DOES MODERN CHINESE ALLOW GENITIVE SUBJECTS?

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This paper investigates whether Chinese allows genitive subjects, and shows that it actually does. Based on newly found data, we will argue (i) that not only Altaic and Indo-European languages, but also one of the Sino-Tibetan languages, allows genitive subjects, (ii) that the Transitivity Restriction on genitive subjects is not operative in Chinese, unlike Japanese, (iii) that genitive subjects are allowed not only in head-final languages, but also in head-initial languages, and genitive subject licensing may not require a covert complementizer in Chinese, and (iv) that the fact that a deep genitive subject is allowed in Chinese suggests that the language possesses the abstract adnominal form of a predicate.*

Keywords: Chinese, genitive, Japanese, subject, transitivity restriction

1. Introduction

Harada (1971) pointed out that Japanese allows genitive subjects. Maki et al. (2010) then point out that Mongolian, another Altaic language, also allows genitive subjects. Maki et al. (2008) and Maki and Bhutto (2013) further show that non-Altaic languages such as Bengali and Urdu also allow genitive subjects. All these languages possess rich case markers, one of which is the genitive case marker. These facts indicate that Altaic and Indo-European languages allow genitives subjects, and at the same time,

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raise the question of whether languages from other language families which are surrounded by Indo-European and Altaic, may also allow genitive subjects. The purpose of this paper is then to investigate whether Chinese, a language from the Sino-Tibetan language family, possesses genitive subjects. This investigation previously had not been conducted, as Chinese does not have rich case markers. However, it has a morphological genitive/possessive marker *de* ‘of,’ although it does not have a morphological nominative case marker. We will then examine if Chinese allows genitive subjects marked with *de* in this paper.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews the mechanisms of genitive subject licensing involved in Japanese and Mongolian as the background to subsequent sections. Section 3 provides data including genitive subjects in Chinese. Based on the newly found data, Section 4 discusses what they might suggest for the theory of (Chinese) syntax. Finally, Section 5 concludes this paper.

2. Background

This section reviews the mechanisms of genitive subject licensing involved in Japanese and Mongolian. Harada (1971) discussed a nominative/genitive case marker alternation phenomenon in Japanese, called the *ga/no* conversion, as illustrated in (1).1

1 [Doyoobi-ni tamago-ga/-no yasui] mise-wa kono mise desu.
   Saturday-on egg-Nom/-Gen cheap store-Top this store be
   ‘The store where eggs are cheap on Saturdays is this store.’

Since his seminal work, the phenomenon has been investigated by many linguists, such as Miyagawa (1993, 2011, 2012, 2013), Watanabe (1996), Hiraiwa (2001), Ochi (2001, 2009), Harada (2002), and Kobayashi (2013), among others.

Two major approaches have been proposed in terms of what licenses genitive subjects in Japanese: (i) the D-Licensing Approach by Miyagawa (1993, 2011), among others, and (ii) the Adnominal Form-Licensing Approach by Watanabe (1996) and Hiraiwa (2001), among others. In this pa-

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1 The abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: 2 = second person, 3 = third person, Abs = absolutive, Acc = accusative, Adn = adnominal, Asp = aspectual, Cl = classifier, Con = conclusive, Erg = ergative, FN = factive nominalization, Fut = future tense, Gen = genitive, Loc = locative, Nom = nominative, Past = past tense, Perf = perfective, Pres = present tense, Sg = singular, and Top = topic.
per, for the sake of discussion, we assume the conditions on genitive subject licensing in (2), which Maki et al. (2010) proposed for Mongolian.

(2) *Conditions on Genitive Subject Licensing in Mongolian*

a. A genitive subject must be c-commanded by a nominal feature, and

b. A genitive subject must be in a local relationship with the adnominal form of the predicate.

(Maki et al. (2010: 236) slightly edited)

(2a) and (2b) are in a sense a mixture of the D-Licensing Approach and the Adnominal Form Licensing Approach in Japanese. Maki et al. (2010) reached the conditions in (2) based on the Mongolian examples in (3) and (4).

   ‘the book which Ulagan bought yesterday’

(Maki et al. (2010: 236) slightly edited)

   ‘the book which I thought [that Ulagan bought] yesterday’

(Maki et al. (2010: 234) slightly edited)

In (3), the genitive subject is allowed only when the predicate is in the adnominal form. Note that a genitive subject is disallowed without a nominal head, as shown in (5).

(5) Öčügedür Ulaɣan-ø/*-u nom-ø qudaldun-abu-čai.
    yesterday Ulagan-Nom/-Gen book-Acc buy-take-Past.Con
    ‘Ulagan bought a book yesterday.’

