Relative clause without complementizer in Mandarin, with reference to Cantonese[1]
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In this paper, I will study a type of relative clause (henceforth RC) in Mandarin Chinese which is little described. Compared to the standard RC, which can be represented as [RC *de*COMP N], the type that I will present has the structure [RC DEM N]. Differences are not only syntactic, but also semantic and pragmatic. However, this new type has its counterpart in Cantonese. The comparison between these two languages (or dialects) shows that in fact this less studied type of Mandarin RC can be considered as a parallel evolution with one type of Cantonese RC from one same construction. Besides, the [RC DEM N] type of RC satisfies the typological properties of prenominal RC, too.

1. Relative clauses in Mandarin Chinese

Mandarin relative clauses are structurally characterised as [RC *de*COMP N]NP (which I will call *de*-RC), that is the RC is prenominal, followed by the complementizer *de*, which is as well the genitive marker, to form a CP before the head noun, with or without other modifiers or specifiers, such as adjectives, demonstratives, which are always optional (cf. (1)). For subject and object RCs, the gap is used (cf. (1)) while for other positions, a resumptive pronoun is used for animate head noun (cf. (2)) and a "generalized gap"[2] for inanimate ones (cf. (3)). Semantically, the RC can be restrictive or non-restrictive.[3]

(1) *wo   zuotian   kanjian   de   (na   ge)   ren*
     PRO.1S yesterday see   COMP   DEM   CL   person
     With DEM CL: 'the person that I saw yesterday' (specific)
     Without DEM CL: 'the person(s) that I saw yesterday' (specific or generic)
(2) *wo   wei   ta   gongzuo de   na   ge laoban*
     PRO.1S for   PRO.3S   work   COMP   DEM   CL boss
     'the boss for whom I work"
(3) *wo   (*zai) shangban   de   xuexiao*
     PRO.1S in, at   work   COMP   school
     'the school where I work'

2. A new type of RC

The type of RC described above is used in oral speech as well as in more formal written speech. Actually, there is another type of RC used only in spoken Chinese, and often in a rather informal register:

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[1] I would like to thank Waltraud Paul for her remarks on an earlier version of this paper, which raised interesting questions about my analysis, questions that, unfortunately, I cannot talk about thoroughly.
[2] By "generalized gap" I mean a gap that corresponds to the position occupied by the head noun and the preposition, as in (3).
[3] For more discussions, see, among others, Li & Thompson (1981), Lin (2001), Yip & Rimmington (2004) and Wu (2007).

(4) *wo   zuo^r   jian   nei   ren^4*
     PRO.1S   yesterday see, meet DEM   person
     'that person I saw/met yesterday'
(5) *wo   song   ta   hua^r   nei   nude*
     PRO.1S   give   PRO.3S   flower DEM   woman
     Lit. 'that woman I gave flowers to her'
(6) *wo   shangban^r nei   di^{r}*
     PRO.1S   work   DEM   place
     'where I work'

This type of RC, which I call DEM-RC for the reasons explained below, is always prenominal, with exactly the same strategies as the standard *de*-RCs: gap for subject and object, resumptive for animate head nouns in other positions and "generalized gap" for inanimate head nouns in other positions than subject and object. But it differs from the *de*-RC in that, first, no complementizer is used; second, there is always a demonstrative, which is almost always *nei* 'that', the distal deictic, except when the context imposes *zhei* 'this', the proximal one, in the presence of an object near to the speakers; and third, the classifier is more than often omitted. Semantically, it can only be restrictive with a specific reading: neither a non-restrictive reading nor a generic one is possible. If the *de*-RC is more than often understood as restrictive, it can be interpreted in a non-restrictive way:

(7) *wo   ai   de   bali*
     PRO.1S   love COMP   Paris
     Restrictive: 'the Paris that I love'
     Non-restrictive: 'Paris, which I love'

Besides, a DEM-RC alone is ambiguous because of the absence of the complementizer. For example, (4), besides understood as a RC, can also mean 'I saw that person yesterday': it is the context that will tell what it really means.[5]
Note that the demonstrative *nei* (or *zhei*) is not a complementizer, even if (4), repeated below as (8), seems to be the exact mirror image of the English *that*-RC:

