

Ellipsis analysis for Mandarin Chinese Right Dislocation?

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1 Introduction

This study explores the formal syntax of right dislocation (henceforth, RD) in Mandarin Chinese (henceforth, MC) based on Taiwanese Mandarin data. RD has been broadly investigated in the Romance languages (e.g. Cecchetto 1999), Germanic languages (e.g. Ott & de Vries 2016), Japanese (e.g. Tanaka 2001) and Korean (e.g. Ko 2014). However, the present study argues that RD in MC may be different from some of these other languages.

Descriptively, RD, in general, consists of a host clause and a dislocated phrase (d-XP)) as in (1). In the example from MC, *Lisi* is the dislocated (RD) phrases. In the host clause, there must be a coreferent resumptive pronoun (*ta*). This resumptive pronoun shares the same case, gender and number features with the right-dislocated phrase. Importantly, in this study RD is distinguished from afterthought constructions in that the latter are associated with a distinct pause between the host clause and the right-dislocated phrase, while the former is not (e.g., Guo 1999).

(1) Mandarin Chinese

[host-clause	Mali	yinggai	keneng	xihuan	*(ta _i)	ba]	[d-XP Lisi _i].
	Mary	probably	maybe	like	he	SFP	Lisi
‘Mary probably likes him _i , Lisi _i .’							

2 Ellipsis analysis for Right Dislocation

A prominent analysis for RD is the ellipsis analysis proposed by Ott and de Vries (2016) based on Dutch and German. They argue that RD has conflicting properties. On the one hand, RD exhibits properties that imply movement (see Ott & de Vries (2016) for clause-external properties). A crucial property proposed by Ott & de Vries to support a clause-external (movement) analysis of RD is the fact that it exhibits island sensitivity. As the German data in (2) shows, displacing *dem Meyer* ‘the mayor’, which originated from within the complex noun phrase, to the right edge of the sentence makes this sentence ungrammatical. This data suggests that the movement of the dislocated phrase is subject to island constraints. On the other hand, some properties of RD suggest that it may not involve movement (see Ott & de Vries (2016) for clause-internal properties).

(2) German (adapted from Averintseva-Klisch 2008: 223)

*Ich habe schon oft [NP das Gerücht, dass ihm_i die Mafia geholfen hat]
 I have already often the rumor that him the mafia helped has
 gehört, dem Meyer_i.
 heard the Meyer
 ‘I have already often heard the rumor that the mafia has assisted him, this Meyer’

In order to account for the conflicting properties that RD exhibit, Ott & de Vries’ (2016) analysis contends that the underlying structure of RD involves two coordinated clauses. They propose that there are two conjuncts (two CPs in a coordinated structure) in the underlying structure, and the right-dislocated phrase (*dXP*) undergoes leftward movement in the second conjunct (3a). This operation would capture the island sensitivity. After the leftward movement, the second conjunct in the coordinate structure undergoes PF-deletion yielding the surface word order of RD (3b). Ott & de Vries argue that this ellipsis analysis creates an anaphoric link between the two conjuncts (i.e. the correlate and the *dXP*). This “anaphoric juxtaposition” (3) allows them to capture the properties regarding case agreement.

- (3) a. [CP₁ ...correlate...] [CP₂ *dXP*_i [...t_i...]]
 b. [CP₁ ...correlate...] [CP₂ *dXP*_i [...~~t_i~~...]] (undergoes PF-deletion)

3 Right dislocation in Mandarin Chinese

In the previous section, I briefly reviewed one proposal regarding RD in Dutch and German. In this section, I analyze some core properties of MC RD. First, the right dislocated NP can originate either from the subject or object position. In (4), either the RD subject, *Mali* (4a), or the object, *Lisi* (4b), can be in the rightmost position. The dislocated phrases all have the corresponding resumptive pronouns (*ta* ‘she’, ‘him’) in the host clause.

