

### Sinitic nominalisation: microvariation and dialect levelling:

Microvariation is claimed to exist in the nominal domain between Chinese dialects, as seen in discrepancies between adnominalisers (結構助詞) having [t-] (e.g. Mandarin *de* 的) and those having [g-] (e.g. Cantonese *ge* 嘅) where the former can be used as a verbal suffix denoting past tense in cleft *shi-de* 是的 constructions (1a) as well as in Activity nominals (2a) while the latter cannot (1b, 2b) (Tang (2011)):

1a) 他是昨天買票的 / 他是昨天買-的 票  
he COP yesterday buy ticket DE he COP yesterday buy-DE ticket  
'It was yesterday that he bought tickets.' (Mandarin, in Simpson and Wu (2002:169))

1b) 佢係琴日買非嘅 / \*佢係琴日買-嘅 非  
he COP yesterday buy ticket GE he COP yesterday buy-GE ticket  
'It was yesterday that he bought tickets.' (Cantonese, in Tang (2008:73))

2a) 他當他的老師 / 他的老師當得好  
he act.as he DE teacher he DE teacher act.as COMP good  
'He is acting as a teacher'/'his acting as a teacher is done well.' (Mandarin, in Huang (2008:231))

2b) 佢做佢嘅老師 / \*佢嘅老師做得好  
he act.as he GE teacher he GE teacher act.as COMP good  
'He is acting as a teacher'/'his acting as a teacher is done well.' (Cantonese, in Tang (2009:241))

In contrast, intermediary dialects permit verbal suffix *ge* in clefts but not *ge* in Activity nominals:

3a) 吾是昨日買一個票 / \*吾個飯吃了蠻久  
I COP yesterday buy-GE ticket I GE meal eat-ASP very long  
'It was yesterday that I bought tickets'/'My eating took a long time.' (Shanghainese (Wu))

3b) 俚是昨日買一個票 / \*俚個水游了蠻久  
you COP yesterday buy-GE ticket you GE swimming swim-ASP very long  
'It was yesterday that you bought tickets'/'Your swimming took a long time.' (Suzhou dialect (Wu))

3c) 我是前年到一個北京 / ?我個籃球打得蠻好  
I COP two.years.ago arrive-GE Beijing I GE basketball play COMP very good  
'It was two years ago that I arrived at Beijing'/'I play basketball very well' (Xinhua dialect (Xiang))

Such levels of microvariation can be correlated with their origins as *de* comes from phrase-final nominaliser *di/zhe* 低/者 (Liu (2008), Aldridge (2009)) and *ge* from classifier *ge* 個 (Cao (1995), Li (2016)), the latter of which is harder to reanalyse as it is quantificational/delimiting (4b, d) (Bisang and Li (2012), Zhang (2013)):

4a) 娘原是氣惱上起的病  
mother originally COP angry-LOC contract DE illness  
'As for our mother, it was originally illness contracted via anger' > 'It was via anger that our mother originally contracted illness.' (金瓶梅詞話)

4b) 則是茶坊裏見個... 官人  
then COP tea.lounge-LOC see GE official  
'Then it was in a tea lounge that he saw an official' (南宋話本選集)

4c) 太守見他的工完得甚遲  
official see he DE work finish COMP quite late  
'The official saw that he finished his work quite late.' (醒世姻緣傳)

4d) 你個骨是乞骨  
good GE bone COP poor bone  
'Your bones are poor bones.' (張協狀元)

Furthermore, as *ge* can be indefinite in copular constructions (4b) but is definite in possessives (4d) (Paul (2019)), dialect levelling with northern Mandarin and Feature Interpretability which predicts that interpretable features such as definiteness (+D) are more resistant to second language parameter-resetting (Tsimplici and Dimitrakopoulou (2007)) can account for central dialects (3) which come between low referentiality in the use of Mandarin *de* and high referentiality in Cantonese *ge*.

(Select) References:

Paul, W. (2019): 'The in subordinate subordinator *de* in Mandarin Chinese: Second Take', in Tang, S-W. (ed), *Hanyu de de yanjiu*, Beijing: Beijing University; Tsimplici, I. and Dimitrakopoulou, M. (2007): 'The Interpretability Hypothesis: evidence from wh-interrogatives in second language acquisition'. *Second Language Research* 23(2):215-242; Zhang, N. (2013): *Classifier Structures in Mandarin Chinese*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.