

Hakka Verbal-Plus-V-Do Construction: A Reply to Tseng (2008)**David Ta-Chun Shen**

Abstract. This reply argues against Tseng's (2008) OCP-based analysis of the Hakka verbal-plus-V-*do* construction. Because the two verbs in this construction are not always homophonous, I propose that they come from different lexical items in the numeration. This numeration-based analysis contends that the two verbs in the verbal-plus-V-*do* construction are not in a copy relationship, so, unlike Tseng's (2008) analysis, it will not wrongly predict some unattested sentences as grammatical. Since the numeration-based analysis is consistent with the relevant literature, it should be further pursued.

Keywords: Hakka, verbal-plus-V-*do*, numeration

1. Introduction

This study is a reply to Tseng's (2008) Optimality Theory (OT) analysis of the verbal-plus-V-*do* (VpVd) construction in Hakka. I contend that the construction does not involve verb copying, and propose a Principle and Parameter (P&P) analysis to account for the language facts which Tseng provides. Even though both analyses are extensionally equivalent, the P&P analysis synthesizes shared concepts to explain the construction in question. Additionally, the P&P analysis doesn't lead to the erroneous predictions of—due to the framework and assumptions used—Tseng's.

The Hakka V-*do* (Vd) construction is illustrated in (1).

(1) Vd construction

a. descriptive

Gi	sii	(*sii)	[do	dong	kiak]. (=Tseng's (2008: 54) (5, 7)) ¹
he	eat	eat	COMP	really	fast
'He ate really fast.'					

¹ It is not mentioned which spelling system was used in Tseng (2008).

b. resultative

Gi seu (*seu) [do du-sii tung]. (=Tseng's (2008: 54) (6, 8))
 he laugh laugh COMP belly hurt
 'He laughed till his belly hurt.'

In this construction, what follows the complementizer *do* (Lai 2002: 375-377, Tseng 2008: 59) can describe either an extent (1a) or consequences (1b) brought about by the main predicate. Additionally, the construction can take a verbal adjunct (following Huang's (1992: 115) analysis for Mandarin and references therein) in front of the main predicate, as shown in (2).

(2) VpVd

a. descriptive complement clause

Gi sii shui-go *(sii) [do dong kiak]. (=Tseng's (2008: 53-54) (1, 3))
 he eat fruit eat COMP really fast
 'He ate fruit really fast.'

b. resultative complement clause

Gi seu ngai *(seu) [do du-sii tung]. (=Tseng's (2008: 53-54) (2, 4))
 he laugh I laugh COMP belly hurt
 'He laughed at me till his belly hurt.'

With the following assumptions, Tseng (2008) anchored her analysis in OT. Instead of viewing (1) and (2) as related but different constructions, Tseng (2008) viewed them as the same construction. Moreover, she used examples like those in (2) as the basis, where the verb of the verbal adjunct and that of the main predicate happen to be homophonous. Also, she (2008: 58 et seq.) viewed the verbal adjunct as the main predicate and the main predicate as the clause adjunct. Therefore, since (2) was taken as the starting point and (1) and (2) were the same, it was natural for her to hypothesize that the presence of second verb in (1) was due to parallelism and/or Richness of the Base from OT. In turn, she had to argue why the attested output for (1) was never the one with two consecutive verbs. Provided that the candidate with two consecutive verbs seemed to involve the juxtaposition of two identical items, the Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP) was borrowed (3d). In order to decide the placement of *do*, the two ABUT constraints (3a-b) were posited, too. The proposed constraints in Tseng (2008) and their definitions are reproduced in (3).

(3) proposed constraints in Tseng (2008)

- a. ABUT (*do* L, WORD R): attaching the left edge of *do* to the right edge of its preceding word (p.60)

- b. ABUT (*do* L, PRED R): attaching the left edge of *do* to the right edge of main predicate (p.60)
- c. UNIFORMITY: disallowing the many-to-one correspondence between syntactic nodes and phonological word (i.e. against fusion) (p.61)
- d. OCP: prohibiting adjacent identical morphosyntactic words (p.64)

The reason for including “morphosyntactic words” in (3d) was to save the grammatical “reduplicative compound verbs”, like *gong-gong* ‘talk-talk (literal); talk for a while’. Since the “reduplicative compound verbs” were formed within the domain of subword, they would not violate the OCP constraint. The constraints in (3) had a particular ranking (Tseng 2008: 71): OCP, ABUT (WORD), ABUT (PRED) >> UNIFORM. Although the ranking among the upper three constraints could not be determined, all three constraints dominated the lower one.

So, regarding the sentences in (2), repeating the main verb of her analysis was a way to meet the requirements of the two ABUT constraints. As for the sentences in (1), the repetition of the main verb of her analysis did not enhance the harmonicity and also violated the OCP constraint, which is why the candidate with two consecutive homophonous verbs in (1) is suboptimal.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In 2.1, I express my concerns about the above analysis; in 2.2, I propose a P&P account. Section 3 then concludes this reply.

