

# Directional Constructions in Taiwan Southern Min: Complex Predicates or Compounds

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## Abstract

This paper discusses directional constructions with the sequence of displacement verb followed by directional complement in Taiwan Southern Min (TSM). Even though they are often referred to as directional compounds in the literature, most directional constructions in TSM allow syntactic elements such as modals and non-locational objects between the displacement verb and the directional complement. The locational object must occur after the directional complement. They are thus argued to be complex predicates with the displacement verb subcategorized for the directional complement. Only a small number of directional constructions truly are compounds.

## 1 Introduction

Resultative verb compounds (RVCs) are composed of two elements; the second element denotes the result caused by the activity of the first element. Among resultative verb compounds in Mandarin Chinese (MC), one subtype is directional RVC with (1) as its typical pattern: (Li and Thompson 1981)

- (1) V1 - V2  
displacement direction  
(Li and Thompson 1981:58)

In a directional RVC, the first verb denotes displacement, while the second verb, which could be simple or complex, indicates the direction of the movement as demonstrated in (2).

- (2) MC  
ta na-qu-le liang-ben shu  
3SG bring-go-PFV two-CL book  
'S/He took (away from the speaker) two books.'

(Li and Thompson 1981:59)

Unlike other types of RVCs, directional RVCs allow objects between the verbal elements as in (3), where the object *liang zhi gou* 'two dogs' occurs between *gan* 'herd' and *chu-qu* 'exit-go'.

- (3) MC  
ta gan-le liang-zhi gou chu-qu  
3SG herd-PFV two-CL dog exit-go  
'S/He herded two dogs out (away from the Speaker).' (Li and Thompson 1981:62)

When the object denotes location, it is even obligatory to have the object inside the compound as in (4), where *shan* 'mountain' must occur between *shang* 'ascend' and *qu* 'go'.

- (4) MC  
a. women shang shan qu  
we ascend mountain go  
'Let's get up the mountain.'  
b. \*women shang-qu shan  
we ascend-go mountain  
(Li and Thompson 1981:64)

Paul (2022) argues that so-called directional verb compounds or directional constructions in Mandarin Chinese as in (3) are serial verb constructions (SVCs) as they allow aspect markers and objects inside the compounds. However, Paul also argues that examples like (4a) are not SVCs, and proposes that in (4a) the second verb, i.e. *qu* 'go', is the main verb while the preverbal part is an adjunct clause. As to examples such as *dai-shang* 'wear-ascend' (5), they truly are compounds as they do not allow objects between the verbal elements.

(5) MC

ta dai-shang-le ta-de maozi  
3SG wear-ascend-PFV 3SG-GEN hat  
'S/He put on his/her hat.'

(Li and Thompson 1981:60)

Different structures have been proposed for so-called directional compounds as defined in (1). This paper aims to discuss directional constructions in Taiwan Southern Min (TSM), a Chinese language spoken by more than 80% of the people in Taiwan (Cheng 1985). As discussed in the next section, TSM directional constructions demonstrate different features from MC directional constructions. They are argued to be complex predicates with the displacement verb subcategorized for the directional complement. Only a small number of directional constructions truly are compounds.

## 2 Features of Directional Constructions in Taiwan Southern Min

Cheng (1982) has proposed some differences between TSM and MC directional constructions. To illustrate, modal and temporal expressions can occur before directional complements in TSM as in (6), but not in MC as in (7).

(6) TSM

I puann toh-a puann bo chut-khi  
3SG move table move did-not exit-go  
'S/He moved the table but did not move it out(side).'

(Cheng 1982:319)

(7) MC

\*Ta ban zhuo-zi ban mei chu-qu  
3SG move table move did-not exit-go  
'S/He moved the table but did not move it out(side).'

Moreover, directional complements can be modified by a degree expression in TSM as in (8), but not in MC as in (9).

(8) TSM

I-a khng liao siunn chut-khi  
chair place conjunction too exit-go  
'The chair is placed too far outside.'

(Cheng 1982:324)

(9) MC

\*Yi-zi fang de tai chu-qu le  
chair place DE too exit-out PRT  
'The chair is placed too far outside.'