(8) *[wo zuo^r jian]   nei   ren*
     RC   that   N
(9) *the person   that   [I saw yesterday]*
     N   that   RC

If *nei* was complementizer, then the head noun *ren* 'person' would have no definiteness marker, so (4) could be generic or specific, just like (1). However, for (9) no generic reading is possible, even if the head noun is plural, in which case, the only reading is still the specific one:

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[4] Note the following features proper to colloquial language: phonetically, the use of 'er' rhoticism and the pronunciation of the demonstrative 'nei' instead of 'na'; and lexically, the use of 'zuo' instead of 'zuotian' for 'yesterday'. The example, if pronounced with some northern accent, could be even more acceptable.
[5] Probably the intonation plays an active role as well, but this remains to be verified.

(10)*wo* 　　　*zuo^r* 　　　*jian* 　　　*neixie* 　　　*ren*
　　　PRO.1S 　　yesterday 　see, meet 　DEM.PL 　　person
　　　'those very persons I saw/met yesterday'[6]

Another possibility is that syntactically, the complementizer *de* is in an underlying level. At the surface level, it is not pronounced, or "masked", because of the assimilation between *de* and *nei*: [tə nei] → [t nei] → [n nei] → [nei], that is, first the schwa drops, which is a very banal phonetic phenomenon, second, [t] is assimilated to [n], given the common feature [dental], and finally, since there is no geminate consonant in Mandarin, the final realization is [nei]. If the demonstrative is *zhei* [tʂei], the same process is still possible, because of the common feature [dental] between [tʂ] and [n]. This possibility cannot be excluded, but it is more conceptual than factual. It is difficult, if not completely impossible, to find actual proofs. Further arguments against this analysis will be presented below.[7]

This type of RC is much less described and studied. However, it is very similar to a type of RC in Cantonese.

3. Types of RC in Cantonese
In Cantonese, there are two types of RCs, as described by Matthews & Yip (1994:109):

(11)relative clause – ge – noun[8]
　　　relative clause – (gó) – CL – noun

e.g. (Matthews & Yip 2001:272):

(12)keoi^5 　coeng^3 ge^3 　go^1
　　　3SG 　　sing 　　PRT 　song
　　　'the song(s) she sings'.
(13)keoi^5 　coeng^3 go^2 　sau^2 　go^1
　　　3SG 　　sing 　　that 　CL 　　song
　　　'the song she sings'.

4. Cantonese vs. Mandarin
The first type, the one with *ge* (henceforth ge-RC) is exactly like the *de*-RC in Mandarin, as noted by Matthews & Yip (1994:110-111). (12) is structurally and semantically similar to (1): the use of complementizer, *ge^3*, the optionality of other modifiers and specifiers and the double reading – specific or generic – of the RC. Nothing more will be said.
As for the second type, formed with an optional demonstrative but an unomittable classifier

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[6] Like (4), (9) can also mean 'I saw those persons yesterday.'.
[7] Waltraud Paul asked as well why 'de' could be omitted, along with the classifier. For a diachronic analysis, see below.
[8] (Matthews & Yip 1994:111): "*dīk* may be used in place of *ge* in formal registers of Cantonese:

　　Yùhngyih 　sauhsēung 　dīk 　léuihyán. (song title)
　　easy 　　　　get-hurt 　　that 　woman
　　'Women who are easily hurt.'

Note that 'that' in the gloss should be understood as complementizer but not demonstrative.

(henceforth CL-RC), exemplified by (13), actually, it is the exact counterpart of the DEM-RC in Mandarin. Here are two more examples (Matthews & Yip 1994:112, 113)

(14) Ngóhdeih sung fā　　béi kéuih gó　go behngyàhn hóu fāan saai la
　　　 we　　　 send flower to him　　that CL patient　　　well back all　PRT
　　　 'The patient we sent flowers to has recovered completely.'
(15) Ngóh yiu　wán gó　　go yàhn　m̀h háidouh
　　　 I　　　 need seek that　CL person not here
　　　 'The person I'm looking for is not here.'
　　　 (not *Ngóh wán kéuih gó go yàhn)

First, Matthews & Yip (1994:111) note that "[t]he construction [i.e. CL-RC] is extremely common, being preferred in colloquial Cantonese to the more formal *ge* construction." Very interestingly, the DEM-CL, as noted above, is only used in spoken Chinese. So the first similarity between the CL-RC and the DEM-RC is sociolinguistic.