(Maki et al. (2010: 232) slightly edited)

In (4), the genitive subject is allowed in the embedded clause headed by the [−Q] COMP. Maki et al. (2010) call the genitive subject that appears in an embedded clause a “deep genitive” subject. The important point about (4) is the fact that the genitive subject is permitted only when the predicate in the embedded clause is in the adnominal form. These facts led Maki et al. (2010) to claim the two conditions in (2). In the following discussion, we will assume the conditions in (2) for Mongolian and Chinese.
3. Data

Let us now consider Chinese data. Before examining whether genitive subjects are permitted, it is worthwhile reviewing basic syntactic properties of Chinese. First, Chinese is an SVO language, as shown in (6), and an adverb such as zuotian ‘yesterday’ may follow or precede the subject, as shown in (7).

(6) Zhangsan mai-le zhe-ben shu.
   Zhangsan buy-Asp this-Cl book
   ‘Zhangsan bought this book.’

(7) a. Zhangsan zuotian mai-le zhe-ben shu.
    Zhangsan yesterday buy-Asp this-Cl book
    ‘Zhangsan bought this book yesterday.’
    yesterday Zhangsan buy-Asp this-Cl book
    ‘Zhangsan bought this book yesterday.’

Second, in nominal expressions in Chinese, the particle de ‘DE,’ which roughly corresponds to ’s or of in English, marks the possessor of a given noun, as shown in (8).

(8) Zhangsan de shu
    Zhangsan DE book
    ‘Zhangsan’s book’

Third, in relative clauses in Chinese, de ‘DE’ must appear between a head noun and the relative clause, as shown in (9).

(9) Zhangsan mai *(de) shu
    Zhangsan buy DE book
    ‘the book which Zhangsan bought’

Note that de ‘DE’ does not appear after the subject of a simple sentence, as shown in (10).

(10) *Zhangsan de mai-le zhe-ben shu.
     Zhangsan DE buy-Asp this-Cl book
     ‘Zhangsan bought this book.’

Let us now examine whether Chinese allows genitive subjects. The data in the b-examples in (11)–(16) show that relative clauses in Chinese

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2 Note that the grammaticality judgments on genitive subjects in Chinese vary from speaker to speaker. The informants’ ages and birthplaces are not relevant factors for the variation in the judgments. We will leave the cause of the variation for future research.
actually allow genitive subjects. Note that in all these examples, an adverb precedes the subject, which guarantees that the subject is within the relative clause rather than in DP SPEC. In (11), the relative head is an argument nominal expression *shu* ‘book,’ in (12), it is a non-argument time expression *shijian* ‘time,’ in (13), it is a non-argument place expression *difang* ‘place,’ in (14), it is a non-argument manner expression *fangfa* ‘way,’ in (15), it is a non-argument reason expression *liyou* ‘reason,’ and in (16), it is a non-lexical expression *shi* ‘thing/fact.’

(11) a. Xingqiliu Zhangsan mai de shu shi zhe-ben.
   Saturday Zhangsan buy DE book is this-Cl
   ‘The book which Zhangsan bought on Saturday is this.’
   b. Xingqiliu Zhangsan de mai de shu shi zhe-ben.
   Saturday Zhangsan DE buy DE book is this-Cl
   ‘The book which Zhangsan bought on Saturday is this.’

(12) a. Zuotian huoche dao Beijingzhan de shijian shi
   yesterday train arrive Beijing Station DE time is
   3 dian.
   3 o’clock
   ‘The time when the train arrived at Beijing Station yesterday
   is 3 o’clock.’
   b. Zuotian huoche de dao Beijingzhan de shijian shi
   yesterday train DE arrive Beijing Station DE time is
   3 dian.
   3 o’clock
   ‘The time when the train arrived at Beijing Station yesterday
   is 3 o’clock.’

(13) a. Zuotian Zhangsan du na-ben shu de difang shi
   yesterday Zhangsan read that-Cl book DE place is
   tushuguan.
   library
   ‘The place where Zhangsan read that book is the library.’
   b. Zuotian Zhangsan de du na-ben shu de difang shi
   yesterday Zhangsan DE read that-Cl book DE place is
   tushuguan.
   library
   ‘The place where Zhangsan read that book is the library.’

(14) a. Zuotian Zhangsan xiuhao zixingche de fangfa shi zhe-ge.
   yesterday Zhangsan fix bicycle DE way is this-Cl
   ‘The way Zhangsan fixed the bicycle is this.’
b. Zuotian Zhangsan de xiuhao zixingche de fangfa shi
yesterday Zhangsan DE fix bicycle DE way is
this-Cl
‘The way Zhangsan fixed the bicycle is this.’

\[(15)\]

a. Zuotian Zhangsan mai na-ben shu de liyou shi
yesterday Zhangsan buy that-Cl book DE reason is
this-Cl
‘The reason why Zhangsan bought that book yesterday is
this.’

b. Zuotian Zhangsan de mai na-ben shu de liyou shi
yesterday Zhangsan DE buy that-Cl book DE reason is
this-Cl
‘The reason why Zhangsan bought that book yesterday is
this.’