Lien (1997) also points out that in a directional construction in TSM the location object occurs after the directional complements as in (10), where *chu-lai* 'house-inside' occurs after *jip-khi* 'enter-go', while in MC directional constructions, the location object occurs between the directional complements as in (11), where *wu-li* 'house-inside' occurs between *jin* 'enter' and *qu* 'go'.

(10) TSM

Kiann jip-khi chu-lai  
walk enter-go house-inside  
'Walk into the house.'

(Lien 1997:388)

(11) MC

Zou jin wu-li qu  
walk enter house-inside go  
'Walk into the house.'

(Lien 1997:388)

Moreover, if the object is non-locational, TSM and MC also demonstrate different word orders as in (12-13). In the TSM example (12), the object *cit pun cheh* 'one book' occurs between *teh* 'take' and *chut-lai* 'exit-come', while in the MC example (13), *yi ben shu* 'one book' occurs either between *chu* 'exit' and *lai* 'come' or before *chu-lai* 'exit-come'.

(12) TSM

- a. \*teh chut cit pun cheh lai  
take exit one CL book come  
'Take one book out.'
- b. teh cit pun cheh chut-lai  
take one CL book exit-come  
'Take one book out.'

(Lien 1997:389)

(13) MC

- a. na-chu yi ben shu lai  
take-exit one CL book come  
'Take one book out.'
- b. na yi ben shu chu-lai  
take one CL book exit-come  
'Take one book out.'

(Lien 1997:389)

## 3 Literature Review

### 3.1 Yang (1991)

Yang (1991) takes TSM compounds such as *jip-lai* 'enter-come' and *chut-khi* 'exit-go' as predicate-complement compounds, where the second verb denotes the result caused by the activity conveyed by the first verb. If other elements can occur between the predicate and the complement, the

predicate-complement sequence is then considered phrases, not compounds. To illustrate, *khuann chut-khi* ‘chase exit-go’ is considered a phrase because syntactic elements such as the negator *bo* ‘not’ can occur between the predicate *khuann* ‘chase’ and the directional complement *chut-khi* ‘exit-go’ as in *khuann bo chut-khi* ‘chase not exit-go’. Note that in the phrase *khuann bo chut-khi* ‘chase not exit-go’, the directional complement *chut-khi* is itself a compound.

### 3.2 Teng (1995)

Teng (1995) compares two types of TSM directional constructions as in (14) and (15). In (14) the object cannot occur between the first verb *sau* ‘sweep’ and the directional complement *chut-khi* ‘exit-go’, while in (15) the object occurs between *chua* ‘take’ and *chut-khi* ‘exit-go’. Teng proposes that (14) is a sentence involving a resultative directional complement, while (15) is a serial-VP sentence just like (16).

#### (14) TSM

- a. Li ka kut-thau sao-chut-khi!  
 you prep. bone sweep-exit-go  
 ‘Sweep the bones out of the house.’  
 b. \*Li sao kut-thau chut-khi!  
 you sweep bone exit-go  
 (Teng 1995:16)

#### (15) TSM

- a. Li ka gin-a chua-chut-khi!  
 you prep. children take-exit-go  
 ‘Take the children out!’  
 b. Li chua gin-a chut-khi!  
 you take children exit-go  
 (Teng 1995:16)

#### (16) TSM

- Li m-ho ching te-khoo chut-khi!  
 you not-good wear shorts exit-go  
 ‘Don’t go out in shorts!’ (Teng 1995:16-17)

Teng means that *sao-chut-khi* ‘sweep-exit-go’ is a resultative compound so no objects can occur between the verbal elements. As to *chua-chut-khi* ‘take-exit-go’, it involves serial verbs and objects can occur between the first verb and the second verb.

However, a closer look at the data shows that it is not true that *sao-chut-khi* ‘sweep-exit-go’ does not allow objects between the verbal elements. As demonstrated in (17), the object *cit tui pun-so* ‘one

pile of garbage’ can occur between the displacement verb and the directional complement.