Second, syntactically, (13) is similar to (4) in that no complementizer is used but the same strategies are used (i.e. gap for subject and object and resumptive pronoun for other positions[9]).However, there are two main differences: in the Mandarin DEM-RC, the demonstrative is always obligatory while the classifier is more than often omitted, but in the Cantonese CL-RC, it is the classifier that is always obligatory while the demonstrative is optional, as noted in (10). Actually, this difference shows only a parallel between these two languages. In colloquial Mandarin, classifiers can be omitted when the noun is used with demonstratives to specify the referent in question:

(16) *zhei/nei　yifu/baozhi/feijipiao*　　　　　　　*te*　　　　　*gui*
　　　 DEM　 clothes/newspaper/plane ticket　　particularly expensive
　　　 'This/that/the very piece of clothes/newspaper/ticket is particularly expensive.'

But it is impossible to use classifiers alone[10]:

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[9] I am not sure if animacy plays a role as well in Cantonese RCs, but the following example may be an clue (Matthews & Yip 1994:112):

(i)　Kéuihdeih jyuh　gódouh　hóu　　m-fōngbihn
　　　 they　　　 live　　there　　very　 non-convenient
　　　 'Where they live is very inconvenient.'

Cf. (Matthews & Yip 1994:117, my emphasis):

(ii)　Ngóhdeih **hái** Gáulùhng jyuh-jó　sāam　lìhn.
　　　 we　　　　 **at** Kowloon　live-PFV three　year
　　　 'We've been living in Kowloon for three years.'

That 'hái' is necessary in (ii) but deleted in (i) may mean that when the head noun is inanimate, the generalized gap, not the resumptive pronoun, is used (cf. (3)).

[10] Some CL+NP are lexicalized, e.g. *ge-ren* 'individuals', *che-liang* 'vehicle'. Here, there is no more grounds to consider *ge* and *liang* as classifiers.

(17) *jian　yifu　　　te　　　　　gui
　　　 CL　　clothes　particularly　expensive
　　　 Intended meaning: '(The) clothes are expensive.'

(18) *zhang　baozhi/feijipiao　　　te　　　　　gui
　　　 CL　　　newspaper/plane ticket　particularly　expensive
　　　 Intended meaning: 'The/A newspaper/plane ticket is particularly expensive.'

On the contrary, in Cantonese "the classifier and noun may be used without any demonstrative adjective or numeral" (Matthews & Yip 1994:93):

(19) Jī　bāt　hóu　hóu　sé
　　　 CL　pen　good　good　write
　　　 'This/that pen is good to write with.'

So, colloquial Mandarin and Cantonese are just contrary in the usage of demonstrative and classifier in the specific/definite NP: DEM + (CL +) NP in Mandarin, but (DEM +) CL + NP in Cantonese. The difference remains if there are modifiers before the NP, for example, RCs: RC + DEM + (CL +) NP in Mandarin

(20) [wo zuo^r jian]　nei　　　ren (= 4)
　　　 RC　　　　　　　 DEM　　NP

and RC + (DEM +) CL + NP in Cantonese (Matthews & Yip 1994:111)

(21) [Ngóhdeih　hái Faatgwok sihk] dī　yéh　géi　　hóu-sihk　ga
　　　 RC　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　CL　NP
　　　 we　　　　in France　eat　CL　food　quite　good-eat　PRT
　　　 'The food we ate in France was pretty good'

So the above difference between Mandarin DEM-RC and Cantonese CL-RC is only a particular case of the general difference in the usage of demonstrative and classifier in specific NPs. The correspondence is clear. Besides, both types can be used as free RCs, i.e. with no overt head noun:

Mandarin:
(22) wo　　　 zuo^r　　　mai　nei　gui　　　le
　　　 PRO.1S　yesterday　buy　DEM　expensive　TAM
　　　 'The one I bought yesterday was more expensive (than it should have been).'

