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APPOSITION OR NOT: UNDERLYING MANDARIN CLAUSES

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ABSTRACT

This paper tackles the underlying nature of clauses in Mandarin Chinese with aim of exploring whether it involves apposition or restriction. English apposition is held in a variety of clauses being independent from the matrix and serving as the background information. However, Mandarin clauses which are seemingly appositive in fact do not involve apposition but restriction. As for those clauses which take the function of modifiers, they still share more similarities with the clauses involving restriction rather than apposition. All of these findings are ultimately attributed to the fact that Mandarin clauses are not as independent from the matrix as the normal clauses involving apposition do in other European languages including English.

Key words: apposition, Mandarin, modifier



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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates into the underlying nature of clauses in Mandarin Chinese with aim of exploring whether it involves apposition or restriction (Raabe 1979 and Lago 1994). A handful of instances are analyzed and tested with the contribution to the finding that the seemingly appositive clauses in Mandarin are deeply non-appositive in contrast with English counterparts. As for those clauses which take the function of modifiers, they still share more similarities with the clauses involving restriction rather than apposition. All of these findings are ultimately attributed to the fact that Mandarin clauses are not as independent from the matrix as the normal clauses involving apposition do in other European languages including English.

2. NON-APPOSITIVE NATURE OF MANDARIN RELATIVE CLAUSES

In Chinese, the position of the DEM often determines whether the element of relevance is descriptive or restrictive (e.g., Hashimoto 1971):

- (1) zhe-ge chuan qunzi de guniang
this-CL wear skirt DE girl
'this girl, who wears a skirt'
- (2) chuan qunzi de zhe-ge guniang
wear skirt DE this-CL girl
'the girl that wears a skirt'

Descriptive (1) is actually appositive although this is not overly expressed. However, relatives in Mandarin behave in many situations as the restrictive ones. For example, it is allowed to bind inside the relative no matter how the relative and DEM are positioned.

- (3) a.) [Mei-wei ertong]i dou huainian na-xie [RC cengjing bangzhu
every-CL child all miss those formerly help
guo tameni de] ren.
GUO them DE people
b.) [Mei-wei ertong]i dou huainian [RC cengjing bangzhu-guo
every-CL child all miss formerly help GUO
tameni de] na-xie ren.
them DE those people
'Every child misses those who helped him.'

Emonds (1979) find that appositive relatives could be selected out when they could accommodate some adverbs such as *incidentally*. However, in Chinese, the appearance of the adverb of incidentally lead to infelicitous sentences with both descriptive and restrictive clauses.

- (4) a.)* Na-xie [RC ouran shou Shang de] nanhai
those incidentally (get) hurt DE boys
dou biande geng yonggan le.
all grow more brave ASP
b.)* [RC Ouran shou Shang de] na-xie nanhai
incidentally (get) hurt DE those boys
dou biande geng yonggan le.
all grow more brave ASP
'The boys that incidentally got hurt grow much braver.'

Appositive clauses do not presuppose but provide background information for what is being announced. Consider the following examples:

- (5) a.) That guy, who encounters his girlfriend on the way from Rome to Paris, likes playing guitar.
b.) That guy, who encounters his girlfriend on the way from Rome to Paris, doesn't like playing guitar.
c.) Does that guy, who encounters his girlfriend on the way from Rome to Paris, like playing guitar?
d.) If that guy, who encounters his girlfriend on the way from Rome to Paris, like playing guitar, he probably likes talking.
e.) That guy encounters his girlfriend on the way from Rome to Paris.

The above group of sentences fulfilled the implication family test, i.e., (e) could be implied from (a)-(d) with the apposition not being estimated and articulated in advance. The contents of (a) comprise of two parts including the primary and the secondary which match with the foreground and the background respectively. By making the above (a) integrated in a suitable context as shown in the following instance, we can see that the following (6) does not presuppose the meaning of the above (5e):

- (6) Maybe you have not learnt about Dick Thompson, a guy I knew while travelling from Rome to Paris yesterday.

It is grammatical to speak out (5a) after the above (6) but it turns to be ungrammatical if we output the following sentence which involves a restrictive apposition:

- (7) The guy that encountered his girlfriend on the way from Rome to Paris was deeply excited.
Speaking out (7) after (6) yield to an improper result for the reason that there is a definite determiner in (7), i.e., the information delivered by the restrictive clause in (7) can be estimated beforehand. By contrast, (6) does not provide any information suggests that the guy encountered his girlfriend. As a consequence, it is impossible for a restrictive clause involving a definite determiner to be spoken out grammatically following a sentence which does not presuppose its information.

