

## Predicate Types in Relative Clauses and the Complementizer Deletion

Xuan Di  
2009-01-08

### 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 or suffixed with the verbal *le*, complementizer deletion cannot be licensed.

Leaving all the analyses of *de* aside, let's tentatively call it a complementizer in relative clauses such as (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 (discussed in Liu Danqing (2005) among others) by now is that *de* is optional when the 'head noun' is preceded by a demonstrative (2).

- (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."

The purpose of this squib is to show that when the predicate is resultative, or *le* marked, *de* cannot be deleted in any event.

Firstly, when the predicate is a resultative compound *mai-dao* [buy-arrive], *de* cannot be deleted for most of the speakers I consulted (3)<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Even for speakers who find (3b) possible, having the complex NP as an object in (i) can lead to the ungrammaticality on *de* deletion with a resultative verb phrase, i.e. in object position of an existential sentence, resultative relative clauses strictly forbid *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."

- (3) a. *Nana mai dao*      *\*(de)*   *(nei)*   *shu*   *hen*   *gui*.  
 Nana buy arrive      COMP   that   book   very   expensive  
 “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 behave similarly in terms of disallowing *de* deletions.

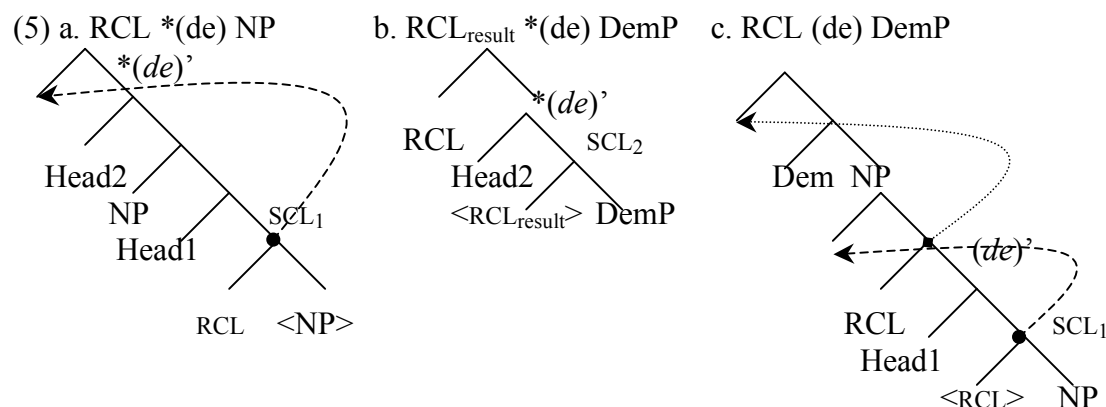
Secondly, when the verb is suffixed with the aspectual marker *le*, *de* also cannot be deleted (4).

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

How to account for these restrictions remains a challenge.

Tentatively, one possibility would be assuming that the optional *de* and the obligatory *de* are different heads. Different relative clauses (RCL) and different ‘head nouns’ require different heads to license the predication. Derivations in the spirit of Moro (2000) are illustrated in (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.