2. P&P analysis

2.1 Concerns regarding Tseng (2008)

Empirical evidence questions whether the two verbs in VpVd are necessarily the product of reduplication. As Shi (1990: 57-58) points out, the repetition of verbs in VpVd in Mandarin is only apparent.² As long as there is some semantic relatedness, the exact (partial) copy condition does not hold, as shown in (4).

(4) VpVd without reduplication

- a. Wo qu pinjiu he de taiduole. (=Shi’s (1990: 58) (29))
I go taste-wine drink DE too much
‘I drank too much when going to taste the wine.’
- b. Zhuangzi zuo bairimeng meng de Huishi dou lao le.
Zhuangzi do daydream dream DE Huishi also old LE
‘Zhuangzi daydreamed to the extent that Huishi became old(er).’

² As many, if not most, of the Sinitic syntactic studies initiate from Mandarin, I will assume that cross-linguistic comparison is applicable.

- c. Niudun xiangyong pingguoxida he de hen taozui.
 Niudun enjoy apple soda drink DE very deeply
 ‘Newton tasted his apple soda wholeheartedly.’

In (4), (4a) is taken from Shi and (4b-c) are mine.³ This evidence suggests that VpVd does not invariably involve reduplication. Whether the two verbs are similar in form (2) or not (4), the sentences in (2) and (4) are all possible instances of VpVd. The dismissal of verb repetition allows (2) and (4) to be understood via a unified analysis and not as special cases of each other.

In addition to these empirical observations there are also a number of theoretical concerns. Firstly, employing ABUT because “ABUT is used as an alignment of opposite edges” (Tseng 2008: 60) is incorrect. On the contrary, ALIGN is by definition capable of opposite edge alignment (Kager 1999: 118). Since constraints in OT are universal, this means that for Tseng’s analysis there implicitly exist two families of constraints (ABUT and ALIGN) with overlapping functions. As OT is harsh on the issue of conspiracy, this overlapping issue cannot be regarded as trivial.

Secondly, although OCP has established itself in the literature, it has also been seen as invalid (Odden 1986, 1988). Moreover, Reiss (2008) has argued for “a pure rule-based formalism” (p.301). Therefore, the use of OCP is debatable.⁴ As the following P&P analysis can cover the same set of facts without constraints, it is reasonable to ask whether the analysis of VpVd needs any constraints at all.

Thirdly, Tseng’s two ABUT constraints do not explain very much. (3a) is simply a shared trait for clitics in general, not just for Hakka *do*: “[c]litics can exhibit a low degree of selection with respect to their hosts” (Zwicky and Pullum 1983: 503). However, more problematic is (3b), because the constraint itself is just a restatement, transforming what is observed into an explanation.

Fourthly, the analysis rules in some ungrammatical sentences. For example, in **Gi ngip vuk zeu do dong gip* ‘He ran into house hurriedly’, the verb *zeu* ‘run’ only appears before the complementiser *do*, which violates the low-ranked UNIFORM. On the other hand, the attested output (*Gi zeu ngip vuk zeu do dong gip* ‘He ran into house hurriedly’) has the verb appear twice and violates the UNIFORM again. As the two candidates have a tie on the

³ I cannot find published literature similar to Shi (1990). As little attention has been paid to the non-homophonous fact since then, the present study continues what Shi argues and takes seriously his single example plus my own sentences which have been checked with some of my family members.

⁴ Tseng (2008: 71-73) provided a pair of words whose forms were the same with different meanings (the relatedness between the two words in a pair being not clear) to support the OCP analysis. However, she only demonstrated a situation in which when two sound-identical words were juxtaposed the sentence was ungrammatical. This explanation is incomplete as grammatical counterparts are not provided. Otherwise, one may reasonably speculate that the ungrammaticality is due to the other factor(s). The supportive strength for her OCP is therefore lacking.

number of constraint violation, the attested and the ungrammatical should both be optimal for her analysis—a wrong prediction.⁵ To help verify this point, a tableau (5) is provided.

(5) ungrammatical output ruled in

	OCF	ABUT (WORD)	ABUT (PRED)	UNIFORM
1.28 *Gi ngip vuk zeu=do dong gip. he PREP house run=COMP really hurried ‘He ran into house hurriedly.’				*
1.29 Gi zeu ngip vuk zeu=do dong gip. he run PREP house run=COMP really hurried ‘He ran into house hurriedly.’				*

Coming up with more constraint(s) to such a fixed set of facts would worsen the situation for it would demonstrate how difficult, if not impossible, it is to falsify an OT analysis—falsifiability is attributed to be part of scientific reasoning. Lastly, the doubt about OT as a framework (e.g. Bromberger and Halle 1997, Rennison 2000) has not been fully addressed.

