

Topic-comment Structure, Focus Movement and Gapping Formation

1. The Problem

According to Tai (1969), M.-D. Li (1988), Tsai (1994) and Tang (2001), Mandarin Chinese (MC) disallows English-like *canonical* Gapping that is shown in (1.a-b), regardless of verb types. Thus, according to their judgments, the MC counterparts of (1.a-b) are ungrammatical (2-3). However, according to Mainland Mandarin (MM) speakers (in comparison with Hong Kong and Taiwan MC speakers), (2) and (3) are actually context-sensitive. For example, (2) is well formed as an answer to the question *tamen dou xihuan shenme* ('what do they all like?'). (3) is also grammatical if it is used to answer the question *natian zai shan-shang, tamen dou kanjian-le shei* ('that day on the mountain, who did they all see?'). These context-sensitive Gapping examples, coupled with some other Gapping-like examples that are context-free (e.g., (4), see Li (1998) and Paul (1996a, b; 1999)), point to one direction: that is, MC (at least in MM), *does* have English-like Gapping.

At the moment, English-like *canonical* Gapping is overwhelmingly analyzed as ATB-movement of verb heads (Johnson, 1994, 1996/2003, inter alia). This analysis, unfortunately, cannot be extended to Gapping in MM. On the one hand, Gapping in MM is not restricted to coordinate structures. For example, the gap can be embedded in the sentential subject position as shown in (5). On the other hand, Gapping in MM does not seem to obey some typical island constraint (a very important, if not crucial, diagnostic to test movement operations), e.g., the CNPC as shown in (6). These two examples jointly undermine an ATB-movement account for Gapping in MM.

2. The Hypothesis

If Gapping in MC is not ATB-movement of verb heads, what can it be? In this presentation, I argue that Gapping in MM is formed by both syntactic Focus movement and PF-deletion (cf. the hypothesis of Gapping as deletion by van Oirsouw 1987). The process can be explicated as the following: in MM, the target clause of Gapping can be analyzed as being syntactically independent (i.e., not being syntactically related to its antecedent clause, just like the way we analyze Pseudo-gapping, e.g., Lasnik, 1995, 1997/1999a, b, inter alia). Take (2) for example. If we consider only the gapped clause (the target clause), we see that there are only two components: the first NP *Lisi* and the second NP *juzi* (I assume that MM has NPs instead of DPs). For the first NP *Lisi*, I argue that it is base-generated in the Spec of TopicP, following Wu (2003), which is in line with the fact that Topic-comment structure is robust and a very common construction in MM. The second NP *juzi*, however, is derived by Focus movement: *juzi* moves from within VP to the Spec of FocusP, which is above IP but below TopicP. The availability of such a Focus position can be supported by the Focus movement of wh-words in MM, which is otherwise argued to be wh-in-situ (Huang, 1982/1998), and the *shi...de* focus construction (or cleft construction) in MM. The Focus movement of the second NP *juzi* is also justified by the obligatory focus on *juzi*: without F-marking the second NP, the gapped clauses are not acceptable. The whole process of Gapping formation in MM is then finished by the PF-deletion of the relevant IP (7). If this analysis is on the right track, it follows that the traditional notation of Gapping is not quite on the right track. The gap is not between the first NP and the second NP, as shown in (1-6). Instead, the gap is after the second NP, as shown in (7). In other words, what is between the first NP and the second NP is simply a comma (a brief pause of intonation), not a gap created by ATB-movement of verb heads. The second NP is not in its originally *sentential-final* position, but in a derived A-bar position, followed by an IP gap. Given that in English, Topic-comment structure is also available and the second NP also receives F-marking, it will be very interesting to see if this analysis can be extended to English Gapping without jeopardizing the close relationship between the antecedent clause and the target clause that has been established by Johnson (1994, 1996/2003, inter alia).

3. Implications

Following this analysis, Gapping in MM is derived by utilizing *partially* the mechanism that gives rise to Sluicing, i.e., by A-bar movement of the relevant constituents (interrogative wh-words in Sluicing and the second NP in MM Gapping), to the COMP domain, followed by the deletion of the relevant IP (cf. Merchant 2001). In a broader theoretical framework, this presentation also provides further insights on the fine structure of the left-periphery in clause architecture (cf. Rizzi 1997).

- 1) a. John likes apples and Mary ___ oranges. (state)
 b. John saw Mary and Bill ___ Susan. (action)
- 2) Zhangsan xihuan pingguo, Lisi ___ juzi. (state)
 Zhangsan like apple Lisi orange
 “Zhangsan likes apples and Lisi ___ oranges.”
- 3) Zhangsan kanjian-le Shufen, Lisi ___ Yaping. (action)
 Zhangsan see-Perf. Shufen Lisi Yaping
 “Zhangsan saw Shufen and Lisi ___ Yaping.”
- 4) Zhangsan chi-le san-ge pingguo, Lisi ___ si-ge juzi. (Li 1998: 41)
 Zhangsan eat-Perf. three-CL apple Lisi four-CL orange
 “Zhangsan ate three apples, and Lisi ___ four oranges.”
- 5) Zhangsan kaojin-le Qinghua. [Wo ___ Beida] ziren mei wenti.
 Zhangsan test-into-Perf. Qinghua I Beida of-course no problem
 “Zhangsan tested into QingHua University. [That I *(test into) Beijing University] is of course no problem.”
- 6) Zhiyao Zhangsan yitian bu kaojin Qinghua,
 as long as Zhangsan one-day not test-into Qinghua
 ni jiu beng ti wo ___ Beida de shi.
 you then not mention I Beida DE thing
 “As long as Zhangsan has not tested into Qinghua University, you will not mention the thing that I *(tested into) Beijing University.”
- 7) [TopicP Lisi, [FocusP juzi_i [HP...[VP xihuan _{t_i]]]]] (cf. (2))}

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