definiteness in Chinese nominals

Lingzi Zhuang

`lingzi-zhuang.github.io/site/`
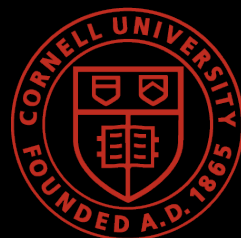
Cornell University

"which , which ?"

(Cheng & Sybesma 1999)

definiteness in Chinese nominals

definiteness in Chinese nominals

a demo class for

LIN475 *Chinese linguistics: a survey course*

LIN475 Chinese linguistics: a survey course

foundational knowledge: general linguistics

working knowledge: core linguistic topics on Chinese

core linguistic topics

sounds   grammar   society

core linguistic topics

sounds   grammar   society

core linguistic topics

sounds   grammar   society

▸ phonological features

▸ case studies

▸ sound change & history of Chinese

core linguistic topics

sounds   grammar   society

& historical linguistics

- ▸ nominal domain
- ▸ verbal domain
- ▸ clausal & sentential domain

core linguistic topics

sounds   grammar   society

& historical linguistics

▸ nominal domain

   definiteness, classifiers

▸ verbal domain

   argument structure (*gěi-tā mǎi* vs. *mǎi-gěi tā*), aspect (*le*)

▸ clausal & sentential domain

   topic, focus (*shì...de*), sentence types/moods (*ba, ma, ne*)

core linguistic topics

sounds

grammar

society

& historical linguistics

‣ dialects vs. standard

‣ minority languages

...ing & learning

definiteness

the

(definite article)

the

(definite determiner)

#1 frequent word

the (definite article)

encodes/marks

definiteness
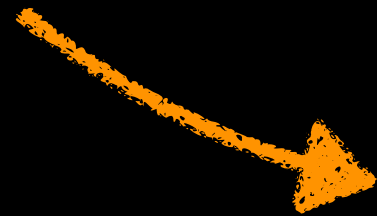
? how do languages like Chinese encode definiteness?

? what is definiteness, anyway?

a group of us was walking towards the UTM bus stop yesterday.

we see our friend Nisa and her dog Skye.

let's go play with the puppy!

a group of us was walking towards the UTM bus stop yesterday.

we see our friend Nisa and her dog Skye.

English

let's go play with the puppy!

Mandarin

wǒmen	qù	gēn			gǒu	wán	ba!
我們	去	跟			狗	玩	吧！
1PL	go	with			dog	play	HORT

wǒmen	qù	gēn	nà	zhī	gǒu	wán	ba!
我們	去	跟	那	隻	狗	玩	吧！
1PL	go	with	that	CL	dog	play	HORT

a group of us was walking towards the UTM bus stop yesterday.

we see our friend Nisa and her dog Skye.

bare nominal

English

Mandarin

let's go play with the puppy!

wǒmen	qù	gēn	gǒu	wán	ba!
我們	去	跟	狗	玩	吧！
1PL	go	with	dog	play	HORT

wǒmen	qù	gēn	nà	zhī	gǒu	wán	ba!
我們	去	跟	那	隻	狗	玩	吧！
1PL	go	with	that	CL	dog	play	HORT

a group of us was walking towards the UTM bus stop yesterday.

we see our friend Nisa and her dog Skye.

English

Mandarin

let's go play with the puppy!

wǒmen	qù	gēn			gǒu	wán	ba!
我們	去	跟			狗	玩	吧！
1PL	go	with			dog	play	HORT

wǒmen	qù	gēn	nà	zhī	gǒu	wán	ba!
我們	去	跟	那	隻	狗	玩	吧！
1PL	go	with	that	CL	dog	play	HORT

demonstrative

a group of us was walking towards the UTM bus stop yesterday.

we see our friend Nisa and her dog Skye.

English

Mandarin

let's go play with the puppy!

wǒmen	qù	gēn			gǒu	wán	ba!
我們	去	跟			狗	玩	吧！
1PL	go	with			dog	play	HORT

wǒmen	qù	gēn	nà	zhī	gǒu	wán	ba!
我們	去	跟	那	隻	狗	玩	吧！
1PL	go	with	that	CL	dog	play	HORT

classifier (next class!)

definite structures

English	Mandarin
the + nominal	bare nominal
	DEM-CL-N

definite structures
can be many.