In light of these problems, I would like to propose the P&P account below.

2.2 My proposal

The source of the following analysis can be traced back to Shi (1990). He writes,

...the second verb, namely, the one taking the morpheme *de*, is always the matrix verb, and the first verb, together with its direct object, is part of an adverbial clause... (Shi 1990: 58)⁶

⁵ A reviewer asked how my proposal would account for the ungrammaticality of **Gi ngip vuk zeu do dong gip*. Assuming that the clause is an instance of VpVd, I consider that the derivation is crashed because the verb for the verbal adjunct left unused in the numeration.

⁶ A reviewer asked if there exist(s) some test(s) to tell the main-verb-hood. In terms of meaning, perhaps we can agree that the Vp portion is more susceptible to being optional. Other than that, to my knowledge such tests seem to be lacking for Hakka, Taiwanese, and Taiwan Mandarin. In terms of sound, contrastive intonation can fall on either Vp or Vd. (That Vd receives the intonation stress in the neutral context is a reappearing phenomenon across languages.) Tone sandhi is not of immediate help because it relies on the researcher’s perception of the syntax-phonology interaction. In terms of form, the addition of aspect markers is not decisive. For example, in the sentence *wo zhan zhe chi fan* ‘I had a meal while standing’, it is the non-main verb *zhan* that takes the aspect marker *zhe* (Hsiao-hung Iris Wu, p.c.; my own responsibility). The contrast of movement to the

This suggests that VpVd is literally the combination of Vd and Vp, the sentences in both (1) and (2) involving Vd in their formation. In addition, (2) has the adjunct clause preceding the Vd part. The difference between (1) and (2) then boils down to a difference in numeration, defined “to be a set of pairs (LI, *i*), where LI is an item of the lexicon and *i* is its index, understood to be the number of times that LI is selected.” (Chomsky 1995: 225)⁷ Focusing on the relevant verbs only, (6) schematically represents the two numerations:

(6) schematic numerations for Vd and VpVd

- a. $N_{Vd} = \{ \dots Vd_1 \dots \}$
- b. $N_{VpVd} = \{ \dots Vp_1 \dots Vd_1 \dots \}$

In the numeration for Vd (6a), the verb is to build up the Vd construction; in the numeration for VpVd (6b), besides the verb for Vd, there is another verb to build up the appendix Vp. With this preparation, for (1), the issue of two appearances of a verb simply does not occur, because that verb in the numeration is used for Vd, as shown in (6a). Take (1a) as an example and lay out its structure as in (7).

(7) phrase structure of *Gi sii do dong kiak* ‘He ate really fast’

[CP [C] [TP [DP Gi_i] [T' [T] [VP [DP Gi_i] [V' [V sii-do] [CP Pro_i dong kiak]]]]]]

In (7), based on Tang (2010: 122-123) and Ting and Shen (2010), the verb and *do* together as a unit act as the head of the VP. The Pro in the complement clause is controlled by the DP in Spec,VP, which further moves up to Spec,TP.⁸

For (2), I contend that the source of the verb in the adjunct is different from the one in the main predicate, that is, there are two verbs in the numeration, as shown in (6b). Other than the earlier shown facts in (4) for Mandarin, that the two verbs in VpVd come from the different LIs can also be observed in (8) for Hakka, when the adjunct and the main predicate take non-homophonous verbs.

topic position between Vp and Vd is open to interpretation: for instance, Vd is comparatively information-rich, so it can occupy the topic position. An inflectionally rich Sinitic language is needed in the present case.

⁷ This idea was suggested by Gerardo Fernández-Salgueiro (p.c.), although I take full responsibility for how it has been interpreted and used.

⁸ Ting and Shen (2010) contains a comprehensive examination of Vd in Mandarin and proposes an analysis to string together the facts around Vd. Also, I ignore the indication of V-to-v and V-to-T movement. For a relevant discussion, please refer to Tang (1998, 2001) and references therein.

(8) different verbs for adjuncts and main predicates (a to d correspond to Tseng's (2008: 68, 69, 70) (33), (35), (36), (37), respectively)

- a. Gi fun-mi fun do tai-ga dong dam-sim.
 he in.a.coma faint COMP everyone really worried
 'He's in a coma, which makes everyone worry about him.'
- b. Gi gieu-nap soi-gim gieu(-nap) do dong m gam-ngien.
 he pay tax pay COMP really not willingness
 'He feels reluctant to pay the tax.'
- c. Diau-e bi-zeu (bi) do dong giak.
 bird fly-away fly COMP really quickly
 'The bird flew away quickly.'
- d. Diau-e bi-zeu zeu do dong giak.
 bird fly-away leave COMP really quickly
 'The bird flew away quickly.'