#### (17) TSM

- i sao cit tui pun-so chut-khi  
 3SG sweep one pile garbage exit-go  
 ‘S/He swept one pile of garbage out.’

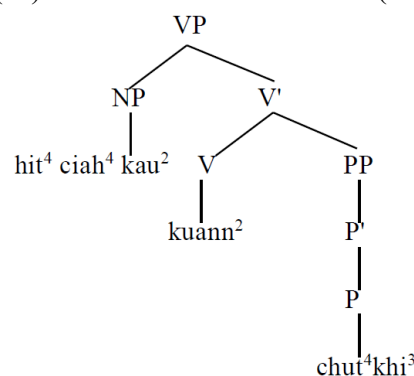
Moreover, even though Teng claims that (15) is a serial-VP sentence, he does not define what a serial verb construction is, and no syntactic structure is proposed, either.

### 3.3 Lin (2007)

Lin (2007) discusses verb-complement complexes in TSM, including phasal, resultative, and directional verbal complexes. The structure proposed for a directional construction such as (18) is shown in (19), where the first verb is followed by a prepositional phrase. In (19) the verb *kuann* ‘chase’ must move up to a higher VP shell to assign Case to the noun phrase *hit ciah kau* ‘that dog’, and thus the object NP appears between the verb and the directional complement.

#### (18) TSM

- Gua kuann hit ciah kau chu-khi a  
 I chase that CL dog exit-go ASP/PRT  
 ‘I chased that dog out.’ (Lin 2007:340)  
 (19) (Lin 2007:343)

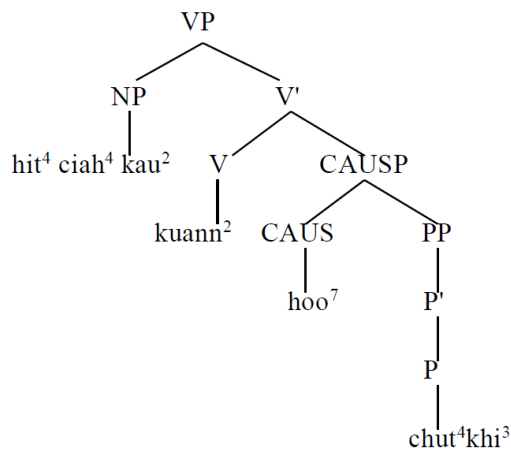


In addition to objects, other syntactic elements can occur in the directional construction as in (20), where the causative element *hoo* occurs between the verb and the directional complement. Lin has proposed (21) to be the structure for (20). In (21) a CAUSP is projected between the verb and PP.

#### (20) TSM

- Hit ciah kau li ai kuann-hoo-chut-khi  
 that CL dog you must chase-CAUS-exit-go

(21) ‘You must chase that dog out.’ (Lin 2007:345)  
(Lin 2007:344)



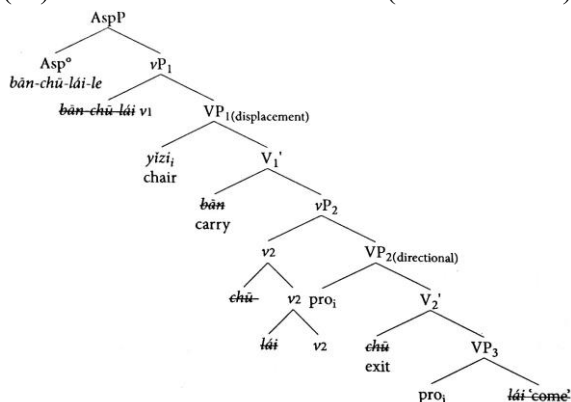
Moreover, the preposition in the directional construction can take a location object as in (22).