English	Mandarin
the + nominal	bare nominal
	DEM-CL-N

the BBC interviewed
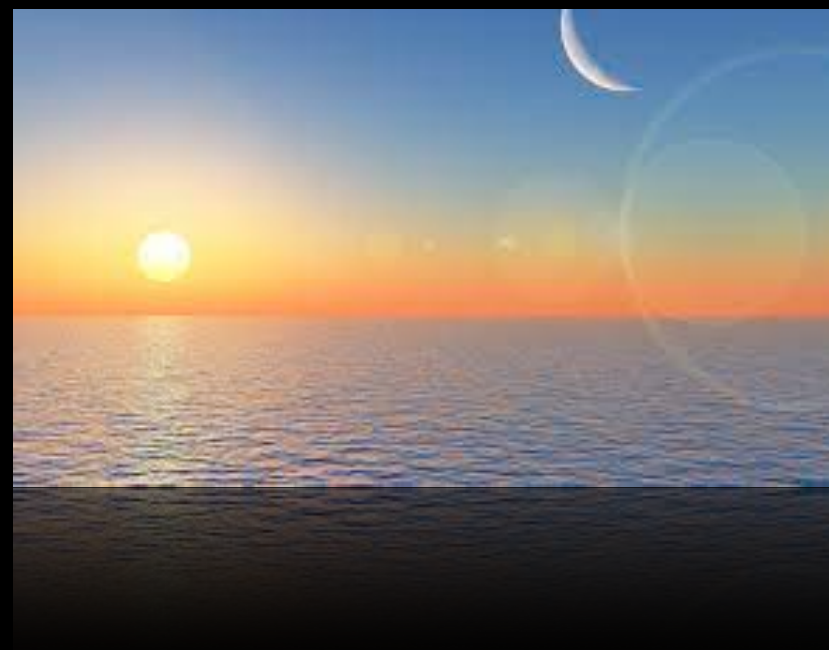the Queen.

the sun

the moon

is setting;

is rising.

English

the BBC interviewed
the Queen.

the sun   is setting;

the moon   is rising.
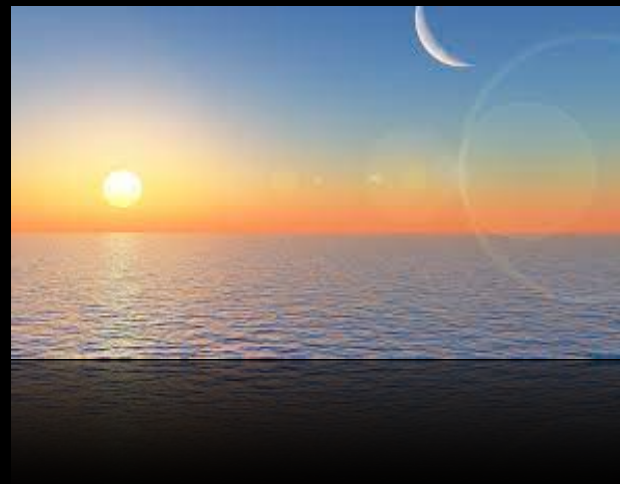
English

the BBC interviewed
the Queen.

the sun   is setting;

the moon   is rising.

Mandarin

BBC căifăng   nŭwáng   le.
採訪   女王   了。
interview   queen   LE₂

tàiyang yào luòshān le,
太陽   要   落山   了，
sun   FUT   set   LE₂

yuèliang   shēngqĭlái   le.
月亮   升起來   了。
moon   rise.up   LE₂

English

Mandarin

the BBC interviewed
the Queen.

BBC căifăng #nà gè nǚwáng le.
採訪 那 個 女王 了。
interview that CL queen LE₂

the sun   is setting;

the moon   is rising.