Cantonese (Matthews & Yip 1994:112):

(23) Gaau　léih　tàahn　kàhm　gó　go?
　　　 teach　you　play　piano　that　CL
　　　 'The one who teaches you piano?'

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Note as well that in Cantonese CL-RC, if the demonstrative is used, "the distal demonstrative *gó*, not the proximal demonstrative *nī* is used … unless a clear deictic function is intended" (Matthews & Yip 1994:406) – another similarity with Mandarin DEM-RC. What is more important is that if in the Cantonese CL-RC there is no complementizer at all, its Mandarin counterpart DEM-CL does not have to use complementizer either, so the analysis outlined above that in DEM-RC, the complementizer *de* is in an underlying level is naturally less favoured than the view that there is no complementizer at all.

Thirdly, CL-RC resembles to DEM-RC w.r.t. its semantic interpretation. The only reading of Cantonese CL-RC is the specific one, so (13), for example, can only mean 'the very song she sings' if interpreted as a RC. And it has the same ambiguity as (4), so (13) means as well 'She sings that song.'. The Mandarin DEM-RC, as noted above, has these two semantic characteristics as well.

In conclusion, it seems that the Mandarin DEM-RC, though much less described, is indeed comparable to the CL-RC in Cantonese, sociolinguistically speaking, syntactically speaking and semantically speaking.

5. Synchrony, diachrony and typology

The last question I will address is the possible origin of the DEM-RC in Mandarin. Seeing the similarity it has with the Cantonese CL-RC, it is possible to argue that it results from language contact. However, since both languages originate from a common mother language, it is not impossible that the DEM-RC and the CL-RC are separate but parallel evolution from a unique structure, in other words, they are syntactic cognates. Both hypotheses seem reasonable. However, evidences show that the second one may be the right one.

RCs until the Late Archaic Chinese (5th – 3rd B.C.) have the following structure: [RC – COMP – NP], so almost the same as the Mandarin *de*-RC and Cantonese *ge*-RC (Aldridge 2008:1):

(24) 岂　若　从　避　世　之　士　哉。(*Analects* 18)[11]
　　 qi　ruo　cong　[[bi　shi]　zhi　shi]　zai.
　　　　　　　　　　 RC　　COMP　NP
　　 how like　follow escape world　ZHI　scholar　Excl
　　 "How could that compare to following a scholar who escapes from the world?"

However, from Archaic Chinese to Middle Chinese, the complementizer became optional (Aldridge 2008:14):

(25) 守　者　乃　请　出　弃　簀　中　死　人。(*Shiji*, Fan Ju)
　　 shou　zhe　nai　qing chu　qi　[[ze zhong] ___ [si　ren]]
　　 guard ZHE then　ask　remove discard　mat be.in (ZHI) dead person
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　 RC　(COMP)　NP
　　 "The guard then asked to take out and discard the dead person that was in the mat."

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[11] For the other type of RC, the free RC with *zhe*, in Archaic Chinese, see Gassmann (1977) and Aldridge (2008).

This structure was used until Early Modern Chinese (Aldridge 2008:15):

(26) 南海　　所　生，　　尤　胜　　蜀　者。(*Guoshibu* 1.7)
　　　[Nanhai suo[12] sheng]　you　sheng shu　zhe
　　　Nanhai Rel　produce　more better　Shu　ZHE
　　　　　　RC[13]
　　　"The ones produced in Nanhai far surpass those of Shu."

So from these examples, we can see that the direction of evolution is the disappearance of the complementizer in RC. Aldridge makes the following remark (2008:14):

(27) "As has been proposed by several Chinese historical linguists (Lü 1943, Ohta 1958, Cao 1986, Feng 1991, and others), it seems clear that it had to have been ZHE which provides the input for the emergence of DE: Note that modern Mandarin DE (的) descends from middle Chinese DI (底). It was DI which was the replacement for archaic Chinese ZHE (者)." (cf. note 9).

