈施以〉}潛規則自己的下屬。

　　*nǐ　　bù　yīnggāi LV _{〈shīyǐ〉} qiánguīzé　zìjǐ de　xiàshǔ

　　you　not　should　　apply　hidden-rule　self DE　subordinate

The above examples indicate that the null light verb and XX form a phrase instead of a single verb. Therefore, XX cannot appear in active sentences where the outer object needs Case from a transitive verb. On the contrary, in English and Old Chinese, XX is

incorporated into LV, and the resultant transitive verb LV+XX can assign Accusative Case to the outer object in an active sentence.

Now the question is why XX cannot be incorporated into LV in the (b) examples as they do in English and Old Chinese. The answer again comes from their different positions on the analytic-synthetic continuum. Along the general lines of the Principles and Parameters theory, we can account for these differences in parametric theory, attributing them to variation and change in the nature of certain functional categories. As is widely known, with varying degrees of grammaticalization, lexical verbs can develop into auxiliaries, overt light verbs, clitics, overt affixes or null affixes. Languages vary if they use different functional categories or the same functional category with different degrees of grammaticalization. Language change happens when the features of a functional category become weaker or it is replaced by a null element. These two factors lead to much of synchronic variation and diachronic change as observed.[14]

Under this view, two languages or dialects (LA and LB) may both use a certain functional category C. In LA, C is a clitic, but in LB, it has already been grammaticalized into an affix. This difference in C may result in a number of variations between the two languages because affixes affect morphology directly while cliticization occurs mainly in syntax and phonetic form (PF). This also reflects different stages of language change. Just as Givon (1971) says, "Today's syntax is yesterday's morphology; today's morphology is yesterday's syntax". For instance, the perfect aspect marker *le* in Modern Chinese has undergone several stages of grammaticalization, including the clitic stage and the present affix stage.

Even one affix may vary in degree of grammaticalization in different languages. Since language change is gradual on a continuum, an overt or null affix may have

different syntactic status in LA and LB. When a given L counts as having acquired some crucial feature (i.e. one that results in a reanalysis) may sometimes be determined by a last straw. We can adopt some version of the Minimalist Program (MP) to account for these differences. The appearance of a functional word means that this item is not an independent unit anymore. It starts to depend on another element in the sentence to support or license it. This dependency relation could be [+strong] or [-strong]. A [+strong] functional word must be supported or licensed as early as possible, whereas the licensing of a [-strong] one can be delayed, say by Procrastinate in a classical version of the MP. Gaining the insights from the comparative study of English and French syntax made by Pollock (1989) and Emonds (1978), Chomsky (1995) proposes that in French, the Tense affix T^0 is [+strong] and must be licensed by overt V-to-T movement, whereas in English, T^0 is [-strong], and hence V-to-T movement is delayed until LF. A number of differences between English and French can be derived in the same manner. Lasnik (1995) proposes another way to explain the English-French difference: In French, T^0 with [+strong] triggers overt V-to-T movement; while in English, T^0 being [-strong] is attached to V by affix-hopping in PF. Chomsky (1999) forms another hypothesis that in both English and French, T^0 has dependency feature requiring licensing. In Syntax, the T^0 with strong dependency triggers V-to-T movement; the one with weak dependency triggers Agree with the verb in its C-command domain in Syntax. (It may still undergo affix-hopping in PF or covert movement in LF.)

The above analyses differ with respect to certain predictions but they all can be generalized by the concept of "Derivational Timing Parameter (DTP)", as in (49).

(49) Derivational Timing Parameter (DTP)

Language variations may be determined by the differences in the time at which a

certain grammatical operation takes place.

A grammatical operation can occur in the lexicon, Syntax, LF or PF which represent

three derivational timings within the systems of Government and Binding and Minimalist

Program: lexicon is the earliest stage, then Syntax, and finally LF and PF. Generally

speaking, for a given operation, the earlier the merger takes place, the more synthetic its

result is; the later the merger occurs, the more analytic. Synthesis is achieved by means of

lexical operations, and analyticity by means of syntactic operations or later operations. In

other words, a form produced by overt Move is more synthetic than one involving only

Agree. In this sense, English is more analytic than French.