#nà gè tàiyang yào luòshān le,
那 個 太陽 要 落山 了，
that CL sun FUT set LE₂

#nà gè yuèliang shēngqǐlái le.
那 個 月亮 升起來 了。
that CL moon rise.up LE₂

definite structures

English	Mandarin
the + nominal	bare nominal
	DEM-CL-N

definite structures
are not semantically equivalent.

English

Mandarin

the + nominal

bare nominal

≠

DEM-CL-N

definite structures
are not semantically equivalent.

		sunset	dog
Mandarin	bare nominal	✓	✓
	DEM-CL-N	#	✓
English	*the* + nominal	✓	✓

what is definiteness

(part 1!)

what do these have in common?

the Queen

the dog

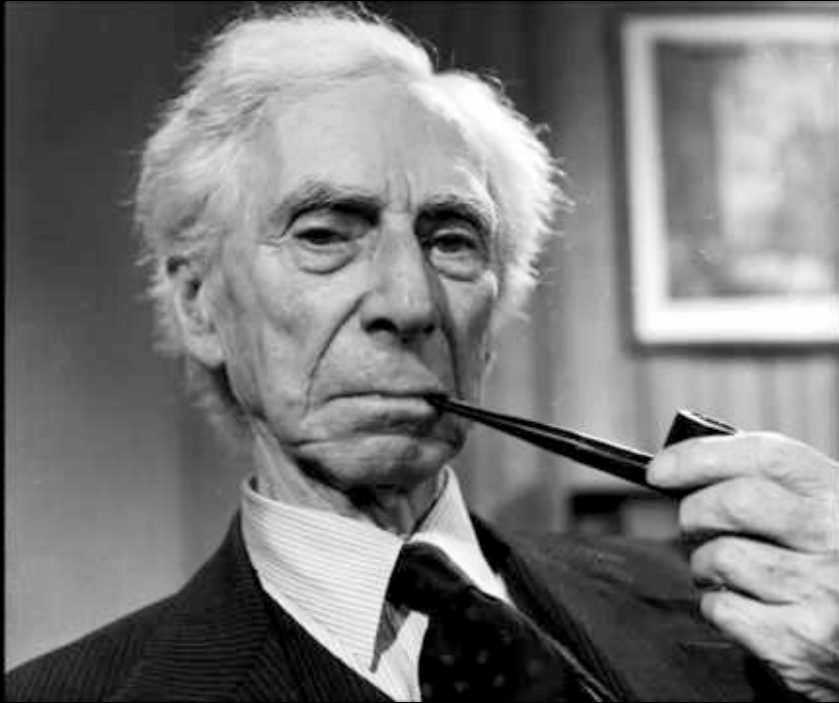the sun   the moon

uniqueness

a single

one and only one

uniquely identifiable

referent

refers to/
picks out

the sun

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

<u>uniqueness</u>

the sun =

there is exactly one which is a sun

the Queen   the dog   the sun   the moon

uniqueness

(Russell 1905, Hawkins 1978, Lewis 1979, Kadmon 1990, Roberts 1993, a.m.o.)

nǔwáng

女王

queen

tàiyang/yuèliang

太陽　　　月亮

sun　　　moon

uniqueness?

