

## SOME NOTES ON THE SYNTAX OF CHINESE PARTITIVES AND INDEFINITES\*

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It is claimed in this paper that Chinese *you* ‘have’ in partitives and indefinites is verbal. Given that *de* is a nominalizer, it undergoes incorporation into *you* in partitives on the surface, forming a nominal *youde*. In indefinites, *you* and *xie* may be reanalyzed as an attributive on the surface, functioning as an indefinite modifier.

### 1. Existential *you* ‘have’: Tsai’s observations and analysis

- There are three variants of existential *you* ‘have’ in Chinese: **presentational**, **partitive**, and **indefinite** (specific plural).

(1) 有人走了。 (presentational)

You ren zou-le.

have person leave-Perf

‘There were (some) people leaving.’

(2) 有的人走了。 (partitive)

You de ren zou-le.

have DE person leave-Perf

‘Some of the people left.’

(3) 有些人走了。 (indefinite)

You xie ren zou-le.

have some person leave-Perf

‘Some people left.’

- These three types of *you* have different syntactic distributions (Tsai 2003).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (6) is marked as ‘?’ in Tsai (2003: 161) while it is marked as ‘\*’ in Tsai (2004: 19).

- (4) \*我騙了有人。 (presentational)  
 \*Wo pian-le you ren.  
 I cheat-Perf have person  
 ‘I cheated someone.’
- (5) \*我騙了有的人。 (partitive)  
 \*Wo pian-le you de ren.  
 I cheat-Perf have DE person  
 ‘I cheated some of the people.’
- (6) \*/?我騙了有些人。 (indefinite)  
 \*/?Wo pian-le you xie ren.  
 I cheat-Perf have some person  
 ‘I cheated some people.’
- (7) \*我被有人騙了。 (presentational)  
 \*Wo bei you ren pian-le.  
 I BEI have person cheat-Perf  
 ‘I was cheated by someone.’
- (8) ?我被有的人騙了。 (partitive)  
 ?Wo bei you de ren pian-le.  
 I BEI have DE person cheat-Perf  
 ‘I was cheated by some of the people.’
- (9) 我被有些人騙了。 (indefinite)  
 Wo bei you xie ren pian-le.  
 I BEI have some person cheat-Perf  
 ‘I was cheated by some people.’

- In general, *you* ‘have’ tends to be in a preverbal position (Tsai 2003).

(10) The occurrence of the variants of existential *you* ‘have’

	presentational <i>you</i>	partitive <i>you de</i>	indefinite <i>you xie</i>
subject	OK	OK	OK
preverbal	*	?	OK
object	*	*	*/?

- Presentational *you* is a verbal element (modal or auxiliary), functioning as a sentential operator (collective wisdom, not controversial).

- Both partitive *you* and indefinite *you* are determiners (Tsai 2003).
  - ❖ ‘∅’ denotes the ‘part-of’ relation, cf. ‘some (part) of the people’.
  - ❖ *De* is a determiner, à la Andrew Simpson.

(11) [DP *you* [NP ∅ [DP *de* [NP *ren* ]]]] (partitive)

(12) [DP *you* [NumP *yi* [CIP *xie* [NP *ren* ]]]] (indefinite)

- Tsai (2003) assumes that the variation in table (10) is created by the ‘gradual change’ of the categorial status of *you*, i.e. existential predicate → pronoun → determiner.
- Indefinite *you* has undergone grammaticalization, becoming a ‘genuine determiner’.
- Partitive *you* is a still pronoun, only halfway grammaticalized. Its ambiguous structural status is correlated with its ‘on-the-fly’ character from a historical point of view.
- QUESTION: How does the ‘on-the-fly’ character preclude partitive *you* from being in the postverbal position?

## 2. *You* ‘have’ as a verbal element underlyingly

- Tsai’s (2003) intuition is insightful: assuming that existential *you* is in a sentence initial position, the closer the argument is, the more likely *you* and the argument form a ‘constituent’.<sup>2</sup>

(13) *you* [ NP1 [ *bei* [ NP2 [ V NP3 ]]]]

(14) *you* NP1 > *you* NP2 > *you* NP3

- To account for these facts (e.g. hierarchy (14)), I have the following claims:

(15) Grammatical status of the variants of existential *you* ‘have’

- a. **presentational *you***: verbal throughout the derivation;
- b. **partitive *you***: verbal (underlyingly) and nominal (on the surface);
- c. **indefinite *you***: adverbial (underlyingly) and attributive (on the surface);

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<sup>2</sup> There could be a ‘downward incorporation’ of *you* historically. However, as pointed by Tsai (2003), there is no evidence for such movement in the historical development of Chinese.



