

Gapping as Focus Movement

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According to Tai (1969), M.-D. Li (1988), Tsai (1994) and Tang (2001), Chinese disallows English-like canonical Gapping that is shown in (1.a-b), regardless of verb types. Thus, according to their judgments, the Chinese counterparts of (1.a-b) are ungrammatical (2-3). However, according to Mainland Mandarin (MM) speakers, (2) and (3) are actually context-sensitive. For example, (2) is fine as an answer to the question “tamen dou xihuan shenme (‘they all like what?’)”. (3) is also fine, giving the context that “natian zai shan-shang, tamen dou kanjian-le shui? (‘that day on the mountain, they all saw whom?’)”. These contexts, in which (2-3) can occur, coupled with some gapping-like examples (i.e. (4)) that are provided by Li (1998) and Paul (1996a, b, 1999), point to one direction: that is, Chinese (at least in MM) does have English-like canonical Gapping (also notice that (2-3) cannot be reduced to independently occurred sentences that are verb-less, as argued in Tang (2001): *Lisi __ juzi, cf. Wo __ Zhangsan! ‘I am Zhangsan!’).

But if this is the case, Gapping in MM has posed some serious problems to Johnson’s (1994, 1996/2003, inter alia) ATB-movement analysis towards Gapping. On the one hand, Gapping in MM is not restricted to coordinate structures. For example, the gap can be embedded in the sentential subject position as shown in (5). On the other hand, Gapping in MM does not seem to obey some typical island constraint (a very important, if not crucial, diagnostic to test movement operations), i.e. the CNPC as shown in (6). These two points jointly undermine an ATB-movement account towards Gapping in MM.

If it is not ATB-movement of verb heads, what can it be then? In this talk, I will argue that Gapping in MM is formed by both syntactic movement and PF-deletion (cf. the hypothesis of Gapping as deletion by van Oirsouw 1987). The process can be explicated as the following:

In MM, the target of Gapping can be syntactically analyzed as being independent (i.e. not syntactically related to its antecedent, just like the analysis of Pseudo-gapping in the fashion of Lasnik, 1995, 1997/1999a, b, inter alia). Considering just the gapped clause (the target) in MM, there are only two components: the first NP and the second NP. In this talk, I will argue that Gapping in MM is derived by base-generating the first NP in the Spec of TopicP, following Wu (2003), which is in line with the fact that Topicalization is robust and a common construction in MM. The Second NP, however, is derived by Focus movement of the relevant NP to the Spec of FocusP, which is above IP but below TopicP – the availability of such a Focus position can be supported by the focus-movement of wh-words in MM which is always considered to be wh-in-situ (Huang, 1982/1998) and the *shi...de* focus construction (or cleft construction) in MM. The movement is also justified by the obligatory focus on the second NP: without the F-marking on the second NP, the gapped clauses are less acceptable. The whole process is then finished by the PF-deletion of the relevant IP. In this fashion, Gapping in MM is analyzed on a par with Sluicing (e.g. by movement of the relevant wh-words to the COMP domain, followed by the deletion of the target IP (Merchant 2001)) rather than ATB-movement of verb heads.

In a broader theoretical framework, this study will provide further insights on the fine structure of the left-periphery in clause architecture (cf. Rizzi 1997).

- 1) a. John likes apples and Mary __ oranges. (state)
b. John saw Mary and Bill __ Susan. (action)
- 2) Zhangsan xihua pingguo, Lisi __ juzi. (state)
Zhangsan like apple Lisi orange
“Zhangsan likes apples and Lisi oranges.”
- 3) Zhangsan kanjian-le Shufen, Lisi __ Yaping. (action)
Zhangsan see-Perf. Shufen Lisi Yaping
“Zhangsan saw Shufen and Lisi Yaping.”
- 4) Zhangsan chi-le san-ge pingguo, Lisi __ si-ge juzi. (Li 1998: 41)
Zhangsan eat-Perf. three-CL apple Lisi four-CL orange
“Zhangsan ate three apples, and Lisi four oranges.”
- 5) Zhangsan kaojin-le Qinghua. [Wo __ Beida] ziren mei wenti.
Zhangsan exam-enter-Perf. Qinghua I Beida of-course no problem
“Zhangsan exam-entered QingHua University. [That I *(exam-entered) Beijing University] is of course no problem.”
- 6) Zhiyao Zhangsan yitian bu kaojin Qinghua,
as long as Zhangsan one-day not exam-enter Qinghua
ni jiu beng ti wo __ Beida de shi.
you then not mention I Beida DE thing
“As long as Zhangsan has not exam-entered Qinghua University, you will not mention the thing that I *(exam-enter) Beijing University.”

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