gǒu/　　　nà　zhī gǒu
狗　　　那　隻　狗

dog　　　that　CL　dog
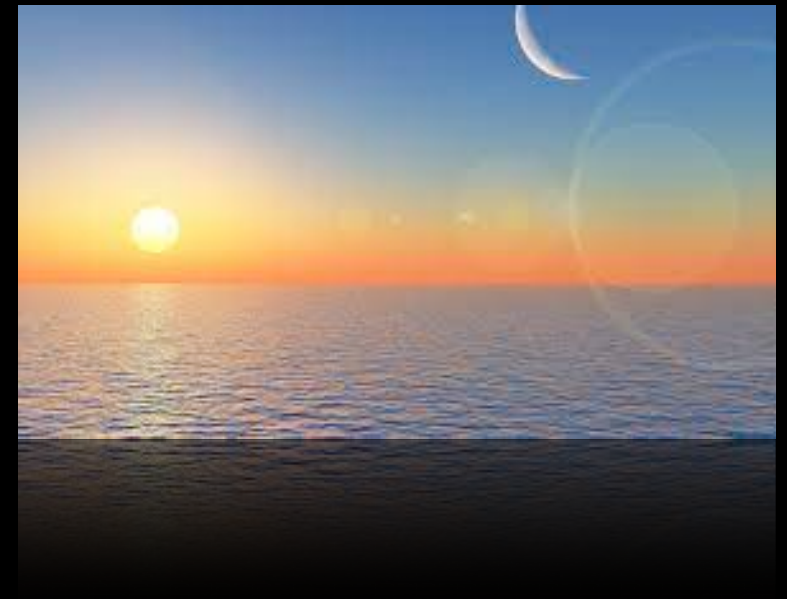
uniqueness is established with respect to a situation.

▸ not overtly mentioned

▸ but supplied by the context of discourse, and understood by all participants

(Hawkins 1978, Schwarz 2009 a.o.)

larger-situation

uniqueness

vs.

immediate-situation

uniqueness

(Hawkins 1978, Schwarz 2009 a.o.)
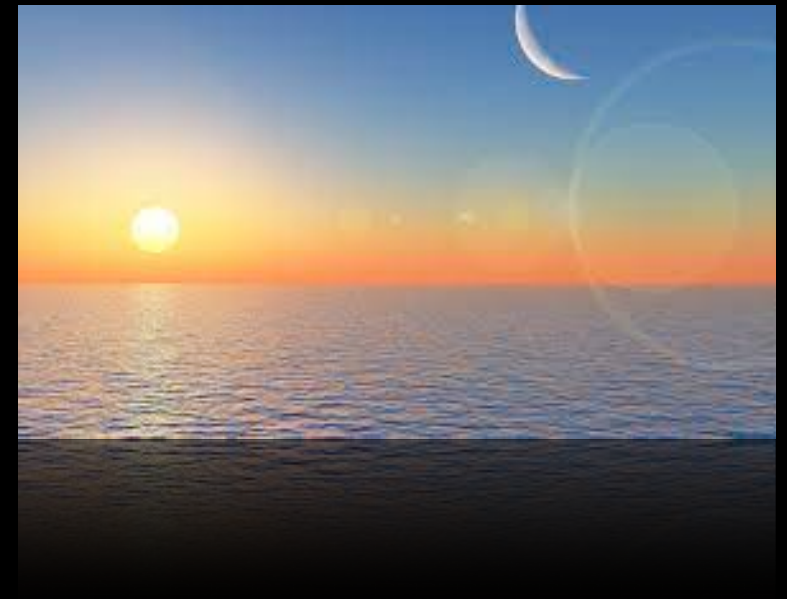
larger situations

the commonwealth

the world

larger-situation uniqueness

unique!

✓the   Queen

s=the.commonwealth
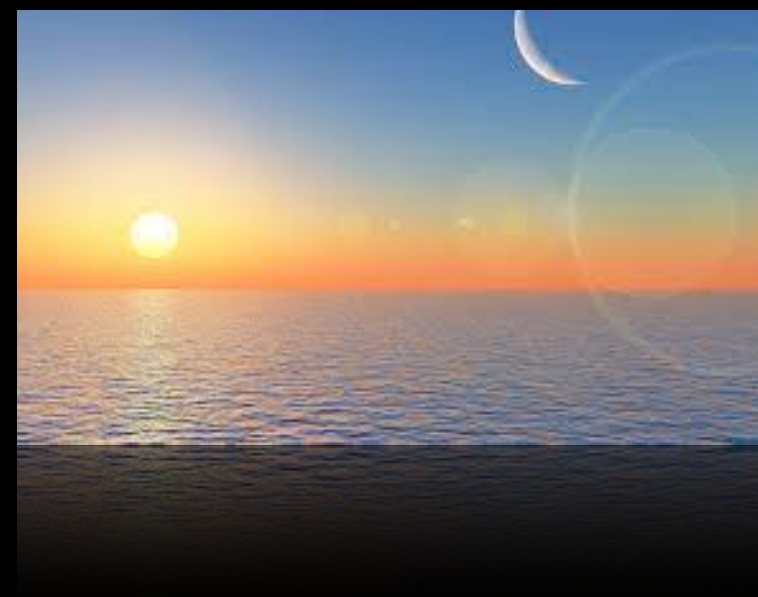
unique!

