Verb Compounding in Taiwanese

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This paper is a synchronic study of the postverbal non-nominal complexes in Taiwanese as spoken in northern Taiwan and postulates that, contrary to Mandarin, Taiwanese has only a weak tendency towards verb-compounding, a pattern that accounts for the divergent syntactic positionings of nominal objects in the latter. It is hoped that this postulation will contribute to a better understanding of the traditional category of 'complements' in Chinese linguistics.

*Key words*: morpho-syntax; Taiwanese; Minnan; object.

Cet article est une étude synchronique des éléments non-nominaux en position postverbale dans la variété septentrionale du taiwanais. Nous postulons que contrairement au mandarin le taiwanais a une tendance moindre à former des composés verbaux, entraînant une plus grande diversité dans les positionnements de l'objet.

*Mots-clés*: morpho-syntaxe; taiwanais; minnan; objet.

本文探討台灣北部現代閩南方言中動詞後非名詞補語成分，認爲台語組成複合動詞的趨勢不如國語，因而台語賓語在句中所能表現出的語法結構，也較國語豐富。希望本文所提出的分析，有助於漢語語言學中對動詞後補語的進一步認識。
A. Introduction.

This is a synchronic study\(^1\) of the syntax of objects in the Taiwanese dialect of southern Min as generally spoken in northern Taiwan. This paper also investigates the various syntactic properties of verb-complexes in Taiwanese. It will be postulated that verb-compounding in Taiwanese, as compared to that in Mandarin, is much weaker, which accounts for the more varied syntax of objects in the former.

B. Basic framework.

a. Objects.

'Object' is a grammatical category employed by different Chinese linguists to refer to different scopes of linguistic elements. This paper will follow the usual framework by referring it to any post-transitive-verb nominal elements that are not 'complements'\(^2\). The same framework applies equally to single or double objects. It follows that objects in Chinese (dialects) naturally assume a great number of thematic roles\(^3\). This paper will not concern itself with this latter issue.

b. Transitivity.

'Transitivity', again, is a notion that has not been consistent-

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\(^1\) Where applicable, romanisation of Taiwanese will be given in the Church Romanisation, except that nasalised vowels are given as -N. Mandarin is romanised in Pin Yin. Chinese characters used to represent Taiwanese sentences will follow the general practice if available but will be my own if not. The author would like to thank Dr. Tang Su-chen for detailed critique of some of the issues raised in this paper.

\(^2\) See Chao 1968. This position is also adopted in 湯 (1979).

\(^3\) See Teng (1975).