INNER MODAL IN MANDARIN EXCESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS*

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I argue that modal elements can be merged inside the vP domain, and an Agree relation is established between the high and low modal projections to fulfill the requirement of Full Interpretation (Chomsky 2000). I present evidence from Mandarin Chinese to support this Inner Modal proposal; I examine the excessive lā construction, which contains the 3rd person singular pronoun lā that seems to lack referentiality and instead to possess a modality meaning. I propose a vP-internal modal projection that hosts lā, and I claim that this projection must be licensed by a higher modal via Agree, and the meaning of excessiveness can be derived compositionally from the structure.

1. EXCESSIVE lā CONSTRUCTION: GRAMMATICAL PROPERTIES OF THE NON-REFERENTIAL PRONOUN lā

In this section, I examine the grammatical properties of the non-referential pronoun lā. I begin with the semantics of the lā sentences, followed by a discussion of distributional facts with respect to mood and modality.

1.1. SEMANTIC PROPERTIES AND THE FUNCTION OF lā

1.1.1. EXCESSIVE lā

Mandarin Chinese exhibits a construction in which a pronoun lā, related to modality but lacking referentiality, surfaces low in the structure. A sentence with non-referential lā is provided below:

(1) lè fā ge bù-zui-bù-guē!
    drink it CL not-drunk-not-return
    ‘Let’s drink such that we won’t go home until we are drunk!’

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In (1), the 3rd person singular person 픈 appears post-verbally, and is followed by the classifier ге and the adverbial complement ｂｕ-ｚｕｉ-ｂｕ-ｇｕｅ ‘not-drunk-not-return’. It has been noticed that the absence of ｆә does not affect the grammaticality of the sentence, although the “lively” flavour disappears with the absence of ｆә. Recently, more work has been done on what exactly the meaning of “liveliness” is, and also what function the non-referential pronoun ｆә plays in the sentence. From a discourse point of view, F.-C. Wu (2003) considers non-referential ｆә to be a metalinguistic expression in the sense that the speaker tries to claim a role of a third person remote from his/her normal state of self. Yeh (2006) follows up F.-C. Wu’s view and suggests that the detachment created by the use of ｆә mentioned above may be triggered by the “extreme” situation described by the sentence, for instance, ｂｕ-ｚｕｉ-ｂｕ-ｇｕｅ ‘not go home until drunk’ in (1), which in turn explains why the complement of ｆә is typically associated with quantity that is excessive. Following this line of reasoning, Biq (2004) and Yeh (2006) further claim that the utterance containing ｆә expresses excessive quantities and the sense of ‘above an implicit norm’ is implied in the construction (Yeh 2006: 92).

To show that ｆә sentences possess the meaning of excessiveness, Yeh (2006) utilizes two evaluative verbs, ｃａｉ and ｊｉｕ. These two evaluative adverbs are both translated as ‘only’, but they differ from each other in that while the adverb ｊｉｕ implies that the preceding action requires little effort, ｃａｉ, on the other hand, implies the preceding action is perceived as necessary and is associated with a more demanding situation (Shu 2007). If ｆә sentences denote excessiveness, we would expect ｃａｉ but not ｊｉｕ to co-occur with ｆә. This prediction is borne out as shown in (2).

(2) a. ｚａｉ ｈｅ ｆә ｌｉａｎ-ｂｅｉ ｐｉｊｕ ｌａｏ again drink it two-glass beer good le! PAR ‘Drinking two more glasses of beer is good=
pleasedrink two more glasses of beer!’

b.*ｚａｉ ｈｅ ｆә ｌｉａｎ-ｂｅｉ ｐｉｊｕ ｊｉｕ again drink it two-glass beer only lәo le! PAR ｇｏ good ‘Drinking two more glasses of beer is good enough!’

c. ｚｈｅ ｓｈ الصين yào ｍａｉ ｆә ｙｉ-ｂｕ-ｂｅｎ this book want buy it one-hundred-CL *ｊｉｕ/ｃａｉ ｇｏù. only enough ‘(We) have to have one hundred copies of this book.’
While (2a) and (2b) clearly show that the adverb jǐù cannot co-occur with the excessive pronoun tà, the contrast in (2c) can be explained if we assume that cǎi requires a more demanding situation described in the antecedent clause, and is thus compatible with the excessive reading contributed by tà, whereas jǐù is associated with a less-demanding interpretation and thus is strongly dis-preferred in the tà sentence.

