

D-3 The N'-deletability and the non-availability of genitive subject in the Tujia language*

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This paper examines whether the Tujia language spoken by the Tujia people in south-central China allows N'-deletion and/or genitive subject, and shows (i) that it allows N'-deletion, but (ii) that it does not allow genitive subject. Based on the Tujia facts found in this survey as well as the related facts from other languages reported in previous studies, we will claim (i) that there is not a correlation between the N'-deletability and the availability of genitive subject in languages with prenominal sentential modifiers, and (ii) that the non-availability of genitive subject in the Tujia language seems to originate from the fact that the predicate cannot have the adnominal form within a relative clause in Tujia.

1. Introduction

This paper investigates syntactic properties of the Tujia language that belongs to Sino-Tibetan languages. The Tujia language is one of the 55 officially recognized minority languages in China spoken natively by the Tujia people in south-central China such as Hunan Province, Hubei Province and Chongqing City. This paper shows (i) that it allows N'-deletion, but (ii) that it does not allow genitive subject. It is then argued (i) that there is not a correlation between the N'-deletability and the availability of genitive subject in languages with prenominal sentential modifiers, and (ii) that the non-availability of genitive subject in the Tujia language seems to originate from the fact that the relevant predicate cannot be in the adnominal form.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 provides a summary of the relationship between the N'-deletability and the non-availability of genitive subject in various well-studied languages as background to subsequent sections. Section 3 presents data on N'-deletion and genitive subject in the Tujia language. Section 4 discusses what the data from Tujia might suggest for the theory of (Tujia) grammar. Finally, Section 5 concludes this paper.

2. Background

Research has been done on the availability of genitive subject in various languages, and also on the availability of N'-deletion in various languages. Maki (2019) finds certain relations between the N'-deletability and the availability of genitive subject in languages with prenominal sentential modifiers so far examined to some depth, which is shown in (1).

(1) The N'-Deletability and the Availability of Genitive Subject in Languages with Prenominal Sentential Modifiers

	✓ Genitive Subject	* Genitive Subject
✓ N'-Deletion	Japanese, Mongolian, Urdu, Bengali	
* N'-Deletion		Korean

In this paper, we only focus on languages with prenominal sentential modifiers because if Hiraiwa (2001: 112), who claims that genitive subject licensing depends on the proper form of the predicate, namely, the adnominal form, is correct, genitive subject will not be observed in languages which use overt wh-movement strategy or overt complementizer strategy in relative clause formation, and languages with prenominal sentential modifiers do not have an overt complementizer in relative clause formation in general. See Hiraiwa's (2001) NGC Universal in (2).

(2) The 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: 112))

(1) seems to show two relations in (3).

- (3) a. A language allows N'-deletion. = It allows genitive subject.
b. A language disallows N'-deletion. = It disallows genitive subject.

Japanese, among others, allows both N'-deletion and genitive subject. However, Korean does not allow either N'-deletion or genitive subject. In the following, we will present data from Japanese as a language that allows both, and data from Korean as a language that does not allow either of them. (4) and (5) from Japanese show the property in (3a), and (6) and (7) from Korean show the property in (3b).

- (4) a. Dare-no taido-ga yoku nai desu ka? b. John-no [_{N'} taido/e] desu.
who-Gen attitude-Nom good not be Q John-Gen attitude be
'Whose attitude is not good?' 'John's (attitude) is.'

- (5) a. [Doyoobi-ni tamago-ga yasui] mise-wa kono mise desu.

- Saturday-on egg-Nom cheap store-Top this store be
 ‘The store where eggs are cheap on Saturdays is this store.’
- b. [Doyoobi-ni tamago-no yasui] mise-wa kono mise desu.
 Saturday-on egg-Gen cheap store-Top this store be
 ‘The store where eggs are cheap on Saturdays is this store.’
- (6) a. Nuku-uy thayto-ga cohci ansumni ka?
 who-Gen attitude-Nom good not.be Q
 ‘Whose attitude is not good?’
- b. John-uy [_N thayto/*e] immida.
 John-Gen attitude be
 ‘John’s (attitude) is.’
- (7) a. [Thoyoil-eye kyelan-i ssan] sangcem-un i sangcem ita.
 Saturday-on egg-Nom cheap store-Top this store be
 ‘The store where eggs are cheap on Saturdays is this store.’
- b. * [Thoyoil-eye kyelan-uy ssan] sangcem-un i sangcem ita.
 Saturday-on egg-Gen cheap store-Top this store be
 ‘The store where eggs are cheap on Saturdays is this store.’