(16) a. Duiyu xingqiliu Zhangsan mai zhe-ben shu de
at Saturday Zhangsan bought this-Cl book DE
shi, dajia jingya-le.
thing/fact everyone be.surprised-Asp
‘Everyone was surprised at the fact that Zhangsan bought
this book on Saturday.’

b. Duiyu xingqiliu Zhangsan de mai zhe-ben shu de
at Saturday Zhangsan DE bought this-Cl book DE
shi, dajia jingya-le.
thing/fact everyone be.surprised-Asp
‘Everyone was surprised at the fact that Zhangsan bought
this book on Saturday.’

Let us then turn to the examples in which genitive subjects are not al-
\[\text{lowed. The data in the } b-\text{examples in (17), (19), (21), (24) and (25) show that some adjunct clauses in Chinese do not allow genitive subjects to appear in there. Note again that in all these examples, some element pre-
cedes the subject, which guarantees that the subject is within the adjunct clause. First, in (17b), a genitive subject is not allowed in the before-
clause formed by the sentence initial element } zai \text{ ‘at’ and the sentence final elements } zhi qian \text{ ‘of before.’} \]
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(17) a. *Zai Zhangsan fabiao zhe-pian wenzhang zhi qian, Lisi
at Zhangsan present this-Cl paper of before Lisi
lai-le.
come-Asp
‘Before Zhangsan presented the paper, Lisi came.’

b. *Zai Zhangsan de fabiao zhe-pian wenzhang zhi qian,
at Zhangsan DE present this-Cl paper of before
Lisi lai-le.
Lisi come-Asp
‘Before Zhangsan presented the paper, Lisi came.’

However, a genitive subject is allowed, when the expression zhi qian ‘of before’ in (17b) is preceded by a nominal expression such as shijian ‘time,’ as shown in (18b).

(18) a. Zai Zhangsan fabiao zhe-pian wenzhang de shijian zhi
at Zhangsan present this-Cl paper DE time of
qian, Lisi lai-le.
before Lisi come-Asp
‘Before the time when Zhangsan presented the paper, Lisi
came.’

b. Zai Zhangsan de fabiao zhe-pian wenzhang de shijian
at Zhangsan DE present this-Cl paper DE time
zhi qian, Lisi lai-le.
of before Lisi come-Asp
‘Before the time when Zhangsan presented the paper, Lisi
came.’

Second, in (19b), a genitive subject is not allowed in the after-clause formed by the sentence initial element zai ‘at’ and the sentence final elements zhi hou ‘of after.’

(19) a. Zai Zhangsan fabiao-le zhe-pian wenzhang zhi hou,
at Zhangsan present-Asp this-Cl paper of after
Lisi lai-le.
Lisi come-Asp
‘After Zhangsan presented the paper, Lisi came.’

b. *Zai Zhangsan de fabiao-le zhe-pian wenzhang zhi
at Zhangsan DE present-Asp this-Cl paper of
hou, Lisi lai-le.
after Lisi come-Asp
‘After Zhangsan presented the paper, Lisi came.’

However, a genitive subject is allowed, when the expression zhi hou ‘of
after’ in (19b) is preceded by a nominal expression such as shijian ‘time,’ as shown in (20b).

(20) a. Zai Zhangsan fabiao-le zhe-pian wenzhang de shijian at Zhangsan present-Asp this-Cl paper of time
zhí hou, Lisi lai-le.
of after Lisi come-Asp
‘After the time when Zhangsan presented the paper, Lisi came.’

b. Zai Zhangsan de fabiao-le zhe-pian wenzhang de
at Zhangsan DE present-Asp this-Cl paper DE
shijian zhí hou, Lisi lai-le.
time of after Lisi come-Asp
‘After the time when Zhangsan presented the paper, Lisi came.’

Third, in (21b), a genitive subject is not allowed in the until-clause formed by the sentence initial element yizhidao ‘until’ and the sentence final elements zhī qian ‘of before.’

(21) a. Yizhidao Zhangsan wancheng na-ben shu zhī qian,
it until Zhangsan finish that-Cl book of before
Lisi douhui zai Riben.
Lisi continue in Japan
‘Lisi will stay in Japan until Zhangsan finishes writing the book.’

b. *Yizhidao Zhangsan de wancheng na-ben shu zhī qian,
it until Zhangsan DE finish that-Cl book of before
Lisi douhui zai Riben.
Lisi continue in Japan
‘Lisi will stay in Japan until Zhangsan finishes writing the book.’