- | | |
|---|---|
| (4) a. Right dislocated subject | b. Right dislocated object |
| (Ta _i) kandao Lisi le *(ba) Mali! | Mali kandao ta _i le *(ba) Lisi. |
| She see Lisi Asp SFP Mary | Mary see he Asp SFP Lisi |
| ‘She _i saw Lisi, Mary _i !’ | ‘Mary saw him _i , Lisi _i .’ |

Second, sentence final particles (SFPs) are generally optional in MC but are obligatory in MC RD (Cheung 2009). This is also illustrated in (4); for both the dislocated subject and the dislocated object, the sentence-final particle *ba* cannot be omitted. Importantly, SFPs in RD always end up in a position preceding the RD phrase, as opposed to appearing in ‘true’ sentence-final position as in other, non-RD clauses (5). The SFP is not allowed after the RD phrase (as in 6).

- (5) Mali bu xihuan Lisi **ma?**
 Mary not like Lisi SFP
 ‘Doesn’t Mary like Lisi?’
- (6) *Mali bu xihuan *ta_i* Lisi_i **ma?**
 Mary not like him Lisi SFP
 ‘Intended: Did Mary not like him, Lisi?’

Finally, and most crucially, RD in MC also exhibits island sensitivity. One perspective on the occurrence of a resumptive pronoun has been thought to be a piece of evidence that no movement has taken place, since resumptive pronouns have been viewed as “a saving device” for island violations (McCloskey 1990, Rouveret 2011). If there were no movement of the right-dislocated phrase, it is expected that there would be no island violation with RD. The relation between the resumptive pronoun and the dislocated phrase could be established through binding. However, I observe that RD is sensitive to islands in MC, such as *wh*-islands (7a). These examples show that neither right-dislocated subjects (7b) nor objects (7c) can be associated with a resumptive pronoun within a syntactic island, suggesting that movement is involved in the derivation of RD in MC. Therefore, RD in MC shows evidence of movement, given the island violations illustrated here, and the resumptive pronoun cannot “save” the sentence from an island violation.

(7) *Wh*-islands

- a. Mali xiang zhidao **Lisi** xihuan shenme a?
 Mary want know Lisi like what SFP
 ‘Mary wants to know what Lisi likes?’
- b. *Mali xiang zhidao **ta_i** xihuan shenme a **Lisi_i?**
 Mary want know he like what SFP Lisi
 ‘Intended: Mary wants to know what he_i likes(,) Lisi_i?’
- c. *Mali xiang zhidao shei xihuan **ta_i** a **Lisi_i?**
 Mary want know who like he SFP Lisi
 ‘Intended: Mary wants to know who likes him_i, Lisi_i?’

The ungrammaticality in (7) is not an effect of the embedded clause. As the following examples show, a phrase can be right-dislocated from the embedded clause. Unlike in English, there is no overt C marking embedded clause in MC, as shown in (8b). The SFP does not go with the embedded clause because the attitude which the SFP contributes to scopes over the whole sentence; namely, the speaker is questioning what Mary believes, not whether Lisi is honest or not. Therefore, it is not possible to have two SFPs in the same sentence (8b) (see Pan & Paul 2016, for the function of SFPs in MC). The sentence in (8c) illustrates that it is

possible to dislocate the embedded subject to the rightmost position in MC, but in this case the SFP precedes the RD.

- (8) a. Mali xiangxin [Lisi shi chengshi de ren] **ma?**
 Mary believe Lisi is honest DE person SFP
 ‘Does Mary believe that Lisi is an honest person?’
- b. *Mali xiangxin [Lisi shi chengshi de ren **ma**] **ma?**
 Mary believe Lisi is honest DE person SFP SFP
 ‘Intended: Does Mary believe that Lisi is an honest person?’
- c. Mali xiangxin [**ta**_i shi chengshi de ren] **ma Lisi**_i?
 Mary believe he is honest DE person SFP Lisi
 ‘Does Mary believe that he is an honest person, Lisi?’

4 Ellipsis for Mandarin Chinese Right Dislocation?

One of the crucial assumptions under the ellipsis approach is that the application of ellipsis is akin to sluicing. One of the analyses claims that sluicing in Mandarin Chinese involves focus movement (Wang & Wu 2006) which co-occurs with the overt focus marker *shi* (9), as shown in the derivation in (10). The movement of the *wh*-element (*shei*) is triggered by the focus marker (*shi*) situated at the C position (10b). Importantly, this focus marker is obligatory. After focus movement, Wang & Wu argue that the remnant TP undergoes PF deletion (10c), yielding the correct surface structure of (9).