✓the   sun/moon

s=the.world

immediate-situation uniqueness

✓the   dog

s=UTM.bus.stop, feb. 10, 4-4:10pm

unique!

Mandarin DEM-CL-N is incompatible with larger situations.

Mandarin DEM-CL-N is incompatible with larger situations.

\# **nà** **gè**
那 個
that CL

s=the commonwealth

nǚwáng
女王
queen

\# **nà** **gè**
那 個
that CL

s=the world

tàiyang/ yuèliang
太陽/ 月亮
sun moon

Mandarin DEM-CL-N is compatible with immediate situations.

√nà   zhī   gǒu
那   隻   **S**=UTM.bus.stop, feb. 10, 4-4:10pm   狗
that   CL   dog

uniqueness definiteness
interim summary

▸ uniqueness is established with respect to a contextually-supplied situation.

▸ two sub-types of uniqueness situations: larger vs. immediate

  ▸ not distinctly encoded in English, but distinctly encoded in Mandarin.

		larger-situation	immediate-situation
Mandarin	bare nominal	✓	✓
	DEM-CL-N	#	✓
English	*the* + nominal	✓	✓

another type of definiteness

(what is definiteness, part 2)

over Zoom, a UTM representative describes the area around UTM's campus to Lingzi:

… oh yeah, we've got a beautiful park and a trail across the river.

the park is called Erindale park, and the trail is called Culham trail…

Over Zoom, a UTM representative describes the area around UTM's campus to Lingzi:

$^{\#}$the park is called Erindale park, and$^{\#}$the trail is called Culham trail…

… oh yeah, we've got a beautiful park and a trail across the river. the park is called Erindale park, and the trail is called Culham trail…

this type of definiteness

- no mutually understood situation needed

- prior mention required

uniqueness definiteness

- mutually understood uniqueness situation required

- no prior mention needed

anaphoric definiteness

‣ a distinct type from uniqueness definiteness

      ‣ no mutually understood situation needed

      ‣ prior mention required

(Strawson 1964, Christopherson 1939, Heim 1983, Green 1989, a.o.)

anaphoric definiteness

▸ referring back to a previously mentioned referent

▸ indefinites: introduce new referents to the discourse

… oh yeah, we've got a beautiful park and a trail across the river.

the park is called Erindale park, and the trail is called Culham trail…

how is anaphoric definiteness encoded?

‣ some languages encode uniqueness and anaphoric definiteness with the same structure.

		uniqueness		anaphoric
		larger-situation	immediate-situation	
English	*the* + nominal	✓	✓	✓

how is anaphoric definiteness encoded?

‣ some languages encode uniqueness and anaphoric definiteness with different and dedicated structures.

‣ German weak vs. strong articles (Schwarz 2009)

Weak article: uniqueness definiteness only

Der	Empfang	wurde	vo-m	Bürgermeister	eröffnet.
the	reception	was	by-the_weak	mayor	opened

von dem

by the_strong

'The reception was opened by the mayor. '

(Schwarz 2009:ex. 42)

how is anaphoric definiteness encoded?

‣ some languages encode uniqueness and anaphoric definiteness with different and dedicated structures.

   ‣ German weak vs. strong articles (Schwarz 2009)

Strong article: anaphoric definiteness only

Hans	hat	einen Schriftsteller	und	einen Politiker	interviewt.
	has	a writer	and	a politician	interviewed

'Hans interviewed a writer and a politician.'

Er	hat	von	dem	Politiker	keine	interessanten	Antworten	bekommen.
he	has	from	the_strong	politician	no	interesting	answers	gotten

     # vo-m

       by-the_weak

'He didn't get any interesting answers from the politician.'