We wonder whether it is the same case in Mandarin but to find that the appearance of a definite determiner in a relative clause which was not presupposed does not result in an appropriate sentence, as exemplified below:

- (8) a.) Na-wei zai cong Luoma dao Bali de lvtu zhong chang ge de
that-CL in from Rome to Paris DE journey middle sing song DE

jiahuo ai yundong.

guy love sports

'That guy who sang songs on the way from Rome to Paris loves sports.'

b.) Na-wei zai cong Luoma dao Bali de lvtu zhong chang ge de

that-CL in from Rome to Paris DE journey middle sing song DE

jiahuo bu ai yundong.

guy NEG love sports

'That guy who sang songs on the way from Rome to Paris does not love sports.'

c. Na-wei zai cong Luoma dao Bali de lvtu zhong chang ge de

that-CL in from Rome to Paris DE journey middle sing song DE

jiahuo ai bu ai yundong.

guy love NEG love sports

'Does that guy who sang songs on the way from Rome to Paris love sports?'

d.) Ruguo na-wei zai cong Luoma dao Bali de lvtu zhong

if that-CL in from Rome to Paris DE journey middle

chang ge de jiahuo ai yundong, ta yinggai bijiao jiankang.

sing song DE guy love sports, 3SG should quite healthy

'If that guy who sang songs on the way from Rome to Paris loves sports, he should be quite healthy.'

e.) Na-wei jiahuo zai cong Luoma dao Bali de lvtu zhong chang ge

that-CL guy in from Rome to Paris DE journey middle sing song

'That guy sang songs on the way from Rome to Paris.'

The relative clauses fulfilled the requirement of the implication test. However, the relative seems not to function as apposition because both the clauses involving both restriction and apposition satisfy the implication test. Under this circumstance, we could make (8a) involved with a relative clause without presupposition as shown below:

- (9) Ni shifou tingshuo guo guanyu Dawei de xiaoxi,
 2SG whether hear about GUO about David DE news
 wo shang ge yue zai cong Luoma dao Bali de lvtu zhong
 1SG last CL month in from Rome to Paris DE trip middle
 yudao le ta.
 meet LE 3SG

'Have you heard about David, a guy I met on the way from Rome to Paris last month?'

Differently from English, the above (9) cannot appear prior to (8a); otherwise, the output is improper. This suggests that (8a) does not involve apposition because it does not merely offer information as background; accordingly, (8a) is unable to appear (9).

In a word, the above analyses by so far reveal that the relative clauses in Mandarin do not involve apposition but restriction, which has nothing to do with either the clausal sequence or the presence of the determiner.

3. APPPOSITION AS CLAUSAL ATTACHMENT OR MODIFYING ELEMENT IN MANDARIN

Now we ask why the relative clauses in Mandarin do not involve apposition even if they seem to take the function of modifiers. From the semantic and syntactic perspective, the clauses involving apposition are accessories to the main sentence being not integrated into the matrix because they cannot appear once again in the answer and they are likely to disappear in the context when a series of sentences emerge. By comparison, appositive modifiers can appear in the answer and they remain stay in the context. The comparison between apposition as clausal attachment and apposition as modifying element can be further made. The former type is independent from the matrix while the latter type is combined with the head

Mandarin clauses tend to take the function as modifiers compared with their English counterparts. To put it in another way, they do not necessarily make themselves independent from the matrix so as to modify

the head. They behave differently from the patterns involving apposition. This provides the reason why appearance of adverbial elements in Mandarin clauses leads to infelicitous output.

To conclude, Mandarin clauses have the tendency of being adjacent to the head and they cannot behave independently from the matrix beyond the surface structure.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explores the differences between Mandarin clauses and English counterparts in terms of the nature of apposition by comparing the structure and meaning of the relative clauses. English apposition is held in a variety of clauses being independent from the matrix and serving as the background information. However, I assume that Mandarin clauses which are seemingly appositive in fact do not involve apposition but restriction. Despite of these striking distinctions, the structure and meaning of those clauses which are dedicated to modification are responsible for distinguishing Mandarin apposition as clausal attachment or modifying element.

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