- (9) Mali jian-le moren, danshi wo bu zhidao ***(shi) shei**
 Mary meet-Asp someone but I not know Foc who
 ‘Mary went to school to meet someone, but I don’t know who.’
- (10) a. Mali jian-le moren, danshi wo bu zhidao [_{CP} C [_{TP}Mali jian-le **shei**]]
 b. Mali jian-le moren, danshi wo bu zhidao [_{CP} **shi shei**_i [_{TP}Mali jian-le **t**_i]] (Focus movement)
 c. Mali jian-le moren, danshi wo bu zhidao [_{CP} **shi shei**_i [_{TP}~~Mali jian-le t_i~~]] (PF deletion)

However, I argue that an ellipsis analysis for MC RD is not supported by the empirical data. First, in terms of the discourse function of RD, the right dislocated element is not focused but rather topicalized. Instead, the focus element in RD is the host clause. The referent of the right-dislocated phrase needs to have been mentioned or be prominent in the discourse context, illustrating the topic nature of old information interpretation. Second, it is not possible for the second clause to be analyzed as sluicing in MC because sluicing in MC involves an overt focus marker. Therefore, if the derivation were similar to sluicing, we would expect RD to be compatible with the presence of a focus maker, contrary to fact, as shown in (11).

- (11) * Ta_i yinggai keneng xihuan Lisi ba **shi** $Mali_i$.
 She probably maybe like Lisi SFP Foc Mary
 ‘She probably likes Lisi, Mary.’

Moreover, one of the consequences of sluicing is that it ameliorates island violations, yielding an island repair (Lasnik 2001, Merchant 2001, Fox and Lasnik 2003). I showed the MC RD is sensitive to islands in section 3 (see (7)). If the derivation of RD involved sluicing, it would predict examples such as (12) to be acceptable in MC. If a sluicing account were adopted, the derivation for (12) would be as in (13). The sluicing in the second CP would ameliorate the island effect, contrary to the empirical evidence. Island effects can be repaired by sluicing in MC. Therefore, if RD involved sluicing, we would expect RD to be able to violate island conditions. However, (12) shows that RD is sensitive to islands in MC. Therefore, MC RD does not involve sluicing. In the alternative analysis that eliminates these problems (developed in detail in Chiang 2017, 2018), the unacceptability in (12) is the result of A'-movement of the object *Lisi* out of the *wh*-island, with subsequent remnant movement of the TP to a higher position, yielding the correct RD surface order without the application of ellipsis as sluicing.

- (12) * $Mali$ xiang zhidao shei xihuan ta_i a $Lisi_i$?
 Mary want know who like he SFP $Lisi$
 ‘Intended: Mary wants to know who likes him_i, Lisi_i?’
- (13) a. [_{CP1} $Mali$ xiang zhidao shei xihuan ta_i a] [_{CP2} $Mali$ xiang zhidao shei xihuan $Lisi_i$]
 b. [_{CP1} $Mali$ xiang zhidao shei xihuan ta a] [_{CP2} $Lisi_j$ [_{IP} ~~$Mali$ xiang zhidao shei xihuan t_j~~]]

5 Conclusion

Although the ellipsis analysis might at first seem appealing for right dislocation (RD) in Mandarin Chinese (MC), some properties of the ellipsis approach to RD in German and Dutch are not applicable to MC. For instance, sluicing is not applicable in MC RD because the derivation of sluicing in MC involves focus movement, which is incompatible with MC RD. Moreover, island repair, which is one of the consequences of sluicing, can ameliorate island violations, but this is not observed in MC RD, in which island violations cannot be ameliorated, contrary to what would be predicted by the application of a sluicing analysis of RD. The discussion here suggests that there is variation in the syntactic operations that generate RD in different languages, allowing the set of operations that generate RD in MC to be different from the operations that generate RDs in languages such as German and Dutch.

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