(Schwarz 2009:ex.23)

how is anaphoric definiteness encoded?

▸ some languages encode uniqueness and anaphoric definiteness with different and dedicated structures.

    ▸ German weak vs. strong articles (Schwarz 2009)

    ▸ Akan (Arkoh & Matthewson 2013), Mauritian Creole (Wespel 2018), Bangla (Biswas 2012) Lakhota, Hausa … (see Schwarz 2013)

		uniqueness		anaphoric
		larger-situation	immediate-situation	
German	weak article	✓	✓	#
	strong article	#	#	✓

how is anaphoric definiteness encoded in Mandarin?

		uniqueness		anaphoric
		larger-situation	immediate-situation	
Mandarin	bare nominals	✓	✓	**?**
	DEM-CL-N	#	✓	

how is anaphoric definiteness encoded in Mandarin?

▸ data given in google doc

▸ discuss & summarize the pattern in Mandarin

		uniqueness		anaphoric
		larger-situation	immediate-situation	
Mandarin	bare nominals	✓	✓	?
	DEM-CL-N	#	✓	

zuótiān	*wǒmen*	*zài*	*xiàoyuán*	*lǐ*	*kànjiàn-le*	*yì*	*zhī*	*gǒu.*
昨天	我們		在校園裡		看見了	一	隻	狗。
yesterday	we		on campus		saw	one	CL	dog

'Yesterday we saw a dog on campus.'

✓	*gǒu*	*hǎoxiàng*	*hěn*	*è.*
	狗	好像	很	餓。
	dog	apparently	very	hungry

'The dog was apparently very hungry.'

zuótiān	*wǒmen*	*zài*	*xiàoyuán lǐ*	*kànjiàn-le*	*yì*	*zhī*	*gǒu.*
昨天	我們		在校園裡	看見了	一	隻	狗。
yesterday	we		on campus	saw	one	CL	dog

'Yesterday we saw a dog on campus.'

✓

wǒmen	*wèi*	*gǒu*	*mǎi-le*	*yí*	*kuài*	*ròu.*
我們	為	狗	買了	一	塊	肉。
we	for	dog	fed	one	CL	meat

'We fed the dog a piece of meat.'

zuótiān *wǒmen* *zài* *xiàoyuán* *lǐ* *kànjiàn-le* *yì* *zhī* *gǒu.*

昨天　　我們　　　在校園裡　　　看見了　　一　隻　狗。

yesterday　　we　　　on campus　　　saw　　one　CL　dog

'Yesterday we saw a dog on campus.'

✓　　*wǒmen*　*bǎ*　*gǒu*　*dài-huí*　*jiā*　*le.*

我們　把　狗　帶回　家　了。

we　OBJ　dog　bring-back　home　LE$_2$

'We brought the dog back home.'

zuótiān wǒmen zài xiàoyuán lǐ kànjiàn-le   yì   zhī gǒu.

昨天   我們   在校園裡   看見了   一   隻   狗。
yesterday we   on campus   saw   one   CL   dog

'Yesterday we saw a dog on campus.'

\#   wǒmen   hěn   xǐhuān   gǒu

我們   很   喜歡   狗。
we   very   like   dog

'We liked the dog a lot.'

pre-verbal bare nominals   vs.   post-verbal bare nominals

✓ *gǒu*   *hǎoxiàng* *hěn*   *è.*   # *wǒmen*   *hěn*   *xǐhuān*   *gǒu*

狗   好像   很   餓。   我們   很   喜歡   狗。

dog   apparently very   hungry   we   very   like   dog

'The dog was apparently very hungry.'   'We liked the dog a lot.'

pre-verbal bare nominals vs. post-verbal bare nominals

can be anaphoric definites freely are not always free to be anaphoric definites

✓ *gǒu* *hǎoxiàng* *hěn* *è.*

狗 好像 很 餓。

dog apparently very hungry

'The dog was apparently very hungry.'