1.1.2. LICENSING THE EXCESSIVE tà

A property that has gone unnoticed in the literature is that the appearance of the excessive tà is restricted to the context of imperative and root modals, such as kěyǐ ‘can’, xiàng(yào) ‘want’, and yīnggǎi ‘should’. The point is demonstrated by the following sentences1.

(3) a. *wǒ mǎi tà jǐ-bāi-běn shū gǔo.
   EXP ‘I bought several hundreds of books.’

   b. mǎi tà jǐ-bāi-běn shū ba!
   buy it several-hundred-CL book PAR ‘Let’s buy several hundreds of books!’

   c. wǒ xiǎng/yīnggǎi/kěyǐ mǎi tà jǐ-bāi-běn shū.
   want/should/can buy it several-hundred-CL book ‘I want to/should/can buy several hundreds of books.’

tà is not allowed in an indicative declarative sentence like (3a), and to render this sentence acceptable, an imperative mood indicated by the sentential particle ba in (3b) or a root modal such as those in (3c) is required.

In her work on imperatives, Han (1999) argues that imperative mood has the semantics of deontic modality. This claim is made based on the observation that imperative sentences and deontic modal sentences both contribute as an essential part of their meanings that an obligation or a permission is issued by the speaker; these two construals only differ in that the existence of an obligation or a permission is part of the assertion for deontic modal sentences, but it is part of the presupposition that cannot be contradicted or canceled for

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1 The existence of a modal/imperative mood in the excessive tà construction echoes the long observed semantic characteristics that the excessive construction typically appears in irrealis contexts (Kojima 2006).
imperatives (Han 1999: 479). Adopting Han’s proposal, I suggest that the crucial element to license the presence of the excessive ᵗᵃ is the root modal and the relation between ᵗᵃ and the imperative mood is mediated by the deontic modal contained in the imperative sentence, and thus is indirect.

To sum up, in this section, I probed into the semantics of the non-referential ᵗᵃ, and showed that first of all, non-referential ᵗᵃ carries the meaning of excessiveness, and second, this marked construction is only possible with a root modal. In the next section, I shift the focus to the syntactic properties of excessive ᵗᵃ, so as to gain a full understanding of the construction in question.

1.2. SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES OF ᵗᵃ
1.2.1. WHAT CAN FOLLOW ᵗᵃ?

The most salient and most discussed grammatical feature of the excessive ᵗᵃ construction is that ᵗᵃ must take a quantity-denoting nominal complement. The sentences in (4a, b) illustrate the fact that the object following ᵗᵃ must be quantity-denoting, and hence it cannot be bare, nor can it be definite. The object can be headed by words like jint ‘several’, a few’ and numerals such as liăng ‘two’. An interesting phenomenon is that while the quantifier jint ‘several’, a few’ can appear in an excessive ᵗᵃ sentence, other quantifiers such as mei ‘every’, suoyoũde ‘all’, dáběn ‘most’ and lìěndou ‘many’ cannot co-occur with ᵗᵃ. This is shown in (4c).

(4) a. hē ᵗᵃ (ge) jī/liăng/*nà -běi pijū
   drink it CL several/two/*that -glass beer
   ba! PAR
   ‘Let’s drink several/two/that glass of beer!’

b. *hē ᵗᵃ pijū ba!
   drink it beer PAR
   ‘Let’s drink beer!’

c. *dú ᵗᵃ méi-běn /suoyoũde/dáběnfěn/lìěndu
   read it every-CL/all/most/many
   xiǎoshūo ba! novel PAR
   ‘Let’s read every/most/all/many the novels!’
   (J.-W. Lin and Zhang 2006: 804)

Moreover, the nominal that follows ᵗᵃ needs not be an argument of the verb. Oblique constituents are allowed with ᵗᵃ, such as temporal expressions (liăng tiān ‘two days’), frequentative phrases (liăng cī ‘twice’), and nominalized
resultative complements (ge tònkkuaî ‘CL. thorough.satisfaction’). (5) involves a frequency expression liàng cì ‘twice’, and (6) a resultative phrase tònkkuaî ‘heartily’, which is nominalized by the preceding general classifier ge².

(5)  chi ngfang ci kào-yà
eat it two times roasted-duck
‘Let’s eat roasted duck twice!’

(J.-W. Lin and Zhang 2006: 802)

(6)  jinwân wán fâ ge tònkkuaî ba!
tonight play it CL heartily PAR
‘Let’s play heartily’

Lastly, it has been observed that fâ cannot appear in a ditransitive construction, as shown in (7); this restriction has led Zhu (1982) and Ma (1983) to treat the excessive fâ constructions on par with ditransitive constructions.