Note here that the Japanese counterpart of (21b) is grammatical, as shown in (22).

(22) John-wa [ame-ga/-no yam-u] made ofisu-ni ita.
John-Top rain-Nom/-Gen stop-Pres until office-at was
‘John was at his office until it stopped raining.’

What is interesting about (22) is the fact that there is no visible nominal expression in the made ‘until’ clause, yet the genitive subject is allowed. See Maki and Uchibori (2008) and Miyagawa (2012, 2013) for relevant discus-
Maki and Uchibori (2008), among others, suggest that there should be an invisible nominal expression that corresponds to *toki* ‘time’ before *made* ‘till,’ which licenses the genitive subject. However, Takahashi (2010) and Miyagawa (2012) correctly point out that Maki and Uchibori’s (2008) claim contains some inadequacies. Miyagawa (2012, 2013) proposes the v-Licensing Approach to the genitive that appears in this type of structure in Japanese on the basis of its similarity in distribution to the genitive of negation in Slavic. In (22), the tense of the predicate in the *made*-clause is determined by the tense of the predicate in the matrix clause, and the predicate in the *made*-clause is unaccusative. Miyagawa (2012, 2013) calls this type of genitive a genitive of dependent tense (GDT), and argues that the genitive subject *ame-no* ‘rain-Gen’ is licensed by v and dependent tense.

Note that the subject of a comparative clause can be marked genitive in Japanese, as Watanabe (1996) first points out, as shown in (i).

(i) John-wa [Mary-ga/-no yonda yori] takusan-no hon-o yonda.
    John-Top Mary-Nom/-Gen read than many-Gen book-Acc read
    ‘John read more books than Mary did.’

(Watanabe (1996: 394, ex. 45a) slightly edited)

Given the fact that genitive subjects appear in similar contexts in Japanese and Chinese, it is expected that Chinese should also allow a genitive subject in comparative clauses. However, Chinese does not allow a comparative clause with a subject, as shown by the contrast between (iia) and (iib). In (iia), *biqi* ‘than’ functions as a preposition, while in (iib), it is supposed to function as a comparative clause introducer.

    than Zhangsan Lisi eat-Asp more
    ‘Lisi ate more than Zhangsan did.’

b. *Biqi* Zhangsan chiguo, Lisi chi-le gengduo.
    than Zhangsan ate Lisi eat-Asp more
    ‘Lisi ate more than Zhangsan did.’

Since (iib) is ungrammatical in Chinese, a genitive subject is impossible in comparative clauses in Chinese in any way, unlike Japanese.

The first referee raises the important question why unlike Japanese, Chinese does not allow an invisible nominal expression that licenses a genitive subject (if one adopts Maki and Uchibori’s (2008) approach) or a genitive of dependent tense (if one follows Miyagawa (2012, 2013)). There will be some approaches to this issue. In this paper we will point out one such approach. The crucial point is the fact that Chinese is a head-initial language, and as far as the elements such as *zai...zhi qian* ‘before,’ *zai...zhi hou* ‘after,’ *yizhidao...zhi qian* ‘until,’ *ruguo* ‘if,’ and *jishi...ye* ‘even if’ are concerned, at least some element is in the clause-initial position. This is exactly like English, which does not allow genitive subjects, as shown in (i)–(v).

(i) Before John/*John’s* presented the paper, …
(ii) After John/*John’s* presented the paper, …
(iii) … until John/*John’s* finishes writing the book.
(iv) If John/*John’s* read that book, …
(v) Even if John/*John’s* read that book, …

In these cases, the clause-initial element functions as a complementizer, so that it does not allow insertion of an invisible nominal expression at the end of the clause.
However, when the *until*-clause is followed by a nominal expression such as *rizi* ‘day,’ a genitive subject is allowed, as shown in (23b).

(23) a. *Yizhidao* Zhangsan wancheng na-ben shu de *rizi zhi* until Zhangsan finish that-Cl book DE day of *qian*, Lisi douhui zai Riben. before Lisi continue in Japan ‘Lisi will stay in Japan until the day when Zhangsan finishes writing the book.’

b. *Yizhidao* Zhangsan de wancheng na-ben shu de *rizi* until Zhangsan DE finish that-Cl book DE day *zhi qian*, Lisi douhui zai Riben. of before Lisi will stay in Japan ‘Lisi will stay in Japan until the day when Zhangsan finishes writing the book.’