The numeration-based analysis also makes vanished the partial reduplication (in Tseng's words, of course) problematic in, for example, (8a) and (8b): Why is *fun* reduplicated in (8a), not *mi*? Why is *gieu* reduplicated in (8b), not *nap*?⁹ For the present analysis, the situation is idiosyncratic to the extent that the verbs in the Vp and Vd parts are "semantically related" (Shi 1990: 57).¹⁰ As for the structure of VpVd, following Shi (1990: 58), I assume that the subject of the adverbial adjunct clause is controlled by that of the main clause. Because the subject of the main clause lands in Spec,TP, the adverbial should not be higher than TP. When one tries to locate nodes for the adverbial to attach to, the introduction of modals, which are merged at T, is useful.

(9) VpVd with modal

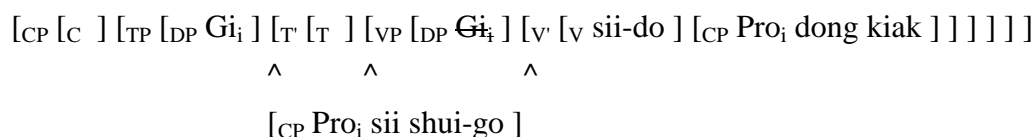
- Liulang (yinggai) qi maoniu (yinggai) qi de hen wen.
 Liulang should ride yak should ride DE very steadily
 'Liulang should ride the yak steadily.'

When *qi maoniu* is followed by *yinggai*, it should be attached to T'. When *qi maoniu* precedes *qi de hen wen* and follows *yinggai*, it could attach to either VP or V'. Therefore, in instances like (9), the adverbial adjunct clause is speculated to attach to T', VP, or V'. The various placements of Vp and the optionality of Vp support the view that Vp is an adjunct. Using (2a) as an example of this, the structure would look like as in (10).

⁹ For the OT analysis, the problem means that unattested outputs are ruled in again.

¹⁰ The semantic relatedness is not yet clear, (partly) because there is no due attention paid to Shi (1990).

(10) phrase structure of *Gi sii shui-go sii do dong kiak* ‘He ate fruit really fast’



In (10), ^ indicates a possible node where the lower clause could merge.

The above nodes independently correspond to those of Potsdam’s (1999) E(xtent)-adverb.¹¹ E-adverbs “approximately describe the extent or degree to which a situation holds.” (Potsdam 1999: 406-407) This description also independently matches what is ascribed to Vp:

The adverbial clause indicates the activities the subject is engaging in when carrying out the action represented by the matrix verb, and thus delimits the range of the matrix verb and the stative clause/AdjP [the complement clause—D.S.]. (Shi 1990: 58)

As an E-adverb, I conjecture that this is the reason why the adverbial adjunct clause Vp seems not able to bear its own modal in sentences like (10) when analyzed as a clause.¹²

In sum, with the minimal assumption that the numeration contains two verb items, it is shown that a reduplication-free analysis for VpVd is feasible. Moreover, the P&P analysis incurs no complications along the way.

¹¹ Potsdam (1999) mainly focuses on English adverbs.

¹² A note is in order here. Some Mandarin speakers find no difficulty comprehending (i) where either or both the adjunct and the main predicate are further modified by subject-oriented adverbs.

(i) further modification in VpVd in Mandarin

- a. Shenjiu xiaoxinde zou xiaojing zou de hen kuai.
 Shenjiu carefully walk trail walk DE very fast
 ‘Shengjiu carefully walked through the trail fast.’
- b. Shengjiu zou xiaojing anjingde zou de hen kuai.
 Shengjiu walk trail quietly walk DE very fast
 Shengjiu walked through the trail fast without a sound.
- c. Shengjiu xiaoxinde zou xiaojing anjingde zou de hen kuai.
 Shengjiu carefully walk trail quietly walk DE very fast
 ‘Shengjiu carefully walked through the trail fast without a sound.’

On the other hand, some Hakka speakers find that the subject-oriented adverb can only go with the adjunct as in (ii).

(ii) further modification in VpVd in Hakka

- a. Gi tiau-sii sii shui-go sii do dong kiak.
 he intentionally eat fruit eat COMP really fast
 ‘He intentionally ate fruit fast.’
- b. *[G]i sii shui-go tiau-sii sii do dong kiak.
 he eat fruit intentionally eat COMP really fast

3. Conclusion

In this reply I pinpointed why the concept of reduplication was used and reviewed the OT analysis based on the reduplication. I believe, however, that this is the wrong direction to take. Instead, for the VpVd construction, the source for the verb in the adjunct and the source for the verb in the main clause correspond to the different lexical items in the numeration. The P&P account is not extravagant, and this should be welcomed. Good analyses not only come from novelty but also from simplicity. Overall, I consider that the present analysis is worth further pursuing because it has the same coverage as the OT one, but within the established norm.

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