Southern Min Post-verbal Negation
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1. Introduction
In this paper, we examine the structure of Southern Min (SM) post-verbal negation. Contra Wang (2008), we analyze postverbal negation as an instance of a Serial Verb Construction (SVC), rather than a Resultative Verb Construction (RVC), based on a comparison between the behavior of RVCs and SVCs in SM. In Section 1, we discuss previous analyses of postverbal negation. Section 2 provides an overview of the diagnostics of RVC and SVC constructions in SM. We then apply the diagnostics to bo in Section 3 and argue that SM postverbal negation is an instance of SVC, rather than SVC. Section 4 concludes the paper.

1.1 Background on negation in SM
There are five negative elements in SM: bo, buei, m-1, m-2 and be. Most of these negatives are associated with aspectual or modality properties (see Table 1). For instance, be is associated with modality. Bo and buei are aspectual. M-1 is a volitional negator, while m-2 is a pure negator. Only bo can still behave like a verb, although it is used to mark perfective when it co-occurs with a verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>aspect</th>
<th>modality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bo</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buei</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m-1</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m-2</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The categorial status of negative words in SM (adapted from Yang 2009)

1.2 SM postverbal negation
SM has a phenomenon of so-called postverbal negation. This is shown in (1), where the negative word bo follows the verb che ‘find’. This order is unexpected in a language that lacks V to I movement. Moreover, the V-Neg order in SM is often associated with a different semantics than the more expected Neg-V order. For instance, in (2), where bo precedes the verb (as expected), the sentence cannot be associated with a volitional interpretation, unlike (1). (Examples from Wang 2008.)

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1 We would like to thank the audience at the Arizona Linguistics Circle III, Tucson, 2009 for valuable comments, especially Heidi Harley and Elly van Gelderen, as well as the audience at the LSA, Baltimore, 2010. All errors are our own.
2 Names are arranged alphabetically.
Huang (2003) and Wang (2008) both analyze post-verbal negation as a Resultative Verb Construction (RVC). Yet, their analyses differ slightly. Treating bo as a second verb, Huang analyzes the verb together with bo as an RVC: V₁ + bo(=V₂), whereas Wang’s analysis treats bo as an adjunct to the lower VP (where V₂ is a null ACHIEVE head) (3).

Neither analysis is convincing. Without much explanation, Huang suggests resultative compounding is the underlying structure for postverbal bo sentences. Wang claims that the NegP occupies a position in a subordinate clause, adjunct to the VP of a null ACHIEVE V head. Her analysis is problematic in that not all negatives can occupy this “postverbal” position. If bo can adjoin to the lower VP (with a null head ACHIEVE), the prediction is that any negative should also be able to adjoin to the lower VP. However, this is not borne out by the data: not all negatives can occupy postverbal position. Only bo is grammatical in this construction (4). Instead, the only other negative (be) that can follow V₁ must also be followed by V₂ (5). That is, be requires a supporting V₂ head to follow it.

2. RVC and SVC

The structure in question involves two verbs: V₁ and V₂, which together can be either a SVC or a RVC. How can we decide between these two analyses? To answer this question, we first
provide semantic and syntactic differences between SVC and RVC (Table 2). We then apply the diagnostics to bo in Section 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RVCs</th>
<th>SVCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( V_2 ) is the result of ( V_1 )</td>
<td>( V_2 ) is not the result of ( V_1 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involves an entailment of completion</td>
<td>doesn't involve an entailment of completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( V_2 ) is dependent on ( V_1 )</td>
<td>( V_2 ) is not dependent on ( V_1 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Characteristics of RVCs vs. SVCs (diagnostics from Zhang 1991)

### 2.1 RVCs

In RVCs, \( V_2 \) is always the result of \( V_1 \) (6). Additionally, there is always an entailment of completion associated with RVCs (7).

(6) Li-e jia ba a.

\[ Li-e \text{ eat full assertion} \]

‘Li-e is full.’

(7) #Li-e jai ba a mgo a buei jia ba.

\[ Li-e \text{ eat full assert but yet not yet eat full} \]

Intended: ‘Li-e is full but he’s not finished eating.’

In RVCs, \( V_2 \) is always dependent on \( V_1 \). That is, \( V_2 \) cannot occur on its own (8).

(8) *Li-e ba a.

\[ Li-e \text{ full assert} \]

Intended: ‘Li-e is full.’

### 2.2 SVCs

SVCs behave very differently from RVCs. Firstly, \( V_2 \) is not the result of \( V_1 \). In (9), \( V_2 \) be ‘buy’ is not necessarily a result of khi ‘go’.

(9) Li-e khi be phio.

\[ Li-e \text{ go buy ticket} \]

‘Li-e went to buy a/the ticket.’

Secondly, there is no entailment of completion associated with SVCs (10).

(10) Li-e khi be phio mgo a buei be tioh.

\[ Li-e \text{ go buy ticket but yet not yet buy achieve} \]

‘Li-e went to buy a/the ticket but he hasn’t bought it yet.’

Finally, \( V_2 \) is not dependent on \( V_1 \) in a SVC. That is, \( V_2 \) can occur as a main verb, as with be in (11).

(11) Li-e u be phio.

\[ Li-e \text{ ASP buy ticket} \]

‘L-e bought a/the ticket.’
3. RVC or SVC?
We now turn to the question of which analysis better accounts for postverbal negation. The diagnostics in the previous section can be applied to the postverbal negative bo in SM.

Firstly, postverbal negation is not necessarily a result of V₁. In (12), V₂ bo is not a result of V₁ guong ‘speak’.

(12) Li-e guong bo gui gu uei.
    ‘Li-e didn’t speak much.’

Secondly, postverbal negation is not necessarily a result of V₁. In (13), there is no entailment of completion in V₁ guong ‘speak’.

(13) Li-e guong bo gui gu uei,
    mgo a buei guong sua.
    ‘Li-e didn’t speak much, but he wasn’t finished speaking.’

Finally, the negation in postverbal negation can act as a main verb, as in (14), indicating that bo is not dependent on V₁.

(14) Li-e bo thaoloo.
    ‘Li-e doesn’t have a job.’

We therefore argue that postverbal negation is an instance of an SVC, rather than of an RVC.

4. Conclusion
SM has so-called “postverbal” negation, which is rare in Chinese languages. One previous analysis suggests that NegP occupies an adjoined position in a small clause, which has a null AHCIEVE V head (Wang 2008). Wang follows Huang’s (2003) suggestion that bo is part of an RVC. However, this cannot be correct. Postverbal bo patterns with SVCs in SM, not with RVCs. We argue that (15) is a better analysis for the phenomenon of postverbal negation.

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{IP} \\
| \text{DP} \\
| \text{Li-e} \\
| \text{V} \\
| \text{VP} \\
| \text{thaoloo} \\
| \text{bo} \\
| \text{che} \\
| \text{V} \\
| \text{VP} \\
\end{array}
\]

Selected bibliography