Fourth, in (24b), a genitive subject is not allowed in the *if*-clause formed by the sentence initial element *ruguo* ‘if.’

Furthermore, Chinese does not have tense dependency between the tense of a main clause and the tense of an adjunct clause such as an *until*-clause, unlike Japanese. Therefore, it is expected that Chinese should not allow a genitive of dependent tense. Furthermore, Chinese allows insertion of an overt nominal element in the above cases. Interestingly enough, in these examples, the element *de* ‘DE’ appears right before the inserted noun, which indicates that the structure preceding it is a relative clause, which is totally different from a clause headed by a clause-initial complementizer. The question that arises here is why insertion of an invisible noun is impossible in the above examples. Our tentative answer is that an invisible noun cannot stand between the relative clause introducer *de* ‘DE’ and some element that follows it, which will cause a phonological anomaly.

The *if*-clause can be optionally followed by the sentence final elements *de hua* ‘DE story.’ One might argue that *hua* of *de hua* ‘if’ at the end of the *if*-clause is actually a noun, because it means ‘story’ in Chinese. However, it is not actually a nominal element. This is shown by the ungrammaticality of (i).

(i) *Lisi xiangxin-le [ruguo Zhangsan du-le na-ben shu de hua].
Lisi believe-Asp if Zhangsan read-Asp that-Cl book if ‘Lisi believed [if Zhangsan read the book].’

If *hua* ‘story’ functions as a noun, the entire phrase in the brackets *ruguo Zhangsan du-le na-ben shu de hua* ‘if Zhangsan read-Asp that-Cl book if’ should be able to function as a logical object of the predicate *xiangxin* ‘believe,’ which can take a direct object, as shown in (ii).

(ii) *Lisi xiangxin-le na-ge chuanwen.
Lisi believe-Asp that-Cl story ‘Lisi believed the story.’

Therefore, the clause final element *hua* ‘story’ for the *if*-clause is not a nominal element.
(24) a. *Ruguo* Zhangsan fabiao-le na-pian wenzhang, dajia
    
    if Zhangsan present-Asp that-Cl paper everyone
    
    hui jingya-ba.
    
    will be.surprised-Asp
    
    ‘If Zhangsan presented that paper, everyone will be sur-
    
    prised.’
    
    b. *Ruguo* Zhangsan de fabiao-le na-pian wenzhang,
    
    if Zhangsan DE present-Asp that-Cl paper
    
    dajia hui jingya-ba.
    
    everyone will be.surprised-Asp
    
    ‘If Zhangsan presented that paper, everyone will be sur-
    
    prised.’

Fifth, in (25b), a genitive subject is not allowed in the *even if*-clause
formed by the sentence initial element *jishi* ‘even if,’ which co-occurs with
the element *ye* ‘YE’ in the main clause.

(25) a. *Jishi* Zhangsan du-le na-ben shu, ye meiyou
    
    even.if Zhangsan read-Asp that-Cl book YE no
    
    ren hui jingya-ba.
    
    people will be.surprised-Asp
    
    ‘Even if Zhangsan read that book, no one will be surprised.’
    
    b. *Jishi* Zhangsan de du-le na-ben shu, ye meiyou
    
    even.if Zhangsan DE read-Asp that-Cl book YE no
    
    ren hui jingya-ba.
    
    people will be.surprised-Asp
    
    ‘Even if Zhangsan read that book, no one will be surprised.’

Let us then examine whether deep genitive subjects are allowed in Chi-

nese. Consider the examples in (26) and (27).

    
    Lisi think Zhangsan buy DE book is this-Cl
    
    ‘The book which Lisi thinks that Zhangsan bought is this.’
    
    b. Lisi renwei [Zhangsan de mai] de shu shi zhe-ben.
    
    Lisi think Zhangsan DE buy DE book is this-Cl
    
    ‘The book which Lisi thinks that Zhangsan bought is this.’

    
    Lisi say Zhangsan write DE book is this-Cl
    
    ‘The book which Lisi said that Zhangsan wrote is this.’
    
    b. Lisi shuo [Zhangsan de xie] de shu shi zhe-ben.
    
    Lisi say Zhangsan DE write DE book is this-Cl
    
    ‘The book which Lisi said that Zhangsan wrote is this.’
The b-examples in (26) and (27) are actually grammatical in Chinese. Therefore, Chinese allows deep genitive subjects, just like Mongolian. Note that Japanese does not allow deep genitive subjects, as shown in (28).