Besides the differences between English and French, the DTP can derive many

macro-variations between languages and micro-variations between dialects. DTP is in the

same spirit with the *wh*-parameter proposed by Huang (1982). In terms of the Minimalist

Program, in English the interrogative affix $C_{[+Q]}$ is [+strong] and triggers overt *wh*-

movement, whereas in Chinese, $C_{[+Q]}$ is [-strong] and licensed under Agree. *Wh*-phrases

stay in situ and move covertly in LF by procrastination. Following the insights of the

DTP, the lack of overt *wh*-movement is an important example of Chinese being an
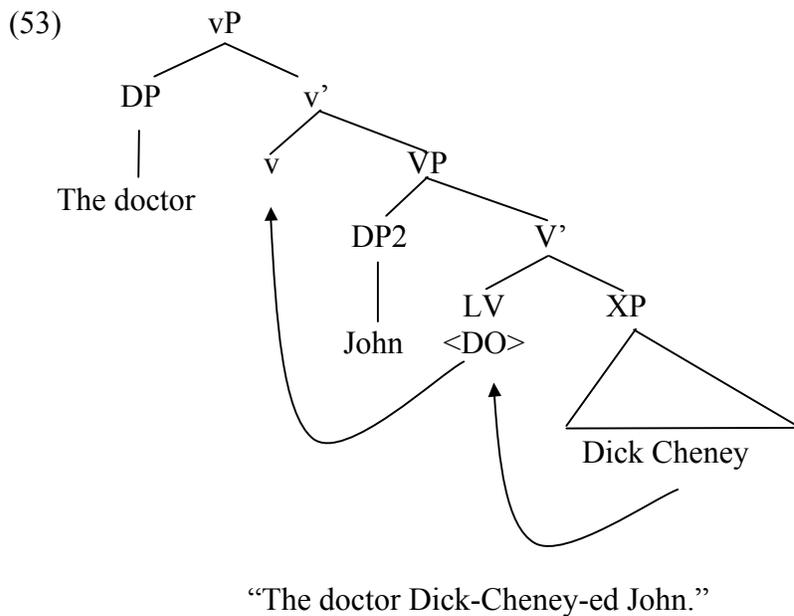
analytic language.

Many differences among Chinese dialects can be derived from (49). For instance,

Cheng & Sybesma (2005) observe that the unstressed numeral *yī* 'one' before a classifier

can be omitted in some dialects such as Mandarin and Cantonese, but not in other dialects

such as Taiwanese Southern Min (TSM). Moreover, Cantonese drops *yī* 'one' quite freely

(in the position of subject, object, etc.), but Mandarin drops *yī* 'one' only in postverbal position, as shown in (50).

(50) a. Mandarin   我買個肉包子來吃。   *個肉包子太鹹了。

  wǒ mǎi ge ròubāozi lái   chī   *gè ròubāozi tài xián le

  I   buy CL meat-bun come eat   CL meat-bun too salty PERF

  'I bought a meat bun to eat.'   'The meat bun is too salty.'

  b. Cantonese   我買個豬肉包嚟食。   個豬肉包太鹹喇

  ngo maai go zyujukbaau lai sik.   go zyujukbao taai haam laa.

  I   buy Cl meat-bun   to eat   CL meat-bun too salty SFP

  'Same as (50a).'   'Same as (50a).'

  c. TSM   *我買粒肉包仔來呷。   *粒肉包仔有夠鹹

  *goa be liap bapao-a   lai chia   *liap bapao-a   wugao kiam

  I   buy Cl meat-bun to eat   Cl meat-bun really salty

  'Same as (50a)'   'Same as (50a)'

Huang (2014) suggests that this pattern of distribution reflects a difference in degree of grammaticalization of *yī* 'one', as shown in (51).[15]

(51) a. In Cantonese, [$_{one}$ e] is [+strong], triggering Move of Cl in Syntax.

  b. In Mandarin, [$_{one}$ e] is [-strong], triggering Agree with Cl and procrastinating

    Move to PF/LF.

  c. In TSM, [$_{Num}$ one] is lexical and hence [-strong].