(7) a. shùshù yâo sâng (*fâ) wô yî-zhî
Uncle want give it I one-CL
shôubïao.
watch

b. shùshù yâo sâng wô (*fâ) yî-zhî
Uncle want give I it one-CL
shôubïao.
watch
Both ‘The uncle wants to give me a watch.’

Instead of attributing the ungrammaticality of (7) to fâ being an “extra” thus unlicensed argument in the ditransitive sentence, J.-W. Lin and Zhang (2006) propose that the unacceptability of fâ in (7) can be explained as follows. In (7a), fâ is not followed by a quantity-denoting nominal, and in (7b) fâ is not adjacent to the verb. However, while their explanation is sufficient to account for the ungrammaticality in (7), it does not tell us much about the contrast between (8a) and (8b):

(8) a. wô yâo sâng (*fâ) sân-ge háižî sân-bên
I want give it three-CL child three-CL
shû. book
‘I want to give three children (a quantity of) three books.’

Please see Wu (2002) for the nominalizer analysis of the general classifier ge.

² Please see Wu (2002) for the nominalizer analysis of the general classifier ge.
b. wǒ yào sòng fā sān-bèn shū
    I want give it three-CL book

   ??(gěi sān-ge háiZǐ).
    to three-CL child

   ‘I want to give three books (to three children).’

(8a) shows again that the non-referential fā cannot appear in a ditransitive sentence, even though the adjacency problem that could potentially cause unacceptability is removed. On the contrary, in a prepositional dative construction like (8b), it is possible to have the non-referential fā in the sentence, although it is best without the presence of the indirect object.

However, if we accept the analysis of fā as an argument of the verb as proposed in Zhu (1982) and Ma (1983), we will be forced to conclude that the transitive verbs in the excessive fā sentences are in fact ditransitive. Moreover, this analysis also predicts that intransitive verbs shouldn’t co-occur with fā, and it should be possible to question excessive fā, contrary to the facts demonstrated below:

(9) páo/kū fā ge tòngquáibì!
   run/cry it CL heartily PAR
   ‘Run/Cry heartily!’

(10) *nǐ xiǎng mǎi shěi/shéme ge
    you want buy who/what CL
    jī-bāi-běn shū?
    several-hundred-CL book
    ‘Who/What do you want to buy several hundreds of books for?’

(9) involves two unergative verbs, páo ‘run’ and kū ‘cry’, and the acceptability of (9) strongly suggests that excessive fā can’t be analyzed as the argument of the verb. (10) shows that excessive fā cannot be replaced by the question words shěi ‘who’ and shéme ‘what’, and this again doesn’t support the argument analysis of fā. As will be argued later, the contrast we have seen in (8) is better understood as an incompatibility problem between fā and an indirect object.

**1.2.2. WHAT MUST PRECEDE fā?**

Many linguists have noticed that not only does the excessive fā have to follow a verb, but it also has to be adjacent to the verb without any intervening constituent, including aspect particles le, zhe, and gào in (11).
(11) *Zhāngsān liè-le/gùo/zhe fā yī-bèi
    Zhangsan drink-PRF/EXP/PROG it one-glass
  jiǔ.
  wine
  ‘Zhangsan drank/has an experience of drinking/is drinking one glass
  of wine.’

Based on the distribution shown above, J.-W. Lin and Zhang (2006)
conclude that fā is an enclitic and must be cliticized onto the preceding verb
without any intervening morpheme. However, as we see in (12), it is unexpected
under the clitic account that the aspect marker zài, which doesn’t block the
cliticization of pronominal fā, is also incompatible with the excessive fā.

(12)  fā  zāi  chǐ (*fā) liǎng  ge  hānbiāo.
    He      PROG eat    it  two  CL  burger
  ‘He is eating two burgers.’

I propose that the contraint on the co-occurrence of fā with the aspect
markers le/gùo/zhe/zài is better understood as a constraint on the co-occurrence
of a modal with those aspectual markers. It is well-known that in English,
modals take a bare infinitive complement (He must *took/take a pen from you.).
T(ense) in Mandarin, the complement of a modal, cannot carry an aspectual
marker. For example, the modal yào ‘want’ in (13a,b), which licenses the
excessive fā, does not appear with le/gùo/zhe/zài. On the other hand, in (14a),
the sentence-final inchoative marker le, which scopes over the modal, is licit
with the modal yào3. It is, therefore, to be expected that the sentence-final
inchoative marker le is accepted in an excessive sentence, as shown in (14b).