### 3. Arguments for my claims

#### So-called ‘pronominal’ usage of *you* ‘have’

- To support his nominal analysis of *you* ‘have’ in modern Chinese, Tsai (2003) assumes that *you* ‘have’ had been used as a pronoun in archaic Chinese (pre-Qin period) (cited from Yang and He 2001:159).

(18) 日有食之。 (Shijing 《詩·小雅·十月之交》)

Ri you shi zhi.

sun have eat it

‘The sun, someone ate it.’

- *You* ‘have’ in examples like (18) could be analyzed as a verb that takes a VP complement, similar to the causative construction in archaic Chinese (Li 2004).

(19) 鄭夫人使棄諸夢中。 (Zuozhuan 《左傳·宣公四年》)

Yun furen shi qi zhu meng zhong.

Yun madam cause discard in dream middle

‘Madam Yun caused something to be discarded in the dream.’

- In the literature, it is not impossible to analyze the so-called ‘pronominal’ *you* in classical Chinese as a verb (Fang 2002).

#### ‘*You + de*’ as a word in Chinese

- ‘*You + de*’ can be a word used independently meaning ‘some’ in modern Chinese, supporting the analysis of suffixation and nominalization of *de* (see (16)).

(20) 十個指頭，有的長，有的短。 (《現代漢語詞典》)

Shi-ge zhitou, youde chang, youde duan.

ten-CI finger some long some short

‘Of the ten fingers, some are long and some are short.’

#### *You* as an adverbial

- *You* in some usage in archaic Chinese seemed to be an adverbial, occurring in a preverbal position.

- (21) 女子有行，遠父母兄弟。 (Shijing 《詩經·衛風·竹竿》)  
 Nüzi you xing, yuan fumu xiongdi  
 girl have marry far parents brothers  
 ‘When a young lady goes away [and is married], she leaves her brothers and parents.’

- *You* in *meiyou* ‘not’ in modern Chinese can be treated as an adverbial.

- (22) 他沒有來。  
 Ta mei you lai.  
 he not have come  
 ‘He did not come.’

‘You xie NP’ and ‘you xie AP’ in pre-modern Mandarin

- The plural classifier *xie* in modern Mandarin was derived from *shao* 少 (literally meaning ‘few’) that was used as an attributive in the Wei, Jin, and Southern-Northern Dynasties (Lü 1985).

- (23) 樓下有少酒，與卿爲別。 (《後漢書》，from Lü 1985: 366)  
 Lou xia you shao jiu, yu qing wei bie.  
 house down have few wine with you WEI leave

- *Xie* ‘some’ is an attributive/adjective, meaning ‘few’, ‘some’.

- (24) 這是些逃荒的百姓。 (《儒林外史》，Lü 1985: 372)  
 Zhe shi xie tao huang de baixing.  
 this be few flee famine DE people  
 ‘These are the common people who fled from their famine-stricken homeland.’

- (25) 無些氣力。 (《朴通事諺解》，Lü 1985: 376)  
 Wu xie qili.  
 not some strength  
 ‘without strength’

- *You* ‘have’ is still an adverbial when it is used to modify *xie* ‘some’ after reanalysis. The grammatical relation/category of *you* ‘have’ doesn’t change. That’s why the judgment of reanalysis of *you* + *xie* is much better, contra nominalization of *you* in *youde* (see table (10))

#### 4. Dialectal variation: Mandarin vs. Cantonese

- Assume that Cantonese *ge3* (嘅) and *di1* (啲) are counterparts of Mandarin *de* (的) and *xie* (些).

(26) 我嘅書

ngo ge syu

I GE book

‘my book(s) / 我的書’

(27) 呢啲書

ni di syu

this DI book

‘these books / 這些書’

- The partitive pattern is missing in Cantonese (cf. (2) and (3) in Mandarin). Why?

(28) \*有嘅人走咗。 (partitive)

\*Jau ge jan zau-zo.

have GE person leave-Perf

‘Some of the people left.’

(29) 有啲人走咗。 (indefinite)

Jau di jan zau-zo.

have some person leave-Perf

‘Some people left.’

- Historical development of Cantonese *ge3* and *di1* may shed light on this issue.