(51) reflects a ranking of relative analyticity among three dialects: Cantonese > Mandarin > TSM, with Cantonese having the highest degree of synthesis, while TSM is the most analytic.

    Now let's come back to the *bèi XX* construction. We assume that although the *bèi XX* is similar to English and Old Chinese in having a null physical or mental light verb, or a light verb of 'do-to/with', the LV is relatively weak, as shown in (52).

(52)   a. In English and Old Chinese, LV is [+strong], triggering Move of XX.

      b. In Modern Chinese, LV is [-strong], triggering Agree with XX and

        procrastinating Move to PF.[16]

According to (52a), in English and Old Chinese, XX moves into LV to form a verb "LV+XX", which undergoes further movements, resulting in the active sentence (53).[17]

(53)

```
                    vP
             ┌──────┴──────┐
            DP            v'
            │        ┌────┴────┐
        The doctor   v        VP
                         ┌─────┴─────┐
                        DP2         V'
                         │      ┌────┴────┐
                       John    LV        XP
                              <DO>      /  \
                                       / Dick Cheney
```

"The doctor Dick-Cheney-ed John."

A parallel derivation in Old Chinese would yield examples like *kǒngzǐ xiǎo tiānxià* 'Confucius smalled the world', *tiān jiāng láo qí jīn gǔ* 'God will exhaust his muscles', etc. In Modern Chinese, however, XX cannot move to LV in Syntax to form a grammatical SVO active counterpart, as shown in (54).

(54)
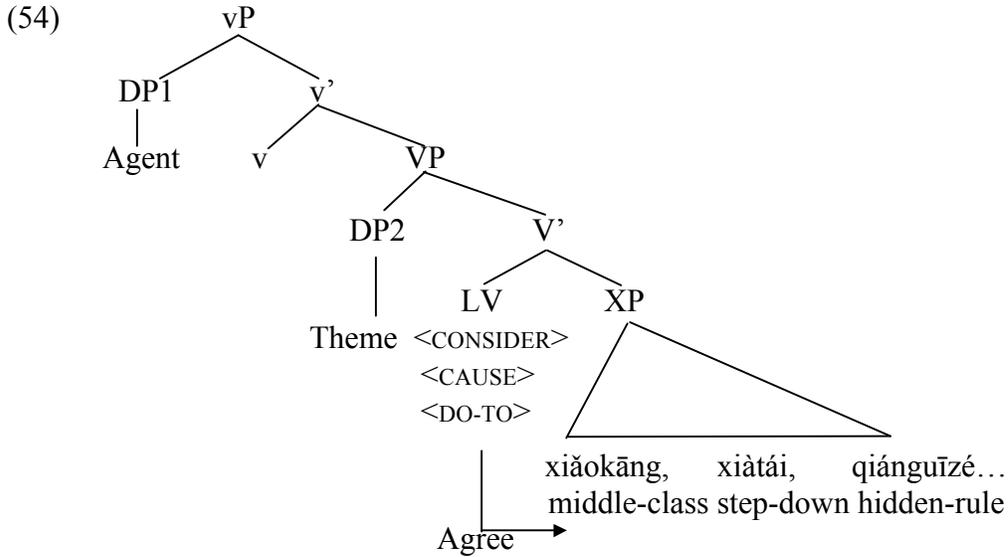
In such a structure, the Theme DP2 cannot get Case (or have its Case feature checked). So the sentence cannot survive as is, in its active form. However, if it undergoes passivization and moves to the subject position, it will get Nominative Case. (The trace left by movement does not need Case.) Another way to rescue (54) is to insert *bǎ* in v to form a *bǎ*-construction. Although the following sentences are not acceptable as the corresponding passive sentences, their acceptability is obviously higher than the active forms, as shown in (55).[18]

(55) a. ?單位又把一些貧戶農民給小康了。

        ?dānwèi yòu bǎ yīxiē pínhù nóngmín gěi xiǎokāng-le

unit   again BA some poor   peasant   give middle-class-PERF

'It happened that the government office again got some poor peasents

[classified] as middle class.'

b. ?*董事會終於把總經理給下臺了。

?*dǒngshìhuì   zhōngyú bǎ zǒngjīnglǐ   gěi xiàtái-le

director-board finally   BA general-manager give step-down-PERF

'Finally, the board of directors forced the general manager to step down.'

c. 他把那實習生給潛規則了兩次。

tā bǎ nà shíxíshēng gěi qiánguīzé-le   liǎngcì

he BA that intern   give casting-couch-PERF twice

'He treated that intern with hidden rules twice.'