(22) I ka hit ciah kau kuann-chut-khi gua-khau  
3SG KA that CL dog chase-exit-go outside  
‘S/He chased that dog out.’ (Lin 2007:345)

### 3.4 Paul (2022)

Paul (2022) adopts Collins’ (1997) definition of serial verb constructions, “representing a single event with one aspect/tense marker and sharing of the internal argument.” (Paul 2022:134) She argues that the so-called directional compounds in MC are SVCs with a structure as demonstrated in (23). With (23) as the structure, there are three possible positions for the shared object as in (24). When all three verbs *ban* ‘transport’, *chu* ‘exit’, and *lai* ‘come’ move up to Asp<sup>0</sup>, (24a) is derived. When only *ban* ‘transport’ and *chu* ‘exit’ move up, the word order in (24b) is derived. If only one verb *ban* ‘transport’ moves up to Asp<sup>0</sup>, (24c) is then derived.

(23) (Paul 2022:144)



(24) MC

- a. Ta cong fangjian li  
3SG from room in  
ban-chu-lai-le yi ba yizi  
transport-exit-come-PERF one CL chair
- b. Ta cong fangjian li  
3SG from room in  
ban-chu-le yi ba yizi lai  
transport-exit-PERF one CL chair come
- c. Ta cong fangjian li  
3SG from room in  
ban-le yi ba yizi chu-lai  
transport-PERF one CL chair exit-come  
‘S/He brought out a chair from the room.’  
(Liu, Pan, & Gu 2001:572)

If Paul’s proposal is adopted for TSM data, directional constructions in (14), (15), (17), and (18) should all be SVCs because they share an internal argument. To illustrate, in (14) the two verbs *sao* ‘sweep’ and *chut-khi* ‘exit-go’ share the internal argument *kut-thau* ‘bone’. In Paul’s proposal as in (23), the object can occur between two directional complements as in (13a) and (24b). However, as indicated by Lien (1997), in TSM if the object is non-locational, it must occur before the two directional complements as in (12), where the object *cit pun cheh* ‘one book’ must occur before *chut-lai* ‘exit-come’, not between *chut* and *lai*.

As to examples that involve locational objects as in (11) and (25), Paul has argued that they are not SVCs and proposed (26) to be their structure. In (25) the shared noun phrase is not the object but the subject. As demonstrated in (26), the main verb is *lai* ‘come’, and what precedes the main verb is an adjunct clause.

(25) MC

- a. Ta zou-jin jiaoshi lai  
3SG walk-enter classroom come  
‘He walked into the classroom (toward the speaker).’
- b. \*Ta zou-jin-lai jiaoshi  
3SG walk-enter-come classroom
- c. \*Ta zou jiaoshi jin-lai  
3SG walk classroom enter-come  
(Paul 2022:140)

(26) Ta<sub>i</sub> [<sub>adj.cl.</sub> pro<sub>i</sub> zou-jin jiaoshi] lai/qu  
3SG walk-enter classroom come/go  
(Paul 2022:141)

Lien (1997) has pointed out that in TSM if the object denotes location, the two directional complements must occur before the object as in (10), where *jip-khi* ‘enter-go’ occurs before the locational object *chu-lai* ‘house-inside’. Paul’s proposal as in (26) cannot account for TSM directional constructions involving locational objects.

#### 4 The Proposal

This paper discusses directional constructions in TSM with (1) as the typical pattern. As presented earlier, directional constructions in TSM often allow syntactic elements such as modals or objects inside the constructions as in (6) and (12). Since syntactic elements can occur inside the constructions, according to Lexical Integrity Hypothesis (Di Sciullo & Williams 1987), those directional constructions are not compounds formed in the lexicon. Yang (1991) also takes predicate-complement constructions that allow syntactic elements inside to be phrases, not compounds.

As discussed in section 3.4, Paul’s (2022) SVC analysis for MC directional constructions cannot account for TSM directional constructions. On the other hand, Lin’s (2007) complex predicate proposal after some modifications seems to work for TSM directional constructions.

In TSM, adjectival verbs but not other types of verbs such as activity verbs can be modified by degree expressions as shown in (27).

(27) TSM

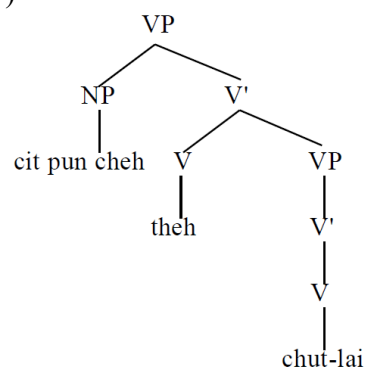
- a. I siunn thiam a  
3SG too tired PRT  
‘S/He is too tired.’
- b. \*I siunn kiann a  
3SG too walk PRT  
Intended meaning: ‘S/He walked too much.’

