A Degree Operator *Yiyang* ‘same’ in Chinese

This paper discusses the syntax and semantics of *yiyang* ‘same’ in Chinese. Syntactically, we argue that there are two *yiyangs* in the following constructions. One is a full-fledge predicate in “X *he ’and’ Y yiyang,” and the other is a degree operator in “X *he ’and’ Y yiyang ADJ,” as in (1)-(2).

(1) [NPZhangsan] [de xingqu ] [he] [Lisi] yiyang.
Zhangsan’s interest and Lisi same
‘Zhangsan’s interest is the same as Lisi’s.’

(2) [Zhangsan [he] [Lisi]] yiyang gao.
Zhangsan and Lisi same tall
‘Zhangsan is as tall as Lisi.’

Specifically, *he ’and’ and yiyang ’same’* as a discontinuous constituent function as a degree operator; introduce the standard of comparison Y. This can be supported by the ellipsis construction in (4). Namely, *yiyang in the second conjunct implies the standard of comparison this flower.*

(3) Zhe-duo-hua hen hong, na-duo-hua ye hen hong.
This-CL-flower very red that-CL-flower also very red
‘This flower is very red, and that flower is also very red.’

(4) Zhe-duo-hua hen hong, na-duo-hua ye yiyang.
This-CL-flower very red that-CL-flower also same
‘This flower is very red, and that flower is the same.’

Empirically, *he Y* is a constituent, as evidenced by the tests of movement, coordination and insertion, as in (5)-(9).

(5) Meiguihua [he baihehua] yiyang xiang.
Roses and Lilies same fragrant
‘Roses are as fragrant as Lilies.’

(6) [He baihehua] [bi] meiguihua yiyang hen xiang. (movement)
With Lilies compare roses same very fragrant
‘Comparing with Lilies, roses are also very fragrant.’

(7) Zhangsan [he Lisi] yiyang gao.
Zhangsan and Lisi same tall
‘Zhangsan is as tall as Lisi.’

(8) Zhangsan [he Lisi] yiyang gao, [he Wangwu] yiyang pan. (coordination)
Zhangsan and Lisi same tall and Wangwu same fat
‘Zhangsan is as tall as Lisi, and as fat as Wangwu.’

(9) *Zhangsan [he jihu Lisi] yiyang gao. (failure of insertion)
    Zhangsan [and almost Lisi] same tall

This parallels to the case that bi ‘than’ and Y in “X bi ‘than’ Y ADJ” comparatives, as in (10).

(10) Zhangsan [bi Lisi] gao.
    'Zhangsan is taller than Lisi.'

That is, yiyang as a degree operator has the theoretical implication that the analysis of degree operator is applicable in comparatives as well as equatives in Chinese (cf. Heim (1985)).

Semantically, yiyang though means the same, somehow different, supporting the device of “Pragmatic Halos” presented in Lasersohn (1999). This is further substantiated by the comparison with another synonym xiangtong ‘same’ in Chinese.

(11) Zhe-ke yintao he pinguo yiyang.
    This-CL cherry and apple same
    ‘This cherry is the same as apples.’ (with the same size)

(12) *Zhe-ke yintao he pinguo xiangtong.
    This-CL cherry and apple same

Simply put, reasonable amount of deviation in the meaning of yiyang is wider than that of xiangtong.

Reference
Heim, Irene (1985) “Notes on comparatives and related matters” Austin: University of Texas, Ms.