

Pseudogapping(-like construction)

Pseudogapping (PG) refers to a verb gap construction where the inflectional domain remains intact (Sag 1976):

- (1) Mary hasn't **dated** Bill, but she has Δ Harry. (Jayaseelan 1990: 12)

English PG is typically derived by moving the remnant (**Move-R**) plus VP ellipsis (**VPE**) (Sag 1976, Levin 1978, Jayaseelan 1990, Lasnik 1999):

- (2) Mary hasn't **dated** Bill, but she has Harry_i [**dated** t_i].

Chinese has constructions resembling PG:

- (3) a. Zhangsan yinggai **chi** san ge pingguo. *Mandarin*
Zhangsan should eat three CLF apple
Lisi yinggai Δ si ge (pingguo).
Lisi should four CLF apple
'Zhangsan should **eat** three apples.
Lisi should [**eat**] four (apples).' (cf. Wei 2008: 82)
- b. Zoengsaam jinggoi **sik** saam go pinggwō. *Cantonese*
Zoengsaam should eat three CLF apple
Leisei jinggoi Δ sei go (pinggwō).
Leisei should four CLF apple
'Zoengsaam should **eat** three apples.
Leisei should [**eat**] four (apples).'

- We argue that (1) and (3) result from **different derivations**.
- Chinese PG-like construction is derived by a **phonologically null pair-list copula** (following the spirits in Tang 2001 and Lin & Li 2026).

Undergeneration

Verbs with the resultative suffix *-de* (or *-dak*) can be deleted:

- (4) (Zhe zhi wu,) *Mandarin*
this CLF dance
Zhangsan yinggai **tiao-de** hen haokan,
Zhangsan should dance-RES very beautiful
danshi Lisi yinggai Δ hen nankan.
but Lisi should very ugly
'(This dance,) Zhangsan should **dance** very beautifully,
but Lisi should [**dance**] in a very ugly manner.'

- 'Ugly' is interpreted as describing **the event of dancing** instead of the subject as a person.
- This suggests a **true PG-like construction** rather than a simple subject and predicate combination.
- In a movement plus deletion analysis, the second clause would be derived by **moving the resultative complement** and eliding the VP.
- Yet, when the verb is not deleted, we observe the **immobility** of the resultative complement to a preverbal position (5).

- (5) *Zhangsan yinggai [hen haokan]_i tiao-de t_i. *Mandarin*
Zhangsan should very beautiful dance-RES
Intended: 'Zhangsan should dance very beautifully.'

A movement plus deletion analysis therefore undergenerates.

Overgeneration

ADJUNCT EXCLUSION

English VPE and PG omit adjuncts:

- (6) a. Mary hasn't **secretly dated** Bill, but Sue has [**secretly dated** Bill],
#though not secretly.
b. Mary hasn't **secretly dated** Bill, but she has [**secretly dated**] Ben,
#though not secretly. (Jayaseelan 1990: 64, adapted)

This property is shared by Chinese VPE:

- (7) Zhangsan yinggai **manman chi** san ge pingguo,
Zhangsan should slowly eat three CLF apple
danshi Lisi_i bu yinggai Δ . (Ta_i yinggai kuai yi dian.)
but Lisi not should 3SG should fast one bit
'Zhangsan should **slowly eat three apples**,
but Lisi_i shouldn't [**slowly eat three apples**]. (He_i should eat faster.)'

However, it is not shared by Chinese PG-like construction:

- (8) Zhangsan yinggai **manman chi** san ge pingguo,
Zhangsan should slowly eat three CLF apple
danshi Lisi_i bu yinggai Δ san ge.
but Lisi not should three CLF
(#Ta_i yinggai kuai yi dian.)
3SG should fast one bit
'Zhangsan should **slowly eat** three apples,
but Lisi_i should not [(*)**slowly eat**] three. (#He_i should eat faster.)'

LACK OF FULL CONTRASTIVENESS

English PG requires a full contrast conveyed by the remnant:

- (9) a. John should eat three apples, but Mary shouldn't Δ four oranges.
b. # John should eat three apples, but Mary shouldn't Δ four apples.
c. * John should eat three apples, but Mary shouldn't Δ three apples.

As in (8), this contrast is not required in Chinese.

LICENSING HEADS

The diagnostic in (6–7) gives us the following VPE-licensing heads in Chinese (Lee & Pan 2024):

	Raising modal	Preverbal aspect	Control verb
VPE	✓	✓	✓
Move-R	✓	✗	✓
PG-like construction	✓	✗	✗

Table 1. Chinese VPE-licensing heads

- Among Chinese VPE-licensing heads, **only raising modals** license PG-like constructions.
- In a movement plus deletion analysis, this is not surprising for **preverbal aspects**, which disallow Move-R.
- However, it *is* surprising for **control verbs**, which *do* allow Move-R.

A movement plus deletion analysis therefore overgenerates.

Phonologically null pair-list copula

RAISING-CONTROL CONTRAST

- A phonologically null copula naturally captures the observations summarized in table 1, with PG-like examples repeated in (10).
- Raising modals contrast with control verbs and preverbal aspects in whether they can be immediately followed by a copula (11).

- (10) *PG-like construction: ✓ Raising modal but ✗ control verb*
a. See (3a) for *yinggai* 'should' allowing PG-like construction.
b. Zhangsan neng/xiang/you **chi** san ge pingguo.
Zhangsan can want PFV eat three CLF apple
(*Lisi neng/xiang/you Δ si ge (pingguo).)
Lisi can want PFV four CLF apple
'Zhangsan can **eat**/wants to **eat/ate** three apples.
(*Lisi can/wants to/did [**eat**] four (apples).)

- (11) *Copula: Also ✓ raising modal but ✗ control verb*
a. Zhangsan yinggai shi (chi) san ge pingguo.
Zhangsan should COP eat three CLF apple
'Zhangsan should eat three apples.'
b. *Zhangsan neng/xiang/you shi (chi) san ge pingguo.
Zhangsan can want PFV COP eat three CLF apple
Intended: 'Zhangsan can eat/wants to eat/ate three apples.'

PAIR-LIST COPULA

We suggest a connection with Lin & Li's (2026) pair-list copula:

- (12) a. Na ge laoshi jiao na men ke?
which CLF teacher teach which CLF class
'Which teacher teaches which class?'
b. Zhang laoshi shi Yingwen. Li laoshi shi shuxue.
Zhang teacher COP English Li teacher COP math
'Teacher Zhang teaches English. Teacher Li teaches Math.'
(Lin & Li 2026: 10–11)

Concluding remarks

- Chinese PG-like constructions $\neq$ English PG.
- Instead, Chinese PG-like constructions are derived by phonologically null pair-list copulae.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SELECTED REFERENCES

We thank Athulya Aravind, Mark Baker, Veneeta Dayal, Susan Fischer, Matthew Hewett, Daniel Hole, Jasper Jian, Kyle Johnson, Richard Luo, Sreekar Raghotham Matam, Daniel Plesniak, Aidan Sharma, Squid Tamar-Mattis, Sze-Wing Tang, Ronnie Wilbur, Alexander Wimmer, Jim Wood, Danutham North Worapipat, Ka-Fai Yip, and Raffaella Zanuttini for discussion and feedback. All errors are our own.

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