3. Data

Having established the particular background, let us now examine Tujia examples. First, Tujia is an ergative, and a head-final language, as shown in (8) and (9). (8) contains an intransitive verb, and (9) a transitive verb.

- (8) p^husni dzēkoku-∅ ndzy.
 yesterday Dzēkoku-Abs came
 ‘Dzēkoku came yesterday.’
- (9) p^husni dzēkoku(-gə) gi ts^hipu-∅ sp^hutʃi.
 yesterday Dzēkoku-Erg that book-Abs bought
 ‘Dzēkoku bought the book yesterday.’

In (7), the subject of a sentence with an intransitive verb is marked by the absolutive case marker represented by -∅, which does not have a phonetic content. In (8), the subject of a sentence with a transitive verb is marked by the ergative case marker represented by -gə, which may optionally appear. The object of a sentence with a transitive verb is marked by the absolutive case marker represented by -∅.

Second, the genitive case marker in Tujia is *ne*, which roughly corresponds to ‘s or *of* in English, as shown in (10).

- (10) dzēkoku-ne ts^hipu
 Dzēkoku-Gen book
 ‘Dzēkoku’s book’

Third, Tujia is a *wh*-in-situ language, and a *wh*-phrase does not move to the sentence-initial position, as shown below, irrespective to whether the *wh*-phrase is marked by the absolutive case marker or the ergative case marker. Note that the sentence-final question particle is optional.

- (11) p^husni asə-∅ ndzy (na)?
 yesterday who-Abs came Q
 ‘Who came yesterday?’
- (12) aso(-gə) gi ts^hipu patʃi (na)?
 who-Erg the book read Q
 ‘Who read the book?’
- (13) dzēkoku(-gə) k^heldi ts^hipu patʃi (na)?
 Dzēkoku-Erg which book read Q
 ‘Which book did Dzēkoku read?’
- (14) dzēkoku(-gə) tē^həei sp^hutʃi (na)?
 Dzēkoku-Erg what bought Q
 ‘What did Dzēkoku buy?’

Fourth, complement clauses in Tujia are placed in front of the matrix clause, and they are followed by the complementizer *bo* ‘that,’ as shown below.

- (15) *gi tsʰipu dzɛkoku-gə paboei bo teĩtsʰã sãla.*
 the book Dzɛkoku-Erg read that Teĩtsʰã think
 ‘Teĩtsʰã thinks that Dzɛkoku read the book.’
- (16) *gi tsʰipu dzɛkoku-gə paboei bo teĩtsʰã lõ.*
 the book Dzɛkoku-Erg read that Teĩtsʰã said
 ‘Teĩtsʰã said that Dzɛkoku read the book.’

Note that the complementizer *bo* ‘that’ cannot be dropped, as shown below.

- (17) **gi tsʰipu dzɛkoku-gə paboei teĩtsʰã sãla.*
 the book Dzɛkoku-Erg read Teĩtsʰã think
 ‘Teĩtsʰã thinks that Dzɛkoku read the book.’
- (18) **gi tsʰipu dzɛkoku-gə paboei teĩtsʰã lõ.*
 the book Dzɛkoku-Erg read Teĩtsʰã said
 ‘Teĩtsʰã said that Dzɛkoku read the book.’

Fifth, Tujia relative clauses are placed in front of the head nominal, and are not headed by the overt complementizer *bo* ‘that,’ as shown below. Note that Tujia has the anti-passive form of the verb, and when it appears, the subject is not marked by the ergative marker, but is marked by the absolutive marker, as shown in (20) and (21).