(28) kinoo watashi-ga John-ga/*-no katta to omotta hon
    yesterday I-Nom John-Nom/-Gen bought that thought book
    ‘the book which I thought [that John bought] yesterday’

4. Discussion

The above section showed for the first time that Chinese allows genitive subjects. If the present study is correct, not only Altaic and Indo-European languages, but also one of the Sino-Tibetan languages, allows genitive subjects. It has been pointed out that Altaic languages such as Japanese (Harada (1971) and Miyagawa (1993, 2011), among others), Mongolian (Maki et al. (2010)), Turkish (Kornfilt (2003)), and the Yanbian variety of Korean (Jin and Maki (2013)) allow genitive subjects. It has also been pointed out that some Indo-European languages such as Bengali (Maki et al. (2008)) and Urdu (Maki and Bhutto (2013)) allow genitive subjects. From the viewpoint of geography, the areas where Sino-Tibetan languages are spoken are surrounded by the areas where Altaic and some Indo-European languages are spoken. This raises the interesting question of whether Chinese, an example of Sino-Tibetan languages, may also allow genitive subjects, which are characteristic of Altaic languages and some Indo-European languages like Urdu. The present study provides an answer to this question. The answer is positive, which suggests that genitive subjects in a language are allowed in a well-defined configuration, no matter what language family the language might belong to.

Let us then consider what the present study may suggest for the theory of (Chinese) grammar. First, examples such as (15b), which has a transitive verb with an overt object, show that the Transitivity Restriction on genitive subjects, which prohibits co-occurrence of an accusative DP with a genitive subject (See Harada (1971), Miyagawa (1993), and Watanabe (1996)), is not operative in Chinese, unlike Japanese. (29) illustrates the Transitivity Restriction effect in Japanese.

(29) [kinoo Taroo-ga/*-no hon-o katta] mise
    yesterday Taro-Nom/-Gen book-Acc bought store
    ‘the store where Taro bought a book yesterday’
    (Ochi (2009: 327), slightly edited)

One may, however, argue that Chinese does not have an overt accusative
case marker, which results in the Transitivity Restriction being lifted, as the example in (30) in Japanese is considered to be grammatical.

(30) [kinoo Taroo-ga/-no hon katta] mise
    yesterday Taro-Nom/-Gen book bought store
    ‘the store where Taro bought a book yesterday’

(Ochi (2009: 328), slightly edited)

Ochi (2009: 335) suggests the possibility that without the accusative case marker, the object and the verb may constitute a unit, so that accusative Case checking is not involved in (30), in which the Transitivity Restriction is lifted. Interestingly enough, when the object is not a common noun, the object without an accusative case marker can not form a unit with the verb, and the Transitivity Restriction effect shows up, as shown in (31).

(31) [kinoo Taroo-ga/-no Jiroo(-o) hometa] riyuu
    yesterday Taro-Nom/-Gen Jiro-Acc praised reason
    ‘the reason why Taro praised Jiro yesterday’

Let us now consider the Chinese counterpart of (31), shown in (32).

(32) zuotian Zhangsan (de) biaoyang Lisi de liyou
    yesterday Zhangsan DE praise Lisi DE reason
    ‘the reason why Zhangsan praised Lisi yesterday’

(32) is grammatical with a genitive subject, which indicates that the Transitivity Restriction is not observed in Chinese. Therefore, the fact that Chinese objects do not bear the morphological accusative case marker is not crucial to the Transitivity Restriction, and the Transitivity Restriction on genitive subjects is actually not operative in Chinese.7

Second, the Chinese examples with genitive subjects suggest that geni-

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7 The first referee points out that as for (32), the authors seem to be assuming that the restriction on nominal-verb unit forming proposed in Ochi (2009) for Japanese is also operative in Chinese, and should present some evidence for this assumption. This is a very important comment. However, we cannot provide independent evidence for this assumption, because such a restriction is only confirmed by ungrammatical examples with the Transitivity Restriction effect, which cannot be found in Chinese.

Although we cannot provide independent evidence for this hypothesis, we can reinterpret the effect of the restriction on the Transitivity Restriction in the following fashion. The fact that both (15b) and (32) are grammatical in Chinese indicates either (i) that the Transitivity Restriction is not operative in Chinese, or (ii) that the Transitivity Restriction is lifted, because nominal-verb unit forming proposed in Ochi (2009) for Japanese is possible for proper nouns as well as common nouns in Chinese.

In this paper, we cannot provide any evidence for either of the two possibilities. However, it is worth noting that the Transitivity Restriction is lifted in other languages as well, such as Mongolian, as shown in (i).
tive subjects are allowed not only in head-final languages, but also in head-initial languages. The generalization on genitive subjects reached on the basis of the examples from the languages other than Chinese consists of two parts, as shown in (33).

(33) Generalization on Genitive Subjects
   a. Genitive subjects are observed in head-final languages.
   b. Genitive subjects are not observed in languages which use an overt complementizer in relative clauses.