In summary, the *bèi XX* construction can be reconstructed into a *bǎ*-construction (though

not fully acceptable) but not an active sentence. The same restriction is applied to

retained object constructions. These restrictions reflect the current state of high

analyticity of Modern Chinese. In more synthetic languages, V+XX has already become a

single word, but in Modern Chinese, it is basically a V' phrase in Syntax (even though V

and XX may be incorporated into a word in PF or LF).[19]

   The last question is: if indeed Modern Chinese is a highly analytic language, why

does it resort to a null light verb in the creation of the *bèi XX* construction? We believe

that the appearance of such a construction simply illustrates the famous cycle of language

change. As we have known, over the past 2-3 millennia, Chinese has undergone many

changes. Generally speaking, it developed from high synthesis (of Archaic Chinese) to

high analyticity, peaking at Late Middle Chinese,[20] and then gradually developing some

synthetic constructions again. In other words, the period between Late Middle and Modern Chinese marks the early stages of a new cycle of language change. The consequences of this change can be found in Modern Mandarin and other Chinese dialects as we know them. One consequence is that the grammaticalization of light verbs resulted in the production of null affixes. Hu (2005, 2008) has pointed out that the diachronic change from Archaic Chinese to Middle Chinese is a change of covert categories into overt categories.[21] But after it reached the peak, a new cycle started, with the creation of new covert categories that trigger further developments towards synthesis. And the *bèi XX* construction is one of the examples marking the beginnings of the new cycle. Since this development is at an early stage, it is quite limited in depth and scope (as compared with English and Old Chinese--not to speak of more highly inflectional or polysynthetic languages). As for its depth, the physical/mental causative light verbs or the light verb of 'do-to/with' are not fully grammaticalized in the *bèi XX* construction, so that [LV+XX] is still a phrase but not a word. As for its scope, the null light verb in Modern Chinese only has three meanings of 'physical causative, mental causative and do-to/with', compared to Old Chinese, which exhibits much greater polysemy. Feng (2014) points out that the light verbs in Old Chinese can have more than 10 meanings, which can be seen as special realizations of a generalized light verb with meanings analogous to *gǎo* 'do' as used in Modern Mandarin. Apparently, the constructions with null categories are much more limited in Modern Chinese than in Old Chinese.

From a diachronic point of view, we may ask what the future of the *bei XX* construction is. If the construction becomes more widely used over time, it is entirely possible that null light verb will further grammaticalize and acquire [+strong], allowing XX to be incorporated into LV in overt syntax, resulting in the change of [LV+XX] from

a phrase into a verb. Then, the *bei XX* will be able to appear in active form.[22] Whether or not this will be the case depends on social or other factors in addition to language-internal factors. Another possibility might be that the usage of *bei XX* may be restricted to the places where it was born or to certain language styles, or it may be discarded by speakers and disappear some day altogether. As for these questions, we shall make no further speculations in this paper.