- (19) [*pʰusni dzɛkoku-ø ndzy*] *xotsu me ʒoxte ʒdzɛ dutsʰu ri.*
 yesterday Dzɛkoku-Abs came time if morning 8 o'clock be
 ‘The time when Dzɛkoku came yesterday is 8 a.m.’
- (20) [*pʰusni dzɛkoku-gə gi tsʰipu ʂpʰu:*] *yẽĩ me gədi yẽĩ ri.*
 yesterday Dzɛkoku-Erg the book bought reason if this reason be
 ‘The reason why Dzɛkoku bought the book yesterday is this reason.’
- (21) [*pʰusni dzɛkoku-ø gi tsʰipu ʒi-ʂpʰu:*] *yẽĩ me gədi yẽĩ ri.*
 yesterday Dzɛkoku-Abs the book Anti.Pass-bought reason if this reason be
 ‘The reason why Dzɛkoku bought the book yesterday is this reason.’
- (22) * [*pʰusni dzɛkoku-ø gi tsʰipu ʒi-ʂpʰu:*] *bo yẽĩ me gədi yẽĩ ri.*
 yesterday Dzɛkoku-Abs the book Anti.Pass-bought that reason if this reason be
 ‘The reason why Dzɛkoku bought the book yesterday is this reason.’
- (23) * [*pʰusni dzɛkoku-gə gi tsʰipu ʂpʰu:*] *bo yẽĩ me gədi yẽĩ ri.*
 yesterday Dzɛkoku-Erg the book bought that reason if this reason be
 ‘The reason why Dzɛkoku bought the book yesterday is this reason.’

Note that a relative clause in Tujia is not followed by the genitive case marker *-ne*, as shown in (24) and (25), unlike in Chinese, as shown in (26).

- (24) * [*pʰusni dzɛkoku-ø gi tsʰipu ʒi-ʂpʰu:*]-*ne* *yẽĩ me gədi yẽĩ ri.*
 yesterday Dzɛkoku-Abs the book Anti.Pass-bought-Gen reason if this reason be
 ‘The reason why Dzɛkoku bought the book yesterday is this reason.’
- (25) * [*pʰusni dzɛkoku-gə gi tsʰipu ʂpʰu:*]-*ne* *yẽĩ me gədi yẽĩ ri.*
 yesterday Dzɛkoku-Erg the book bought-Gen reason if this reason be
 ‘The reason why Dzɛkoku bought the book yesterday is this reason.’
- (26) *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.’

Let us now investigate whether Tujia allows N'-deletion and/or genitive subject. First, observe the N'-deletion examples in (27).

- (27) a. ase-je t^hetu t^hama ri na? b. dzēkoku-je [N' t^hetu/e] ri.
 who-Gen attitude good.not be Q Dzēkoku-Gen attitude be
 'Whose attitude is not good?' 'Dzēkoku's (attitude) is.'

(27b) shows that N'-deletion is possible in Tujia. Second, let us examine whether Tujia allows genitive subject. Consider the examples in (28)–(32).

- (28) [p^husni dzēkoku-ø/*-je ndzy] xotsu me ʒoxte ʒdʒe duts^hu ri.
 yesterday Dzēkoku-Abs/-Gen came time if morning 8 o'clock be
 'The time when Dzēkoku came yesterday is 8 a.m.'
- (29) [p^husni dzēkoku-ɡə/*-je ʃp^hutʃi] t^hipu me ɡidi t^hipu ri.
 yesterday Dzēkoku-Erg-Gen bought book if this book be
 'The book which Dzēkoku bought yesterday is this book.'
- (30) [p^husni dzēkoku-ø/*-je ʒi-ʃp^hutʃi] t^hipu me ɡidi t^hipu ri.
 yesterday Dzēkoku-Abs/-Gen Anti.Pass-bought book if this book be
 'The book which Dzēkoku bought yesterday is this book.'
- (31) [p^husni dzēkoku-ɡə/*-je ɡi t^hipu ʃp^hu:] yēi me ɡədi yēi ri.
 yesterday Dzēkoku-Erg-Gen the book bought reason if this reason be
 'The reason why Dzēkoku bought the book yesterday is this reason.'
- (32) [p^husni dzēkoku-ø/*-je ɡi t^hipu ʒi-ʃp^hu:] yēi me ɡədi yēi ri.
 yesterday Dzēkoku-Abs/-Gen the book Anti.Pass-bought reason if this reason be
 'The reason why Dzēkoku bought the book yesterday is this reason.'

