

Formation of Cantonese clefts: new and extra-new features:

Cantonese cleft constructions (*hai... ge*) conform to the Sinitic pattern of using the copula verb as assigning focus to a clausal complement ending with the adnominaliser (cf Mandarin *shi... de*), and dialectal comparisons reveal a sharp divide between northern (*de*) and southern dialects (*ge*) (Tang (2011), Sio (2011)). However, while the formation of Mandarin clefts (*shi-de*) has been investigated (Long and Xiao (2009, 2011), Zhan (2012), Han (2012)), the origins of Cantonese *ge* and clefts are virtually unknown. In this paper, I propose a formal comparison between the historical origins of northern and southern Chinese clefts (COP... *de/ge*) and argue that, like *de*, southern Chinese *ge* also undergoes a 'lateral' categorial reanalysis from being a nominal category to a clausal one (Tse (2018), cf Simpson and Wu (2002), Yap et al (2014)) but displays microparametric differences in the 'lateral' conversion between the Chinese nominal and clausal hierarchies which make the formation of Cantonese clefts a unique form of syntactic change.

It is widely held that *de* is derived from an original nominalizer *di* on a par with classical Chinese *zhe* (Lu (1943), Aldridge (2008), Yap et al (2010)) whereas *ge* is derived from the general classifier *ge* (Cao (1994)), and since *de* being derived from nominalizer *di* does not necessarily denote referentiality/definiteness, it can be reanalyzed as a clausal particle when its deictic force is suppressed in copular constructions in sentence-final position (VOde, ex 1a) and sentence-medial position (VdeO, ex. 1b)). Classifier *ge*, on the other hand, is widely attested with inherent referentiality/definiteness (+D) in southern dialects (Bisang (2012)), which makes its deictic force more difficult to suppress. *Ge* therefore is only reanalysable as a clausal particle in sentence-final position (VOge, ex. 2)) (cf Lee and Yiu (1998)):

1a) fei shi pusa xingcang ci shi suren zuo di

NEG COP saint behaviour this COP laymando DE

'It is not the behaviour of saints; this is the doings of laymen (> it was the laymen who did this).'

(*Zhenzhou liji Huizhou chanshi yulu*) (Han (2012), Zhan (2012))

1b) wukong, ni shi na shi xiu-lai de yuanfa

Wukong you COP which life obtain-RES DE enlightenment

'Wukong, as for you, of which life is your enlightenment obtained? (> Which life was it that you obtained your enlightenment?)' (*Xiyouji*) (cf Long (2013))

2) wo bian shi zhao xiang ge

I then COP wear light GE

'Then I shall be the one who is in trouble (> then I shall be in trouble).'

 (*Tongshang, yierchu*)

The microparametric variation between Chinese dialects in the nominal hierarchy (*de* (n), *ge* (CL (+D))) hence yields different types of cleft constructions in northern (VOde/VdeO) (ex. 1)) and southern (VOge/*VgeO) dialects (ex. 2)), and while both *de* and *ge* constitute 'lateral' categorial reanalysis from nominal to clausal, which entails a gain in new formal (i.e. clausal) features (+C) (Tse (2016)), southern Chinese *ge*, in addition to being merged relatively low in the hierarchy of C-elements in the inventory of Chinese sentence-final particles (SFP) (cf Paul (2015)), can also combine with other SFPs in forming composite particles (*gaa3*, *gaa4*, *gak3*, *ge2* (Fung (2000), Li (2006)), which entails a further gain of new C features. The formation of Cantonese clefts, therefore, represents a new form of 'lateral' grammaticalization where not only is *ge* 'laterally' reanalysed from nominal to clausal (CL > C), it also gain new C features incrementally.

Key References:

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