4. *Conclusions*

This paper has discussed the syntax, semantics and historical source of the *bèi XX* construction, and carried out a limited cross-linguistic comparison. Some conclusions have been reached as follows: Firstly, the *bèi XX* construction is not a new construction which involves the passivization of intransitive verbs, but a re-appearance of the null light verb construction so widespread in Classical Chinese.[23] The element that is passivized is not the XX itself but the null light verbs. Secondly, similar constructions are abundant and quite productive in English and other languages though they may occur in more synthetic form. This means that the *bèi XX* construction is not a construction unique to Chinese and our analysis for it is also applicable to the corresponding structures in English. Thirdly, the *bèi XX* construction normally appears in the passive form, and while it may occur in the *bǎ*-construction, it can hardly be reconstructed into active 'sources'. This restriction on the *bèi XX* can also be seen in retained object constructions, in which a Theme argument occurs as an outer object of a phrasal predicate. Fourthly, these structures reflect the high analyticity of Modern Chinese, in contrast to the considerable degree of synthesis of English, Old Chinese, etc. We propose to characterize the differences between analytic and synthetic languages by the Derivational Timing

Parameter. Since the light verbs in an analytic language are less grammaticalized, the incorporation of LV and XX does not occur in lexicon but in Syntax or even PF/LF. In English and Old Chinese, [LV+XX] incorporation takes place in Syntax and hence the active form can be constructed; whereas in Modern Chinese, such incorporation is procrastinated to PF or even never happens, thus preventing the successful derivation of the active form. The appearance of the *bèi XX* construction in Modern Chinese marks Modern Chinese in the beginning of a new cycle of linguistic change, from analytic to synthetic and from analytic to synthetic again.[24] Old Chinese was considerably synthetic, but the language underwent a gradual change to analyticity, peaking around Tang-Song dynasties. Modern Chinese is mainly analytic but shows the tendency (forward, not backward) toward synthesis with the *bèi XX* construction as an example.

The hypotheses we have made, if correct, allow us to draw further theoretical and methodological conclusions. First, having adopted the theory of lexical decomposition and analyzed the overt XX as [LV+XX] with a null light verb, we are able to see the inter-structural and inter-language differences among various forms and their meanings. Our analysis shares the spirit of Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz 1993, Harley 2005, among others), and non-projectionist, 'exo-skeletal' models like that proposed in Borer (2005), in capitalizing light-verb syntax as the core of grammar. Some overt elements (such as XX) are assumed to come in as representing conceptual structures, with their lexical meanings determined by one's "encyclopedic knowledge" or life experience. Such elements in the mental lexicon or encyclopedia do not come in with grammatical category labels or other concepts of grammar. The data we have produced here above provide strong evidence for this view of the organization of grammar. For one thing, we saw that XX can be of any syntactic category (as we are more used to in traditional

terms)--which also means XX does not need any category label at all. And nothing can be more vivid evidence in favor of this approach than the appearance of proper nouns and personal names as verbs. No one would, in view of some of the examples above, entertain the idea of listing *Dick Cheney, Lewinsky,* and *Obama*, as both a noun and a verb, we suppose. In the spirit of DM, an XX acquires its categorial feature by an Agree relation with a category-creating light verb, but by its meaning it serves as the complement or adjunct of that light verb.

Another conclusion is that the *bèi XX* construction is not a unique construction falling outside normal grammatical rule systems. Similar to other common structures, it can be derived by light verb syntax. Treating it as a special 'construction' or idiomatic phrase would blur its similarities with many other structures and the fact that their phrasal meanings can be compositionally computed from their parts.

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[1]These examples were found unexpectedly by the authors in the summer of 2008. Later,

several linguists have noticed such passive constructions, pointing out that they may

appear on the Internet earlier and have not been noticed by the scholars until 2008. Parts

of this paper were presented by the first author as a keynote speech in IACL-19 in Tianjin

Nankai University (Huang 2011) and as lectures in Peking University, Taiwan National

Sun Yat-Sen University and Taiwan National Normal University. Some other parts were

discussed by the second author in her Ph.D. dissertation completed at Beijing Language

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001-017.

[2]The examples (8-9) are cited from Yang (2011).

[3]The two types of events are expressed by two series of verbs: the unaccusative series

takes Causer as its highest argument, and the unergative series takes Agent as its highest

argument. (See Huang 2007 for details.)

(i) 民可使由之，不可使知之。《論語•泰伯》

   mín   kě shǐ yóu   zhī, bù kě shǐ   zhī   zhī (*Lunyu•Taibo*)

   people can cause follow it   not can cause know i

   'People can be made to follow it, but cannot be made to understand it.'