In (28), the predicate in the relative clause is an intransitive verb, in (29) and (31), it is a transitive verb, and in (30) and (32), it is the anti-passive form of the transitive verb. None of these examples allows genitive subject.

Therefore, the above examples clearly show that Tujia allows N'-deletion, but disallows genitive subject.

4. Discussion

Let us now examine what the Tujia examples found in this survey might suggest for the theory of (Tujia) syntax. First, the examples in (27)–(32) clearly show that Tujia does not fall into the category of the languages that both allow N'-deletion and genitive subject. This indicates that the correlation in (3a) does not hold in languages with prenominal sentential modifiers or probably in human language. This poses the important question as to why Tujia exhibits this property.

There are two possible factors that may disallow genitive subject in Tujia. The first is Tujia's ergativity. The second is the fact that the predicate in the prenominal sentential modifier in Tujia cannot have the adnominal form that may license genitive subject in other languages such as Japanese and Mongolian. The first is disconfirmed by the fact that there is an ergative language that allows genitive subject, such as Urdu, as shown below. First, Urdu is an ergative language. Consider the examples in (33a, b).

- (33) a. John-ø/*-ne yahan ponhcha. b. John-ne/*-ø kitab-ø khareedi.
 John-Abs/-Erg here arrived John-Erg/-Abs book-Abs bought
 'John arrived here.' 'John bought the book yesterday.'

In (33a), the subject of the intransitive verb bears no morphological case marker, as represented by -ø, which is the absolutive case marker in Urdu. On the other hand, in (33b), the subject of the transitive verb is marked with the ergative case marker -ne 'Erg.' Note that the object of the transitive verb is marked absolutive, just like the subject of the intransitive verb in (33a).

Second, Urdu has two types of relative clauses. Kachru (1978), among others, investigates relative clauses in Urdu, focusing on those with the relative pronoun starting with the [j] sound, as shown in (34).

- (34) Jo kitab [John-ne kal khareedi] buhut dilchasp hai.
 RP book John-Erg yesterday bought very interesting be.Pres
 'The book which John bought yesterday is very interesting.'

In (34), *jo* functions as a relative pronoun, which cannot be deleted, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (35).

- (35) *Kitab [John-ne kal khareedi] buhut dilchasp hai.
 book John-Erg yesterday bought very interesting be.Pres
 (intended reading) ‘The book which John bought yesterday is very interesting.’

There is another type of relative clauses in Urdu, which do not make use of a relative pronoun, as shown below.

- (36) [Kal John-ki khareedi-hui] kitab buhut dilchasp hai.
 yesterday John-Gen bought-Perf book very interesting be.Pres
 ‘The book which John bought yesterday is very interesting.’

In (36), the relative clause precedes the head noun, and the subject is marked genitive. Note here that the genitive subject is not allowed in a relative clause that follows the head noun, as shown in (37), or the ergative subject is not allowed in a relative clause that precedes the head noun, as shown in (38).

- (37) Jo kitab [John-ne/*-ki kal khareedi] buhut dilchasp hai.
 RP book John-Erg/-Gen yesterday bought very interesting be.Pres
 ‘The book which John bought yesterday is very interesting.’

- (38) [Kal John*-ne/-ki khareedi-hui] kitab buhut dilchasp hai.
 yesterday John-Erg/-Gen bought-Perf.Adn book very interesting be.Pres
 ‘The book which John bought yesterday is very interesting.’

(Maki and Bhutto (2013))

These examples clearly indicate that the ergativity of the language does not affect the appearance of genitive subject.

Then, the remaining possibility is the second factor. This is plausible, given the fact that the form of the predicate in the prenominal sentential modifier in Tujia is morphologically identical to that of the predicate in the main clause, as shown in (8) and (19).