\# *wǒmen* *hěn* *xǐhuān* *gǒu*

我們 很 喜歡 狗。

we very like dog

'We liked the dog a lot.'

pre-verbal bare nominals   vs.   post-verbal bare nominals

can be anaphoric definites freely   are not always free to be anaphoric definites

✓ *gǒu*   *hǎoxiàng* *hěn*   *è.*   ✓ *wǒmen*   *mō-le*   *gǒu*

狗   好像   很   餓。   我們   摸了   狗。

dog   apparently   very   hungry   we   petted   dog

'The dog was apparently very hungry.'   'We petted the dog.'

pre-verbal bare nominals   vs.   post-verbal bare nominals

can be anaphoric definites freely   are not always free to be anaphoric definites

✓ *gǒu*   *hǎoxiàng* *hěn*   *è.*   ?? *wǒmen*   *kàn-le*   *gǒu*

狗   好像   很   餓。   我們   看了   狗。

dog   apparently very   hungry   we   looked.at   dog

'The dog was apparently very hungry.'   'We looked at the dog.'

post-verbal bare nominals

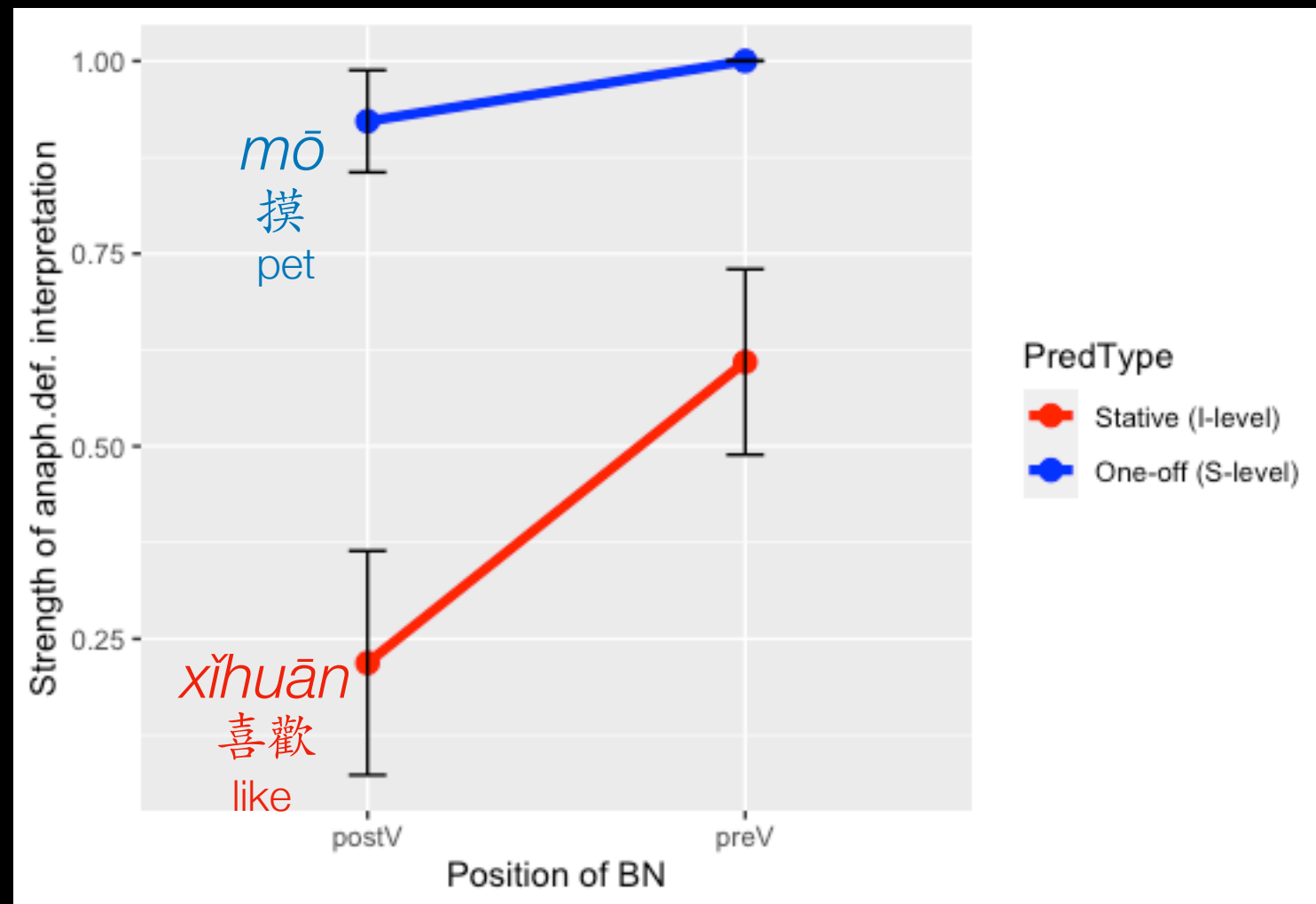are not always free to be anaphoric definites…

