

## Possessor Extraction in Mandarin Chinese

There is a long-standing puzzle concerning the asymmetrical behavior of subjects and objects in Mandarin Chinese: a possessor within a subject argument can be extracted (1a), while extracting a possessor within an object is marginal (1b). The purpose of this paper is to argue that in Chinese, the genitive possessor should be distinguished from possessive APs and that possessor extraction is allowed in Chinese.

My point of departure is Bošković's (2005, 2007) generalization that adjunct extraction is not allowed in DP languages such as English (2a). We find that Chinese behaves in the same way: (2b) and (2c) show that an adjective can never be extracted in Chinese. Following the DP analysis and the view of *de*-phrases as ModifierPhrases (see Tang (2005), Hsieh (2005) and Paul (2005)), I argue that possessor-*de* phrases are not genitive possessors, but rather are possessive APs. We can see that SpecNP cannot license genitive possessor (3a), but only SpecDP can (3b). However, both NP and DP can be modified by possessive APs, as in (4) (see also Hsieh (2005)). Along this line of analysis, when the possessor is realized as part of a modifier phrase, the sequence of the possessor-*de* is an AP, and thus extraction is banned, as shown in (5). I adopt Bošković's (2005) suggestion that a language which has DP yet allows possessor extraction, like Hungarian (6), does so because the whole possessor phrase is located in SpecDP in such a language. I claim that the possessor in Chinese is located in SpecDP as a whole, not forming a constituent with its possessee, and thus can be extracted (e.g., (1a)), as opposed to English (e.g., (7)). Moreover, the contrast between (1a) and (5) shows that possessive phrases can be realized by different syntactic means in Chinese, e.g., by possessive APs and by possessor arguments (see also Tasseva-Kurkchieva (2005)).

The study next focuses on the seeming discrepancy between extraction from within subject and object arguments. Unlike extraction of subject possessors, extracting the possessor from objects is sometimes acceptable (8), and sometimes only acceptable in certain contexts; cf. (9a) vs. (9b). It is demonstrated that the object possessor in (9) undergoes topicalization to the sentence-initial position. I claim that (9a) contrasts with (9b) in acceptability because the focus reading of the possessee is difficult to construct in (9a). Assuming Krifka (2007), I suggest that kinship terms, *as such*, are weak in constructing the concept of "a list of alternatives." Thus, sentences like (9a) are generally not acceptable, although they always have their acceptability improved with contrastive components, as in (9b). I then show that subject possessors can be extracted by either A- or A'-movement, whereas object possessors can only be extracted *via* A'-movement. And thus, this phenomenon is sensitive to island effects. For example, possessor cannot be extracted from complex NPs (10).

If the preceding discussion is on the right track, the difference between DP and NP given in Bošković (2007) is supported by the Chinese data: that adjunct extraction is strictly banned and no scrambling phenomena are attested in languages with DPs. The difference between English and Chinese in possessor extraction suggests that Bošković's (2005) observation about English and Hungarian is correct and Chinese behaves on a par with the latter type of language.

### Examples

- (1) a. Zhangsan<sub>i</sub>      xianran    [t<sub>i</sub>    shoubi]    hen.chang  
       Zhangsan      obviously    arm        very.long  
       'Zhangsan obviously has very long arms.'
- b. ?\*Zhangsan<sub>i</sub>    wo    renshi    [t<sub>i</sub>    baba ]  
       Zhangsan<sub>i</sub>    I      know        father  
       'Zhangsan, I know [his] father.'
- (2) a. \*Beautiful<sub>i</sub>, he saw [t<sub>i</sub> house].
- b. \*piaoliang<sub>i</sub>    ta    kanjian.le [t<sub>i</sub>    fangzi ]  
       beautiful    he    see.PERF        house
- c. \*ruanruo(.de)<sub>i</sub>    xianran      t<sub>i</sub>    Zhangsan    hen.shaojian  
       feeble(.DE)    obviously      Zhangsan    very.rare  
       'Obviously, it's rare to see ZS being so feeble.'

- (3) ‘those three books of Zhangsan’  
 a. \*[<sub>DP</sub> na.san.ben [<sub>NP</sub> Zhangsan [<sub>N’</sub> shu]]] b. [<sub>DP</sub> Zhangsan [<sub>D’</sub> na.san.ben][<sub>NP</sub> shu]]  
 that.3.CL Zhangsan book Zhangsan that.3.CL book
- (4) ‘those three books of Zhangsan’  
 a. [<sub>DP</sub> na.san.ben [<sub>NP</sub> Zhangsan.de [<sub>NP</sub> shu]]] b. [<sub>DP</sub> Zhangsan.de [<sub>DP</sub> na.san.ben] [<sub>NP</sub> shu ]]  
 that.3.CL Zhangsan.DE book Zhangsan.DE that.3.CL book
- (5) a. \*Zhangsan.de<sub>i</sub> xianran [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> shoubi] hen.chang (cf. (1a))  
 Zhangsan’s obviously arm very.long  
 ‘Obviously, Zhangsan’s arms are very long.’  
 b. \*Zhangsan.de<sub>i</sub> si.le [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> baba] (cf. “Zhangsan si.le baba” is grammatical.)  
 Zhangsan DE die.PERF father  
 ‘Lit: Zhangsan died [his] father.’
- (6) [Péter-nek]<sub>i</sub> cask Mari láтта [ a <sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> kalap-ja –t ] (Szabolcsi (1994))  
 Peter-DAT only Mari-NOM saw the hat-POSS.3SG-ACC  
 ‘Peter, only Mari saw [his] hat.’
- (7) \*John’s obviously arms are very long.  
 ‘Obviously, John’s arms are very long.’
- (8) na.zhi tuzi<sub>i</sub> wo mingming kanjian.le [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> erduo] (zemo xianzai bujian le!)  
 that.CL rabbit I obviously see.PERF ear  
 ‘It is true of that rabbit that I saw its ears! (Why can’t I see the rabbit now?)’
- (9) a. ?\*Zhangsan<sub>i</sub> wo renshi [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> BABA]  
 Zhangsan I know father  
 ‘Zhangsan, obviously I know [his] father.’  
 b. Zhangsan<sub>i</sub> wo renshi [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> BABA], bu renshi [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> mama]  
 Zhangsan I know father not know mother  
 ‘Zhangsan, I know [his] father, but don’t know [his] mother.’
- (10) a. ?\*Zhangsan<sub>i</sub> xianran [[<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> baba] xie de shu] dou bai.de hen hao  
 Zhangsan obviously father write DE book all sell.DE very good  
 ‘Zhangsan, obviously, books that [his] father wrote all sell very well.’  
 b. \*Zhangsan<sub>i</sub> wo nian.le [bu shao [<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub> baba] xie de shu]  
 Zhangsan I read.PERF not few father write DE book  
 ‘Zhangsan, I have read quite a few books that [his] father wrote.’

### Selected references

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