Even if *de* did replace *zhe*, another complementizer, its absence in modern colloquial Mandarin Chinese (and *ge* in modern Cantonese) is only a reproduction of what has happened to *zhi*. In other words, the tendency in general is the disappearance of the complementizer: *zhi* in ancient Chinese and *de/ge* in Mandarin/Cantonese. The Mandarin DEM-RC and the Cantonese CL-RC are very probably the direct descendants of the Middle Chinese and Early Modern Chinese RCs.
Typologically speaking, Chinese languages, including Mandarin and Cantonese, are exceptional in that they have prenominal RCs but SVO word order, contrary to the implicational universal: prenominal RC → SOV. In spite of this, Chinese RCs are indeed typical prenominal RCs, syntactically speaking as well as semantically speaking, for example, the non-existence of the relative pronoun (Downing 1978:392,396, Keenan 1985:149, De Vries 2005:147, Creissels 2006:vol 2:239,242, Andrews 2007:208,218,222), final RC marker (Downing 1978:392-393,396, De Vries 2005:148, Creissels 2006.vol 2:240), the use of the "generalized gaps" (Wu 2008:92-111), the quasi-unique restrictive reading (Mallinson & Blake 1981:364-366, De Vries 2005:135), etc.[14] The Mandarin DEM-RC and the Cantonese CL-RC are even more typical prenominal RCs than *de*-RC and *ge*-RC, at least in two points: the total absence of any relativizer[15] and the unique reading of restrictiveness. Prenominal RC languages with no relativizer at all include, for example, Turkish (and almost all the other Turkic languages (cf. Johanson Csató (1998))), Japanese (cf. Shibatani (1990)) and Quechua (cf. Lefebvre & Muysken (1988)). Japanese witnesses the disappearance of the complementizer in RCs, too (Shibatani 1990:347-357). As for the unique restrictive reading of RCs, a lot has been said about Mandarin Chinese (cf. Lin (2003), Del Gobbo (2006) and their

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[12] The gloss is Aldridge (2008)'s, but *suo* here is better analyzed as a resumptive pronoun, see Chiu (1995) and Ting (2003, 2005, 2006).

[13] Note that this is a free RC with no overt head noun, but what matters is the absence of complementizer.

[14] For a typological study on prenominal RC, see Wu (2008, in course).

[15] Cf. "Cross-linguistic comparison points to the original Sino-Tibetan relative clause structure being of this type, that is, a clause directly modifying a noun without nominalization or relative marking, although most Sino-Tibetan languages have grammaticalized some sort of nominalizer or complementizer for relativization." (LaPolla & Huang 2003:430, note 96)

references). In sum, the DEM-RC, from a typological point of view, seems to be more prototypical than *de*-RC[16].

Conclusion

In summary, in this paper I studied a type of RC very productive in colloquial Mandarin but which had been much less described. Compared to the standard *de*-RC, i.e. [RC *de*$_{COMP}$ N], it has no complementizer, but imposes the use of a demonstrative, most often, the distal one, *nei*: [RC DEM N]. Semantically, it can only be restrictive. This type of RC, actually, has its counterpart in Cantonese. Diachronically speaking, similar structures, with or without complementizer, were indeed used in different periods of Chinese. From the typological point of view, the [RC DEM N] type seems to be a more prototypical prenominal RC, both syntactically, e.g. the lack of complementizer, and semantically, the unique restrictive reading. One question remains: given that there are two cognate types of RC in Mandarin and Cantonese, do they exist as well in the other Chinese languages[17]? More studies are needed before a definite answer can be given.

Abbreviations:

1/2/3: person
S: singular
SG: singular
CL: classifier
COMP: complementizer
DEM: demonstrative
Excl: exclamation
PFV: perfective
PL: plural
PRO: pronoun
PRT: particle
RC: relative clause
Rel: relative clause
TAM: tense-aspect-mood

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[16] An anonymous reviewer raised the question as to why the DEM-RC existed in a very restricted context in Mandarin, i.e. in the spoken context. Frankly, I have no answer, even though it seems to me that this question concerns actually how syntactic constructions change or are preserved in spoken and written languages, which is quite complex, as is noted by Hock (1991:4):

"... the written text may suggest changes which did not actually occur in the spoken language. Or conversely, changes of the spoken language may not be properly reflected in writing."

[17] Chen (2008) reports a similar construction in Hui'an dialect (Minnan), which favors a positive answer to the above question.

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