(ii) 雖有槁暴，不復挺者，輮使之然也。…《荀子•勸學》

   suī   yǒu gǎo   pù,   bù fù tǐng zhě, róu shǐ zhī

   although again   wither expose-to-the-sun not again straight reason roast cause it

   rán yě…   (*Xunzi•Quanxue*)

   this SFP

   'Although (you) dry it again (under the sun), it will not become straight again because roasting causes it to be like this (a circle). '

A plausible explanation to the scarcity of the analytic form in Archaic Chinese is that since there exists the synthetic form such as *xiǎo* 'small x', people would not resort to the less economical analytic form *shǐ…xiǎo* 'cause x small' unless there is a special reason for doing so. This is called "synthetic blocking" in the literature (See Embick 2007 and its references).

[6]See HLL (2009) and its references for details. In the tree diagram (14), DP1 (the Spec of V1) is coindexed with DP3 (the Spec of V3). According to HLL (2009), this coindexation is established with DP3 raising to Spec, vP2 and being bound by DP1. However, in the recent works of Liu (2012) and Huang (2013), in certain contexts, the Theme object DP3 can move to the DP1 position directly. We shall leave the details of these analyses aside due to their irrelevancy to the concerns of this paper.

[7]Another obvious case of such a type of grammaticalization is the relative pronoun *suǒ* in Old Chinese. *Suǒ* originated as a lexical word denoting a place (e.g. *suǒ dào zhī chù* 'where one came to') was generalized for the relativization of other categories of people, things and events (e.g. *wǒ suǒ ài* 'the one who I love', *rǔ suǒ yù* 'what you want', *bǐ suǒ jiàn* 'what they saw' etc.). The same phenomenon can also be found in other languages, such as Greek and Swiss German etc., in which relative clauses are introduced by a relative pronoun which is an equivalent of 'where'.

[8]Mei (1989, 2012) calls this affix as denominative affix mainly because it denominalizes its object into a verb, but the affix itself bears the meaning of 'do'.

economy considerations (economy of derivation or of processing), much similar to the case mentioned in footnote 5.

[13]The retained object construction with an animate outer object can occur in an active form. For instance, we can not only say *tā bèi wǒ qiǎng-le liǎng-bǎi yuán* 'He has two hundred yuan robbed by me' and *wǒ bǎ tā qiǎng-le liǎng-bǎi yuán* 'I robbed him two hundred yuan', but also say *wǒ qiǎng-le tā liǎng-bǎi yuán* 'I robbed him two hundred yuan'. According to Huang (2007), the active sentence can be derived because the verb *qiǎng* moves to the light verb v and replaces *bǎ*, thus having the ability of assigning oblique Case to the outer object *tā* 'he'. (The inner object got inherent Case from the verb.) If the outer object is inanimate, the V-v movement does not apply.

[14]This view is similar to that of the functional typologists. Many researchers in Chinese dialects and history of Chinese hold the view that Chinese dialects have same lexical categories but different functional categories. Generative Grammar further assumes that this view can also be applied across different languages or language types. For instance, generally speaking, English and Chinese have same lexical categories (except in how they are pronounced) but different functional categories. These micro-variations of the words in different languages are dealt with by micro-parametric theory. For some current discussions on the status of parameters in the Minimalist Program and the relations between macro- and micro-parametric theories, please see Baker (2008), Roberts & Holmberg (2010), Huang (2014), Kayne (2013) and their references.

[15]See Huang (2014), and also Simpson (2005) and Tang (2006) for more discussions.

[16]If we adopt the terms in the Probe-Goal system, LV is probe, XX is goal in its C-command domain. When the probe has strong features, it triggers Move of XX; when it has [-strong] features, it triggers Agree with XX. We believe that in Modern Chinese, XX moves to merge with LV in PF by procrastination to form a phonetic word or a prosodic word (Feng 2013) because the perfect marker *le1* is affixed to the whole *bèi XX* as in *tāmen yīgòng bèi qiánguīzé-le liǎngcì* 'They were treated withthe casting couch twice altogether'. This is different from some pseudo-incorporation structures, such as *bō pí* 'remove skin', in which *-le* is inserted between V and O (as in *bō-le pí* 'remove-le skin') but not attached to the whole V-O phrase (as in **bō-pí-le* 'remove skin-le'). Also See Baker (2011), who proposes that pseudo-incorporation does involve incorporation, but only in LF, into a "semantic word".