Ge3 (嘅)

- *Ge3* (嘅) was derived from the measure word/classifier *gè* (個/箇/个)(Cao 1995)
- In pre-modern Mandarin (since late Tang Dynasty and Five Dynasties), no examples of the ‘verb + *gè* (個) + noun’ pattern existed and *ge* (個) was not attached to any verbs.
- In pre-modern Mandarin, *di* (底) was used as an attributive marker, e.g. 245 examples of *di* (底) vs. 24 examples of *ge* (個) in *Zutangji* (《祖堂集》). Perhaps *di* (底) was a vocabulary in the standard language while *ge* (個) was used in some southern dialects (Cao 1995).
- Compared with Mandarin *de* (的), perhaps *ge3* (嘅) entered Cantonese quite recently (Yue 2000) and has not yet been fully grammaticalized in modern

Cantonese, e.g. 的: 2445 examples; 嘅: 321 examples in 《麥仕治廣州俗語〈書經〉解義》 (cited from Yue 2000).

DiI (啲)

- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Cantonese, *diI* (written as 的) was used as a plural marker and an attributive marker (in《麥仕治廣州俗語〈書經〉解義》, cited from Yue 2000).<sup>3</sup>

(30) 個堯帝個人的事績

go Jiu dai go jan dik sizik  
 Cl Yao king Cl person DI achievement  
 ‘the achievements of the person of King Yao’

(31) 百姓下頭就有一個未曾娶老婆的人

Baaksing haatou zau jau jat-go mei cang ceoi loupo dik jan.  
 people below then have one-Cl not yet marry wife DI person  
 ‘There is a person who has not yet taken a wife among the common people.’

- Examples of the partitive *diI* can also be found in Cantonese the 19<sup>th</sup> century (in《麥仕治廣州俗語〈書經〉解義》, cited from Yue 2000).

(32) 世上有的人，...。

Saisoeng jau dik jan, ...  
 on earth have some person  
 ‘There are some people in the world.’

(33) 有的就不過至多做十年。

Jau dik zau batgwo zido zou sap nin.  
 have some then merely at most do ten year  
 ‘Some only worked ten years at most.’

- The attributive usage of *diI* (啲) could be derived from *dikI* (的).
- The plural marker was written as ‘的’ in 呢的 ‘these’ and rendered [tik] in E. C. Bridgman (1841) *Chinese Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect* (Macao: S. Well Williams) (cited from Yue 2004: 250).
- The plural marker ending with a velar stop is still preserved in some Yue dialects, e.g. [tik<sup>55</sup>] in 嗰[tik<sup>55</sup>] ‘those’ in Lianxian (Qingshui) (連縣清水) (Zhan et al. 1994: 660, Zhan et al. 2002: 286), Lianjiang (廉江) (Zhan et al. 2002: 472).

<sup>3</sup> Examples (30) to (33) are transcribed in the modern Cantonese pronunciations of the Chinese characters.

(34) Historical development of Cantonese *di1* (啲) and *ge3* (嘅)

*de/dik1* (的) → *di1* (啲) → *jau5 di1* (有啲)  
*gè/go3* (個) → *ge3* (嘅) → *\*jau5 ge3* (\*有嘅)

- In terms of the diachronic development of Cantonese *di1* (啲), it could preserve more grammatical properties of *de* (的), such as the partitive usage, functioning as the head of DP.
- Given that *ge3* (嘅) was from *gè/go3* (個) and entered Cantonese quite recently, it is not yet fully grammaticalized.
- Though *ge3* (嘅) is now used as a nominalizer in modern Cantonese, only *di1* (啲) preserves the partitive usage (or pronounced as *dit1*).<sup>4</sup>

(35) 畀啲蘋果我呀。

Bei di pinggwo ngo aa.  
 give some apple I SFP  
 ‘Give me a little piece of an apple.’

(36) \*畀嘅蘋果我呀。

\*Bei ge pinggwo ngo aa.  
 give GE apple I SFP

(37) 啲 (咁) 多蘋果

dit (gam) doe pinggwo  
 some so few apple  
 ‘a very little piece of an apple’

(38) \*嘅 (咁) 多蘋果

\*ge (gam) doe pinggwo  
 GE so few apple

- The heterogeneous nature of so-called (nominal) modifier markers in Cantonese may open up a new way to study the grammatical properties of this type of words and their syntactic status.

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<sup>4</sup> Example (35) and its judgment are due to Cathy Wong (personal communication).

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