Cheng (1982) points out that in a directional construction such as (28), the directional complement can be modified by a degree expression. Therefore, the directional complement is not an activity verb. Cheng further explains that degree expressions can modify location-denoting nouns as in *ciok lai-bin* ‘very inside’ and *kai gua-khau* ‘very outside’. Likewise, location-denoting verbs such as *chut-lai* ‘exit-come’ can also be modified by degree expressions.

- (28) I e chih thong siong chut-lai  
3SG modifier tongue stretch-out most exit-come  
‘His tongue stretched out furthest.’  
(Cheng 1982:325)

Taking the features of TSM directional constructions presented in section 2 into consideration, this paper modifies Lin’s (2007) proposal into (29) to account for directional constructions in TSM. Unlike Lin’s analysis in (19), in (29) *chut-lai* ‘exit-come’ is analyzed as VP instead of PP.

(29)



Adopting Larson’s (1988) analysis for the double object construction, this paper proposes that the displacement verb is subcategorized for an NP and a directional complement, which functions as a secondary predicate. The cause-result relation between the displacement verb and the directional complement can be overtly expressed through the result/extent marker *kah* as in (30).

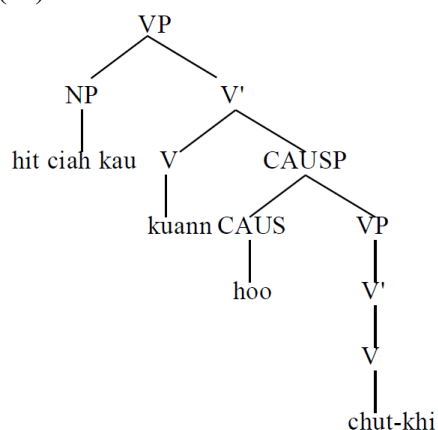
- (30) a. Cit ki chi chak kah  
this M splinter pierce conjunction  
ciok jip-khi e  
very enter-go PRT  
‘This splinter pierces deep inside.’  
(Cheng 1982:324)
- b. Cit ki chi chak ciok jip-khi e  
this M splinter pierce very enter-go PRT

As a location-denoting verb, the directional complement can take a location object. Examples like (10) where the location object occurs after the directional complement are thus accounted for. As shown in (12), non-location objects occur before the directional complement. In (29) the verb *theh* ‘take’ moves up to a higher VP shell to assign Case to the noun phrase *cit pun cheh* ‘one book’, and

thus the object NP appears between the displacement verb and the directional complement.

In addition to objects, other syntactic elements can also occur between the displacement verb and the directional complement as in (6) and (20). Lin's (2007) proposal as in (21) can be modified into (31) to account for examples like (6) and (20).

(31)



It seems that most so-called directional compounds are not compounds after all. Paul (2022) has taken MC examples like *dai-shang* ‘wear-ascend’ as in (5) to be compounds. The TSM counterpart of *dai-shang*, however, is not a directional compound as shown in (32), where *ti-leh* is composed of a verb followed by a durative aspect marker.

(32) TSM

I bo-a ti-leh (cf. (5))  
 3SG hat wear-ASP  
 ‘S/He put on a hat.’

The only type of TSM directional compound that does not allow syntactic elements in between would be examples like *jip-lai* ‘enter-come’ and *chut-khi* ‘exit-got’ as Yang (1991) claims.

## 5 Concluding Words

This paper has proposed two structures for directional constructions in TSM: complex predicate and compound. Most directional constructions allow syntactic elements such as modals and non-locational objects between displacement verbs and directional complements, and they are argued to have displacement verbs subcategorized for directional complements.

Location-denoting objects follow directional complements. Only a small number of displacement-direction verb sequences are compounds, which do not allow syntactic elements in between and can only take location-denoting objects.

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