

Predicate Types in Relative Clauses and the Complementizer Deletion

Xuan Di
2009-01-01

Abstract:

Call *de* a complementizer in Mandarin relative clauses. It's well known that *de* can be deleted when the 'head noun' is preceded by a demonstrative. However, the complementizer deletion is not just conditioned on the complexity of the head noun, even when the head noun is a demonstrative phrase, if the predicate of the relative clause is resultative, complementizer deletion cannot be licensed.

Leaving all the analyses on *de* aside, let's tentatively call it a complementizer in the relative clauses (1).

- (1) *Nana mai de shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy COMP book very expensive
 "The book(s) Nana bought is (are) very expensive."

A well-known fact by now is that *de* is optional when the 'head noun' is preceded by a demonstrative (2)¹.

- (2) a. *Nana mai (de) nei shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy COMP that book very expensive
 "The book(s) Nana bought is (are) very expensive."
- b. *Nana mai (de) nei ben-r shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy COMP that CLF-R book very expensive
 "The book Nana bought is very expensive."
- c. *Nana mai (de) nei san ben-r shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy COMP that three CLF-R book very expensive
 "The three books Nana bought are very expensive."

Interestingly, when the predicate is a resultative compound *mai-dao* [buy-arrive], *de* cannot be deleted² (3).

- (3) a. *Nana mai dao *(de) (nei) shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy arrive COMP that book very expensive

¹ Liu Danqing (2005) as well as the discussion afterwards on who is the discoverer of this phenomenon was heat on-line

(<http://www.pkucn.com/viewthread.php?tid=139575&extra=page%3D4>) . I am not the first who reports the fact on (2). The purpose of this squib is that when the predicate is resultative, or *le* marked, *de* cannot be deleted in any event.

² For speakers who find (3b) possible, having the complex NP as an object in (i) can lead to the same judgement on *de* deletion, i.e. resultative relative clauses cannot allow *de*-deletion even when a demonstrative is found in the 'head noun'.

- (i) *zhuo shang fang zhe ____*
 table up put ZHE
 "There is ____ on the table."

“The book(s) Nana bought is (are) very expensive.”

- b. *Nana mai dao *(de) nei ben-r shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy arrive COMP that CLF-R book very expensive
 “The book Nana bought is very expensive.”

- c. *Nana mai dao *(de) (nei) san ben-r shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy arrive COMP that three CLF-R book very expensive
 “The three books Nana bought are very expensive.”

Other types of resultatives *ran-hong* [dye-red], *da-si* [beat-die] etc. all behaves similarly in terms of disallowing *de* deletions.

When the verb is suffixed with the aspectual marker *le*, *de* also cannot be deleted (4).

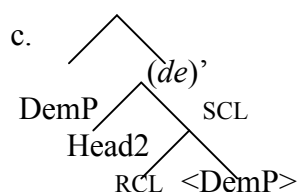
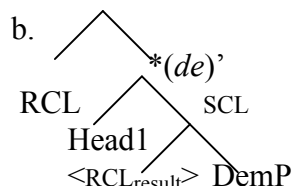
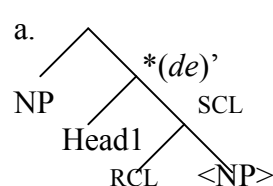
- (4) a. *Nana mai le *(de) (nei) shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy LE COMP that book very expensive
 “The book(s) Nana bought is (are) very expensive.”
- b. *Nana mai le *(de) nei ben-r shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy LE COMP that CLF-R book very expensive
 “The book Nana bought is very expensive.”
- c. *Nana mai le *(de) (nei) san ben-r shu hen gui.*
 Nana buy LE COMP that three CLF-R book very expensive

Analyses on taking *de* as a D head (Simpson 2000), or as a movement type representation, i.e. a linker (den Dikken and Singhapreecha 2004), cannot readily explain why the ‘internal’ structure of the relativized predicate has such an effect.

I don’t know how to analyze the data.

Tentatively, in the spirit of Moro (2000), one possibility would be assuming the optional *de* is a head in the derivation of a relative clause (RCL) (5a, b); meanwhile, assume the obligatory *de* as a (different) head at a different position (5c).

(5)



References:

den Dikken, Marcel and Pornsiri Singhapreecha. 2004. Complex noun phrases and linkers. *Syntax* 7:1

Liu, Danqing. 2005. 《汉语关系从句标记类型初探》 *中国语文* 2005.1

Moro, Andrea. 2000. Dynamic Antisymmetry. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Simpson, Andrew. 2000. “On the re-analysis of nominalizers in Chinese, Japanese and Korean”. In Li, A and Simpson, A, (eds.), *Functional Structures, Form and Interpretation*. Curzon Routledge (UK), 280.