

## Relative clauses and the noun phrase in Cantonese

Dominic Yu

University of California, Berkeley

A number of different formal analyses of relative clauses have been proposed over the years. For example, the adjunction analysis states that the relative clause is adjoined to the modified noun; the antisymmetry analysis (formulated in Kayne 1994) posits that the complementizer phrase (CP) is the direct complement of the determiner (the determiner being the head of the nominal projection), and that the NP being relativized is moved to the specifier position of the CP; yet another alternative is the small-clause analysis by Dikken and Singhapreecha (2004), which attempts to unify the treatment of relative clauses with that of other nominal modifiers.

However, to date there have been no attempts at a formal analysis of Cantonese relative clauses, an exercise which may shed considerable light on the structure of relative clauses in general.

Cantonese is important because there are three different relative clause constructions, as Matthews and Yip (2001, 280) point out:

- (45) ngo5 sik1 ge3 hok6saang1  
1sg know PRT student  
'the student(s) I know'.
- (46) ngo5 sik1 go2 di1 hok6saang1  
1sg know that CL.pl student  
'the students I know'.
- (47) ngo5 sik1 go2 di1 ge3 hok6saang1  
1sg know that CL.pl PRT student  
'the students I know'.

The most basic construction in Cantonese, the type shown in (46), presents the greatest challenge. Whereas *ge3* in (45) can be analyzed as some kind of semantically empty function word (in an analogous fashion to, e.g., Mandarin *de*), the relative clause in (46) is typologically unusual in that it appears to use the classifier as a relativizer.

In this paper, we apply the various analyses described above to the Cantonese data (building on Simpson 2002, Wu 2000, Tang 1990, etc.) in order to evaluate the relative merits of each. The results indicate that the adjunction analysis poses the fewest problems and may be the most fruitful option to pursue. Along the way, we also discover some interesting things about the noun phrase in Cantonese; specifically, *ge3* seems to allow only an NP complement (as opposed to Mandarin *de* which seems to allow only a DP complement), a syntactic pattern which suggests that such particles head a functional projection within the nominal projection, as Dikken and Singhapreecha suggest.