(33b) is a brief summary of Hiraiwa’s (2001) generalization. (33a) is illustrated by examples from Urdu, Bengali, and Turkish, among others, as shown in (34)–(36).

(34) a. John-ne kitab-ø khareedi.
   John-Erg book-Abs bought
   ‘John bought a book.’
   Urdu (Maki and Bhutto (2013: 192) slightly edited)
   b. [Kal John-ki khareedi-hui] kitab buhut dilchasp
      yesterday John-Gen bought-Perf book very interesting
      hai. be.Pres
      ‘The book which John bought yesterday is very interesting.’
      Urdu (Maki and Bhutto (2013: 193) slightly edited)

(i) [öcügedür Bagatur-ø/-un Uлагan-i magta-gsan] siltagan
    yesterday Bagatur-Nom/-Gen Uлагan-Acc praise-Past.Adn reason
    ‘the reason why Bagatur praised Uлагan yesterday.’
    Mongolian (Maki et al. (2010: 234) slightly edited)

These data indicate that the Transitivity Restriction is lifted at least in Mongolian and Chinese, while it is not in Japanese. If the lifting of the Transitivity Restriction originates from the same factor(s) in the two languages, which seems correct, the question that immediately arises is which of the two possibilities should be correct, (i) the possibility that the Transitivity Restriction is simply not operative in these languages, or (ii) the possibility that the Transitivity Restriction is lifted, because nominal-verb unit forming proposed in Ochi (2009) for Japanese is possible in these languages. We will leave this important issue for future research.

8 To be more precise, Hiraiwa’s (2001) generalization is (i).

(i) The Nominative-Genitive Conversion (NGC) Universal
Nominative-Genitive Conversion is possible only in a language L which employs the C-T-V AGREE strategy in relativization; consequently, NGC is not observed in the languages which use overt wh-movement strategy or overt complementizer strategy in relative clause formation. (Hiraiwa (2001: 113))
(35) a. Se boi lekhe-che.
   he book write-Past.3.Sg
   ‘He wrote a book.’
   Bengali (personal communication with Sikder Monoare Murshed)

   last year his write-Asp book-the very interesting
   ‘The book which he wrote last year is very interesting.’
   Bengali (personal communication with Sikder Monoare Murshed)

(36) a. Sen yarn akşam ev-de yemek
   you.Sg.Nom tomorrow evening home-Loc food
   pişir-ecek-sin.
   cook-Fut-2.Sg
   ‘You will cook food at home tomorrow evening.’
   Turkish (Kornfilt (2003: 133, ex. 1) slightly edited)

b. [Ali-nin \(e\) pişir-diğ-i] yemek\(_1\)
   Ali-Gen cook-FN-3.Sg food
   ‘the food Ali cooked’
   Turkish (Kornfilt (2003: 145, ex. 11) slightly edited)

These languages are all head-final languages. Thus, the generalization in
(33a) is challenged by examples such as (15b) in Chinese, reproduced as
(37), as Chinese is a head-initial language with an SVO order.

(37) Zuotian Zhangsan de mai na-ben shu de liyou shi
    yesterday Zhangsan DE buy that-Cl book DE reason is
    zhe-ge.
   this-Cl
   ‘The reason why Zhangsan bought that book yesterday is this.’
   (= (15b))

One may point out that Chinese relative clauses are headed by an overt
complementizer \(de\) ‘DE,’ which then challenges the generalization in (33b).
However, Chinese does not possess an overt complementizer that corre-
sponds to \(that\) in English, or \(de\) ‘DE’ does not function as a complemen-
tizer, as shown in (38).

(38) Lisi renwei (*de) Zhangsan zuotian mai na-ben shu.
   Lisi think that Zhangsan yesterday buy that-Cl book
   ‘Lisi thinks that Zhangsan bought that book yesterday.’

Thus, it is not implausible to hypothesize that \(de\) ‘DE’ put in front of the
relative head \(liyou\) ‘reason’ in (37) is not a complementizer in Chinese.
Therefore, the correct generalization on genitive subjects will be (39).

(39) Generalization on Genitive Subjects

Genitive subjects are not observed in languages which use an overt complementizer in relative clauses. (Hiraiwa (2001))

Under (39), genitive subjects are predicted to be allowed in either head-final or head-initial languages, given a proper configuration.