- (8) p^husni dzēkoku-ø ndzy.
 yesterday Dzēkoku-Abs came
 ‘Dzēkoku came yesterday.’

- (19) [p^husni dzēkoku-ø ndzy] xotsu me ʒoxte ʒdʒɛ duts^hu ri.
 yesterday Dzēkoku-Abs came time if morning 8 o'clock be
 ‘The time when Dzēkoku came yesterday is 8 a.m.’

Therefore, we claim that Tujia does not allow genitive subject because the predicate in the prenominal sentential modifier in Tujia cannot have the adnominal form, unlike Japanese or Mongolian. This then lends support to Hiraiwa’s (2001) main claim, which in turn is incorporated into Maki et al’s (2016) claim that genitive subject licensing requires both nominal elements and the adnominal form.

Maki et al’s (2016) claim is summarized below. In Mongolian, genitive subjects are disallowed in simple sentences, as shown in (39), but both nominative and genitive subjects are allowed, when they appear in relative clauses, as shown in (40).

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

- (40) Öčügedür Ulayan-ø/-u t qudaldun-abu-γsan/*-ab-čai nom-bol ene nom.
 yesterday Ulagan-Nom/-Gen buy-take-Past.Adn/-take-Past.Con book-Top this book
 ‘The book which Ulagan bought yesterday is this book.’

Maki et al (2010) report that genitive subjects are also allowed in a non-local relationship with the relative head, as shown in (41) and (42).

- (41) Bayatur-ø [öčügedür Ulayan-ø t₁ qudaldun-abu-γsan/-ab-čai gejü] bodu-γsan nom₁-bol
 Bagatur-Nom yesterday Ulagan-Nom buy-take-Past.Adn/-take-Past.Con that think-Past.Adn book-Top
 ene nom.

this book

‘The book which Bagatur thought [that Ulagan bought *t* yesterday] is this book.’

- (42) Bayatur- \emptyset [öcügedür Ulayan-u t_1 qudaldun-abu- γ san/*-ab- \check{c} ai ge \ddot{y} ü] bodu- γ san
Bagatur-Nom yesterday Ulagan-Gen buy-take-Past.Adn/-take-Past.Con that think-Past.Adn
nom₁-bol ene nom.
book-Top this book
‘The book which Bagatur thought [that Ulagan bought *t* yesterday] is this book.’

Note that genitive subjects in embedded clauses need a relative head, as shown by (42) and (43).

- (43) Bayatur- \emptyset Ulayan- \emptyset /*-u nom- \emptyset qudaldun-abu- γ san/-ab- \check{c} ai ge \ddot{y} ü bodu-jai.
Bagatur-Nom Ulagan-Nom/-Gen book-Acc buy-take-Past.Adn/-take-Past.Con that think-Past.Con
‘Bagatur thought [that Ulagan bought a book].’

Maki et al (2011) further investigated examples with gapless prenominal sentential modifiers, as shown in (44) and (45).

- (44) a. Öcügedür Ulayan- \emptyset /*-u iniye-jei.
yesterday Ulagan-Nom/-Gen laugh-Past.Con
‘Ulagan laughed yesterday.’
b. Batu- \emptyset [öcügedür Ulayan- \emptyset -u iniye-gsen uçir]-tu soçi-jai.
Batu-Nom yesterday Ulagan-Nom/-Gen laugh-Past.Adn fact-at be.surprised-Past.Con
‘Batu was surprised at [the fact that Ulagan laughed yesterday].’
- (45) a. Bayatur- \emptyset [öcügedür Ulayan- \emptyset /*-u iniye-gsen ge \ddot{y} ü] kele-jei.
Bagatur-Nom yesterday Ulagan-Nom/-Gen laugh-Past.Adn that say-Past.Con
‘Bagatur said [that Ulagan laughed yesterday].’
b. Batu- \emptyset [Bayatur- \emptyset [öcügedür Ulayan- \emptyset /*-u iniye-gsen ge \ddot{y} ü] kele-gsen uçir]-tu
Batu-Nom Bagatur-Nom yesterday Ulagan-Nom/-Gen laugh-Past.Adn that say-Past.Adn fact-at
soçi-jai.
be.surprised-Past.Con
‘Batu was surprised at [the fact that Bagatur said [that Ulagan laughed yesterday]].’

