

Non-nominal A-movement: Evidence from Mandarin VP-fronting

Intro This study argues *A-movement is not restricted to nominal constituents*. Drawing on Mandarin VP-fronting (VPF), we show VPs can undergo genuine A-movement, challenging the nominal restriction. We argue that this supports an extended *categorial view* (Hewett 2025), where the A/A' distinction tracks the structural category targeted by movement (non-QP vs. QP).

Empirical domain Mandarin VP-fronting occurs in **verb-doubling constructions**, where two identical verbal forms obligatorily co-occur (1). In this construction, the fronted VP may target either a clause-internal position (**low VPF**; (1-a)) or a clause-peripheral position (**high VPF**; (1-b)), a contrast that we will show cannot be captured by a scrambling-based analysis.

- (1) a. Zhangsan [**du zhe ben shu**] **du=le** san ci / san ge xiaoshi ____ .
 Zhangsan **read this CL book read=PFV** three time / three CL hour
 ‘Zhangsan has read this book three times/for three hours.’
 b. [**du zhe ben shu**], Zhangsan **du=le** san ci / san ge xiaoshi ____ .
read this CL book Zhangsan **read=PFV** three time / three CL hour
 ‘As for reading this book, Zhangsan has read this book three times/for three hours.’

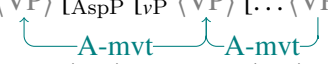

The A/A'-movement properties of Mandarin VPF A converging set of standard diagnostics (e.g., van Urk 2015; Safir 2019; Lohninger 2024) reveals a clear A/A' asymmetry: low VPF consistently exhibits A-movement properties, whereas high VPF patterns with A'-movement (see Table 1).

Table 1: The A vs. A'-properties of Mandarin Low/High VP-fronting (some data are omitted for space)

Tests targeting properties sensitive to A-mvt		Low VPF	High VPF	
Shows no specific interpretive effect		✓ (1-a)	× (1-b)	
Cannot cross finite clause boundaries		✓	×	
No reconstruction effect	Shows Principle C obviation	✓	w.r.t. Subj ×	w.r.t. IO ✓
	Creates new antecedent-anaphor relation	✓	w.r.t. Subj ×	w.r.t. IO ✓
can feed further A-movement		✓	×	

Mandarin high VPF is fed by A-mvt. **Evidence:** High VPF exhibits binding reconstruction with respect to the subject, but not the indirect object. This asymmetry indicates that high VPF does not reconstruct to its base position, but only to the landing site of low VPF.

Analysis The derivation of Mandarin low (2-a) and high VPFs (2-b) is given below. We assume that Mandarin has TP (He 2020, 2024) and high VPF is presumably topicalization targeting [Spec, CP].

- (2) a. **Mandarin low VPF:** ... [TP [FP ⟨VP⟩ [AspP [vP ⟨VP⟩ [... ⟨VP⟩]]]]]

 b. **Mandarin high VPF:** [CP VP [TP [FP ⟨VP⟩ [AspP [vP ⟨VP⟩ [... ⟨VP⟩]]]]]]


The landing site of low VPF We argue the landing site of low VPF is the specifier of a functional layer FP, located between TP and AspP, rather than [Spec, vP] (Cheng 2007; Bartos 2019), [Spec, IP-internal TopP] (Hsu 2008), or [Spec, AspP] (Gouguet 2006; Lai 2024). Three types of evidence will be provided to support this analysis. **Motivating the movement** Since Mandarin VPF shows genuine A-movement of verbal projections, analyses restricting A-movement to nominals are untenable. We therefore extend Hewett’s (2025) *categorial view*, building on insights from the Insulation (Cable 2010; Safir 2019; Colley 2024) and featural (van Urk 2015) approaches. On this view, the A/A' distinction tracks the featural properties of probes: non-Q features trigger A-movement, while Q triggers A'-movement. Extending Hewett’s proposal, we allow V (in addition to D) to bear a non-Q-feature. Low VPF is thus driven by an Internal-Merge A-feature [$\langle V \langle \rangle$], while high VPF involves an A'-feature [$\langle Q \langle \rangle$], fed by prior low VPF. We further propose that high VPF targets a QP formed by parallel Merge of VP with a topicalizing Q head bearing an External-Merge A-feature [$\bullet V \bullet$], deriving the observed feeding relation.