(39) seems to be a correct generalization on genitive subjects, as far as the data so far observed are concerned. However, one particular aspect of Hiraiwa’s (2001) hypothesis needs to be carefully examined. Hiraiwa (2001) claims that a genitive subject is possible only in a language L which employs the C-T-V AGREE strategy in relativization, where C is not morphologically realized. That is why genitive subjects are not observed in languages which use an “overt” complementizer in relative clauses. However, Murasugi (1991) convincingly shows that Japanese relative clauses are IPs, not CPs. If Murasugi’s (1991) idea is generalized to Chinese, C may not be relevant in this language as well.9 Rather, the contrast between (21b) and (23b) suggests that a nominal element, rather than a covert complementizer, is a necessary factor for genitive subject licensing in Chinese.

Third, given the Conditions on Genitive Subject Licensing in (2) and the fact that a deep genitive subject is allowed in Mongolian, not Japanese, the fact that it is allowed in Chinese, as shown in (26b), reproduced as (40), suggests that the abstract adnominal form of a predicate may exist in Chinese.

(40) [Lisi renwei [Zhangsan de mai] de shu shi zhe-ben.
Lisi think Zhangsan DE buy DE book is this-Cl
‘The book which Lisi thinks that Zhangsan bought is this.’

= (26b)

Condition (2b) states that a genitive subject must be in a local relationship with the adnominal form of the predicate. If (2b) applies to Chinese, the predicate in the embedded clause mai ‘buy’ should be in the adnominal form. Therefore, in spite of the fact that there is no morphological distinction between the conclusive form and the adnominal form of a predicate in Chinese, the grammaticality of (40) seems to suggest that Chinese possesses

9 Note that Miyagawa (2011) convincingly shows that Japanese relative clauses that include a genitive subject are TPs (equivalent to IPs in this paper), and do not contain a C-projection. Our claim on Chinese relative clauses including a genitive subject is along this line.
the abstract adnominal form of a predicate.  

5. Conclusion

This paper investigated whether Chinese possesses genitive subjects, and discovered that it actually did. Based on newly found data, we suggested the following. First, not only Altaic and Indo-European languages, but also one of the Sino-Tibetan languages, allows genitive subjects. Second, the Transitivity Restriction on genitive subjects, which prohibits the co-occurrence of an accusative DP with a genitive subject, is not operative in Chinese, just like Mongolian, and unlike Japanese. Third, genitive subjects are

The first referee points out that it is preferable to present some independent evidence for the claim that the predicate in the embedded clause in (40) is in the adnominal form. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to provide independent evidence for this claim, as Chinese predicates show no morphological inflections.

Note here that the claim actually solely relies on the assumption that the conditions on genitive subject licensing are (2a, b) for Mongolian and Chinese. If it is true that (2a, b) are operative in Mongolian and Chinese, the fact that (40) is grammatical suggests that the predicate in the embedded clause must be in the adnominal form, and that Chinese does possess the abstract adnominal form of a predicate.

Now, is there any evidence that shows that (2b) is not operative, and only (2a) is functioning in Chinese? The fact that the example in (i) is ungrammatical suggests that (2a) is not the only condition functioning in Chinese.

(i) [Ruguo Zhangsan (*de) gei-le qian], Lisi mai de shu shi zhe-ben.
   ‘The book which [Lisi will buy [if Zhangsan gave him money]] is this.’

In (i), the subject within the if-clause is c-commanded by a nominal expression, yet the example is ungrammatical with a genitive subject. This indicates that (2a) is not the only condition for genitive subject licensing, and example (i) with a genitive subject will be correctly ruled out by (2b), if the predicate in the if-clause is not in the adnominal form. Note that the Mongolian counterpart of (i) is also ungrammatical, as shown in (ii).

(ii) [[Bayatur-ø/*-un joyus-ø ügkü-bel], Batu-ø qudaldun-abqu]
    Bagatur-Nom/-Gen money-Acc give-if Batu-Nom take-Adn.Pres
    nom-bol, ene nom yum.
    book-Top this book Cop
    ‘The book which [Batu will buy [if Bagatur gave him money]] is this.’
    (personal communication with Lina Bao)

The ungrammaticality of example (ii) is expected, since the predicate in the if-clause is not in the adnominal form.

Of course, we can only claim that Chinese possesses the abstract adnominal form of a predicate in an indirect way. However, whether or not Chinese possesses the abstract adnominal form of a predicate, it is important to note that genitive subject licensing in certain languages seems to need a condition like (2b), which poses a locality restriction on the relationship between a genitive subject and its (partial) licensor.
allowed not only in head-final languages, but also in head-initial languages, and genitive subject licensing may not require a covert complementizer in Chinese. Rather, a nominal element is a necessary factor for genitive subject licensing in Chinese. Fourth, and finally, the fact that a deep genitive subject is allowed in Chinese suggests that the language may possess the abstract adnominal form of a predicate.

REFERENCES


DOES MODERN CHINESE ALLOW GENITIVE SUBJECTS?  


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