(44a) is a simple sentence without a nominal head. (44b) contains an NP with a gapless prenominal sentential modifier. It is grammatical, irrespective of whether the subject is nominative or genitive. (45a) contains a complement clause. It is grammatical when the subject in the embedded clause is nominative, but ungrammatical when it is genitive. (45b) contains an NP with a gapless prenominal sentential modifier. In contrast to (44b), it is grammatical only when the subject in the embedded clause is nominative. These facts led Maki et al (2011) to claim that a relation is established between a relative head and its gap *t* by binding (c-commanding), in such a way that the nominal feature in the nominal head percolates down to *t*, and led Maki et al (2016) to further claim that only the relevant Comp in the binding path from the relative head to its gap may host the feature [+N] inherited from the relative head, and can function as a licensor for genitive subjects, based on Rizzi’s (1990) idea about feature specifications on functional categories. These claims then led Maki et al (2016) to merge two important approaches to genitive subject licensing in Japanese, namely, Miyagawa’s (1993, 2011) D-licensing approach and Watanabe’s (1996)/Hiraiwa’s (2001) adnominal form-licensing approach into one, as shown in (46).

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

- a. A genitive subject must be c-commanded by a nominal element in a local domain.
b. A genitive subject must be in a local relationship with the adnominal form of a predicate.

Maki et al (2016) claim that both Mongolian and Japanese obey the same conditions on genitive subject licensing in (46), and the differences between the two languages arise from the environments in which the adnominal form of a predicate may appear.

The conditions in (46) correctly predict the unavailability of genitive subject in Tujia under the assumption that the predicate in a relative clause does not have the adnominal form. The claim that this idea is on the right track is further supported by examples in Tibetan, which belongs to Sino-Tibetan languages, just like the Tujia language. Tibetan is an ergative language, with an SOV order, as shown in (47). The subject of a transitive verb is marked ergative *-kyis*, and the object of a transitive verb is marked absolutive, which does not have a phonetic content, as shown by \emptyset . A sentence with an intransitive verb is shown in (48). In (48), the subject is not marked ergative *-kyis*, but marked absolutive \emptyset .

(47) Bkrashis-kyis dpecha-adi-ø bris.
 Bkrashis-Erg book-the-Abs wrote
 ‘Bkrashis wrote the book.’

(48) Dering Bkrashis-ø slebssong.
 today Bkrashis-Abs came
 ‘Today Bkrashis came.’

The genitive marker in Tibetan is *-kyi*, as shown in (49).

(49) Bkrashis-kyi dpecha
 Bkrashis-Gen book
 ‘Bkrashis’ book’

Now, as the example in (50) shows, Tibetan does not allow genitive subject.

(50) Sgrolmas naning Bkrashis-kyis/*-kyi bris-b’i dpecha-ø bklags.
 Sgrolma.Erg last.year Bkrashis-Erg/-Gen wrote-Gen book-Abs read
 ‘Sgrolma read the book Bkrashis wrote last year.’ (Daojicaio (2019))

Note here that the verb in the simple sentence in (47) and the verb in the relative clause in (50) have the identical form, which seems to indicate that the verb in the relative clause is not in the adnominal form. Therefore, the genitive subject in Tibetan is not allowed by (46b).

5. Conclusion

This paper investigated syntactic properties of the Tujia language, and showed (i) that it allows N’-deletion, but (ii) that it does not allow genitive subject. These findings suggest (i) that there is no correlation between the N’-deletability and the availability of genitive subject in languages with prenominal sentential modifiers, and (ii) that the non-availability of genitive subject in the Tujia language originates from the fact that the relevant predicate cannot be in the adnominal form. This in turn suggests the validity of Maki et al’s (2016) Conditions on Genitive Subject Licensing for a variety of languages with prenominal sentential modifiers.

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