

Cantonese GE (嘅) vs Mandarin DE (的): microparametric variations in the nominal domain:

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Recent research has revealed that although Cantonese GE (嘅) and Mandarin DE (的) are both broadly classifiable as possessive adnominalisers in the nominal domain merged in roughly the same low position on the nominal spine below Dem(onstrative), Num(ber), Q(uantifier), CL(assifier) and Adj(ective) (Zhu (1980), Sio and Sybesma (2008)), there are subtle microparametric variations in the Chinese D(eterminer)P(hrase) (del Gobbo (2007), Cheng and Sybesma (1999), Sio and Song (2015)), namely the fact that DE has a bigger collocational range than GE in that the former can select predicational complements in subject position whereas the latter cannot (1a)), even though both are possible in object position (1b)):

- 1a) ta de laoshi dang de hao / *kui ge lousi zo dak ho
he DE teacher serve DE good he GE teacher do DAK good
'He serves well as a teacher.' (Tang (2011:149-150))
- 1b) ta dang ta de laoshi / kui zo kui ge lousi
he serve he DE teacher he serve he GE teacher
'He does his job as a teacher.' (Tang (2011:151))

Furthermore, there is evidence that these constructions are not truly nominal since the classifier is strictly prohibited (2a)), and even though the adnominaliser is possible in object position (1b)), it is ungrammatical in Cantonese with idiomatic verb phrases (2b)), even though common VO structures are possible (2c)):

- 2a) zhe ge/*tou niu chui-de tai guohuo le
This CL cow blow-DE too over.the.top SFP
'This bluff (blow-cow) is too over the top.' (Tang (2011:150))
- 2b) wo ting-bu-dong ta you-DE-mo / *ngo teng-ng-ming kui jau-ge-mak
I listen-NEG-understand he hu-DE-mour I listen-NEG-listen he hu-GE-mour
'I do not understand his humour.' (Tang (2011:152, 154))
- 2c) ta chi wo de cu / kui haap ngo ge cou
he sip I DE vinegar he sip I GE vinegar
'He is jealous (sip-vinegar) of me.' (Tang (2011:152))

There are hence discrepancies between Cantonese GE and Mandarin DE as well as the subject and object grammatical relations which call for closer scrutiny. It is widely argued that the object construction consists of light verbs denoting activity in which there is possessor raising to a higher A(rgument)-position (Huang (2008), cf Pyllkanen (2008)), which yields the adnominal particles (DE/GE) as remnant expletives in their respective DPs, and here DE shows higher flexibility in selecting non-figurative objects such *you-de-mo* (2b)) whereas GE can only be used with metaphorical objects like *haap-ge-cou* (2c)). In subject position, on the other hand, as possessor raising is impossible, both DE and GE are functional elements in the nominal domain and here their relative referentiality displays microparametric variation, since while Mandarin DE can be used to mark non-transitive objects like *ta-de-laoshi* as selected by *dang* 'to serve as' (1a)), Cantonese GE cannot (1a)) which indicates a higher level of referentiality as it seems to be incompatible with such non-transitive verbs *zo* 'to serve as' which selects a predicational complement like *kui-ge-lousi* (1a)). The more abstract selection as seen in Mandarin DE brings it closer to den Dikken's (2006) linker hypothesis, which is supported by the fact that DE is derived historically from predicational constructions in which DE marks the predicational relationship between two nominal elements (Yap et al (2010)), whereas GE is originally a classifier (< 個) with referential force which, in southern-central dialects, continues to function as a determiner (Xu and Matthews (2011)). GE and DE, therefore, have subtly different selectional features which may be argued to stem from their different etymological origins

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