when?

why?

(open question!)

post-verbal bare nominals

are not free to be anaphoric definites…

when

the verb expresses states as opposed to one-off events

(Zhuang & Aparicio)

pilot results, n=16

post-verbal bare nominals

are less free to be anaphoric definites…

zuótiān wǒmen zài xiàoyuán lǐ kànjiàn-le   yì   zhī   gǒu.
昨天   我們   在校園裡   看見了   一   隻   狗。
yesterday   we   on campus   saw   one   CL   dog

'Yesterday we saw a dog on campus.'

😐   wǒmen   mō-le   gǒu
        我們   摸了   狗。
        we   petted   dog

'We petted the dog.'

post-verbal bare nominals

are less free to be anaphoric definites…

zuótiān   wǒmen   zài xiàoyuán lǐ   kànjiàn-le   yì   zhī   gǒu.

昨天 　　　 我們 　　　　 在校園裡 　　　　 看見了 　　 一 　 隻 　 狗。

yesterday 　　 we 　　　　 on campus 　　　　 saw 　　 one 　 CL 　 dog

'Yesterday we saw a dog on campus.'

😃 　　 *wǒmen* 　　 *mō-le yí xià* 　　 *gǒu*

　　 我們 　　　 摸了一下 　　　 狗。

　　 we 　　　 petted.1.stroke 　　 dog

'We petted the dog by exactly one stroke.'

post-verbal bare nominals

are less free to be anaphoric definites…

when

the verb expresses unbounded, non-atomic events as
opposed to bounded, single-atomic events

(Zhuang 2019, Zhuang & Aparicio)

mō-le

摸了

petted

'petted'

mō-le yí xià

摸了一下

petted.1.stroke

'petted by exactly one stroke'

post-verbal bare nominals

are not always free to be anaphoric definites…

because

they are dependent on the VP for interpretation.

Dogs
who are
Over-Attached

(seriously, though, see: Van Geenhoven 1998, Farkas & de Swart 2003, Chung &

Ladusaw 2007, Dayal 2011, 2015, Luo 2022)

recap

recap

▸ two theoretical types of definiteness: uniqueness vs. anaphoric

        ▸ larger-situation uniqueness vs.
           immediate-situation uniqueness

▸ two definite structures in mandarin: bare nominals vs. DEM-CL-N

	uniqueness		anaphoric
	larger-situation	immediate-situation	
Mandarin bare nominals	✓	✓	…it's complicated 💔
DEM-CL-N	#	✓	✓

recap

▸ two theoretical types of definiteness: uniqueness vs. anaphoric

  ▸ larger-situation uniqueness vs. immediate-situation uniqueness

▸ two definite s~~tructures in~~ mandarin: bare nominals vs. DEM-CL-N

  ▸ a third definite structure in southern Chinese varieties: CL-N

next class

DEM   NUM   CL   N

- finish reading Cheng & Sybesma (2016)

thank you.

thank you.

Talk

Lingzi Zhuang & Eszter Ótott-Kovács

a tale of two *-mlş*'s:
between evidential and attitudinal
semantics

Tu+7 conference (virtual, registration free)
Feb. 18, 2022 @3:15-3:45pm ET