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## Creative economy – toward a theory of passive construction innovations in Chinese

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Zipf (1949) proposed the principle of Least Effort as a general prognosis of human behavior including verbal behavior. In linguistics, the effect of this principle, more commonly known as the principle of economy, has been widely observed, both in synchrony (e.g., Altman 1985; Horn 1984; Grice 1989; Sperber & Wilson 1995; Prince & Smolensky 2004, *inter alias*) and in diachrony (Hopper & Traugott 2003; van Gelderen 2004; 2021) and has led to renewed theoretical interests (e.g., Xiang 2017). Recent studies have argued for the effect of economy on linguistic creativity and innovation (Axel 2009), raising interesting questions regarding the relationship and interaction between economy and creativity. However, existing research that engages with such questions mostly draws on data from European languages. On the other hand, recent research on the development of new construction types from the Chinese canonical *bei*-passive construction has showed syntactic innovations in special discourse contexts lead to categorial expansion of the canonical lexical class of transitive VP to intransitive VP and NP as part of the innovative constructions. This kind of change allows creative construal of novel stances and the conventionalization of innovative constructional subtypes (Wang 2011; Xiao 2016; Peng 2017). While this linguistic innovation has been analyzed from the perspective of pragmatics and cognitive construction grammar, little has been said about the mechanisms underlying the categorial expansions key to the linguistic innovation and pragmatic creativity. It is the goal of this presentation to propose the principle of Creative Economy to account for the linguistic innovation in the *bai*-construction. Drawing on corpus data, I show that the creative type-shift that occurs when the VP slot violates the transitivity constraint by admitting intransitive verbs and nominal structures in adapting to emerging communicative needs is best account for by economy. Creative economy gives rise to new routines for communication, which become conventionalized in the linguistic system. This study has both theoretical and empirical implications for language change and its underlying mechanisms.

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