[17]The little v in (a) is different from V. The latter is a lexical verbal element, whereas the former is a functional category, triggering Move of V in order to assign Case to the outer object DP2. Little v is also treated as external argument assigner, being excluded out of the thematic structure of a verb.

[18]It can be noticed that the sentences in (55) all include the verb *gěi* 'give'. If *gěi* is dropped, the acceptability of these sentences will obviously be degraded. Shen and Sybesma (2010) point out that the complement of *gěi* must be an unaccusative verb or a transitive verb without object. Huang (2013) treats *gěi* as a raising verb denoting 'exist or happen', taking an unaccusative verb as its complement or a clausal complement whose subject raises. *Gěi* resembles the German existential verb *geben*. Tang (2008) analyses

gěi as the light verb BECOME, which is used to reinforce the affectedness reading expressed by the verb. From these analyses, we can see that the XX in the *bǎ*-sentences (55a-c) has more or less non-active readings.

[19]We assume that Case Filter must apply in Syntax since the argument cannot be interpreted in LF unless it has Case (or its Case feature is already checked). The operations which are procrastinated to PF cannot meet the requirement of Case Filter.

[20] As Chirui Hu (p.c.) pointed out to us, an indication of Late Middle Chinese being at the peak of analyticity was the widespread use of *dǎ* (literally 'hit') as a light verb with only the elementary semantics of DO. He brought our attention to a passage by Ouyang Xiu (of Northern Song Dynasty), in which he laments the deterioration of language witnessed by the over-use of *dǎ* even by otherwise respectable person. Examples include: *dǎ chuán* 'to take a boat ride', *dǎ chē* 'to take a vehicle', *dǎ yú* 'to fish', *dǎ shuǐ* 'to fetch water', *dǎ fàn* 'to serve oneself with rice', *dǎ sǎn* 'to hold the umbrella', *dǎ nián* 'to glue', *dǎ liáng* 'to measure', all of which were not found in any word books of his time.

[21] In his terms, a change from implicit (隱含) to explicit (呈現) forms. Others have characterized the same shift in other terms (e.g., analyticity), including Wei (2003), Mei (2003), Huang (2014 and much earlier works), Xu (2006), and others.

[22]Diachronically speaking, it is not strange at all that passives appear first and actives later since many continuous syntactic forms are derived from separate ones. Here, we

suspect that the use of the *bǎ*-construction may facilitate or catalyze the birth of active forms because the *bǎ*-construction often reflects the high transitivity of verbs. (Thompson 1973, Hopper & Thompson 1980).

[23]By saying this, we do not mean that these structures are invented by speakers under the influence of Old Chinese. We intend to say that any language change and development will follow a certain path. Null light verb structures have found themselves since Old Chinese but sometimes, they are not used because language change has not reached a certain stage. Similarly, although Archaic Chinese has a large number of null light verb (or synthetic) structures, overt light verb (or analytic) structures also existed, but boomed in use only when the right time arrived (after late Han). It is not unreasonable to call the *bèi XX* construction a "new" construction since its birth brought modern language users some feeling of freshness. However, from a long-term perspective, the path of language change is cyclic (as shown in the next paragraph) and hence a synchronic 'new' construction might appear as a rebirth of some old one.

[24]On micro-scales, a change occurs in a particular word, and proceeds along a certain direction to its extreme and then starts from the very beginningagain. The cycle of light verb change we have discussed in this paper and the cyclic changes of negation in many languages (the famous Jesperson's Cycle) are the instances of language change cycles. When many word-based changes of the same type take place within a language, atypological pattern emerges. That is to say, micro-parametric effects aggregate and

eventually lead to macro-parametric changes in a language.See Roberts & Holmberg (2010) and Gelderen (2011) for relevant discussions.

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