(13)  a.  Wǒ  yào  liè-∗le/*gùo/*zhe  yī-bèi
    I want  drink-PRF/EXP/PROG  one-glass
  jiǔ.
  wine
  ‘I want to drink one glass of wine.’

  b.  Wǒ  yào  (*zài)  liè  yī-bèi  jiǔ.
    I want    PROG  drink one-glass  jiǔ.
    wine
    ‘I want to drink one glass of wine.’

3 The issues are still unsettled as to whether sentence-final le (sentential le) and verbal le
are the same and where in the structure they are represented; however, there is some
concensus on that sentence-final le has a wider scope than verbal le, as it expresses the
meaning of ‘change of state’, and serves as a discourse-final particle, marking the end of
a discourse unit (Chao 1968).
(14) a. Wǒ yào hē yì-bèi jiǔ le.  
    I want drink one-glass wine INCH  
    ‘I wanted to drink one glass of wine now.’

b. Wǒ yào hē fā yì-bèi jiǔ
    I want drink it one-glass wine
    ‘I wanted to drink one glass of wine now.’

1.2.3. LOCALITY IN fā-LICENSING

As mentioned in Section 1.1.2, excessive fā is licensed by a modal in the sentence. Importantly, fā licensing has to be local, i.e., it cannot be across a clause boundary, or an island boundary:

    John want buy it several-hundred-CL book  
    ‘John wants to buy several hundreds of books.’

b. John xiāng zhīdào fā mǎi (fā)  
    John know he buy it  
    jī-bāi-bēn shū le ma.  
    several-hundred-CL book PRF Q  
    ‘John wants to know if he bought several hundreds of books.’

In (15a), the modal xiāng ‘want’ and the pronoun fā are located in the same clause, and licensing holds between these two elements. However, when the modal is separated from excessive fā by the boundary of a finite clause, fā-licensing is blocked and the result is ungrammatical, as shown in (15b). (16) below shows again that licensing between a modal and fā must respect locality:

(16) a. wǒ rènshī xiāng lié fā liǎng-bēi dé rén.  
    I know want drink it two-glass DE person  
    ‘I knew the person who wants to drink two glasses (of wine).’

b. * wǒ xiāng rènshī [liè fā liǎng-bēi  
    I know drink it two-glass  
    DE rén
Intended, ‘I want to meet the people who drank two glasses (of wine).’

(16a) is acceptable since the modal xiăng ‘want’ and the non-referential pronoun ta are both in the relative clause, an island for extraction; however, licensing is blocked when the modal is outside the island that contains the pronoun ta, as (16b) shows. Note that as claimed by J.-W. Lin and Tang (1995), the modal xiăng takes an infinitive clause as its complement. It is therefore not the clause boundary that causes the problem in (16b); instead, the ungrammaticality of (16b) is attributed to the violation of an island condition. In sum, the relation between ta and its licensor observes locality constraints.

In the next section, I show that the syntactic operation Agree is responsible for the establishment of the relation between ta and the modal.

2. AN AGREEMENT APPROACH

I start this section by answering the questions in (17) one by one:

(17) Questions:
    a. Why must excessive ta be licensed by a modal?
    b. Why must ta be immediately followed by a quantity-denoting nominal?
    c. Why can objects headed by certain quantifiers and demonstratives not co-occur with ta?
    d. Why is ta barred from double object constructions?

Following Cinque (1999), Butler (2003), Tsai and Portner (2008), I assume that root modals are generated between TP and vP. This modal projection is headed by Mod with an interpretable yet unvalued feature, which probes another instance of modal feature with which to agree in its c-command domain. In the ta excessive construction, Mod establishes an Agree relation with ta, which heads a functional projection inside the vP domain. The licensing relation held between the modal and the excessive ta can be best characterized by syntactic agreement between these two elements; this agreement occurs to establish a functional relation between the modal and the excessive ta (Miyagawa 2009), and to fulfill the requirement of Full Interpretation (Chomsky 2000). Assuming the feature sharing model proposed by Pesetsky and Torrego (2007), the functional relation in the excessive ta construction can be represented in the following tree diagram (irrelevant details are ignored):
Let’s start from the top of the tree representation in (18). First, the interpretable and unvalued modality feature of Mod⁰ is valued by the modal feature on ŭa, as stated above. After the sentence is converged, the output of the Agree relation between Mod⁰ and ŭa is a meaningful input (an interpretable modal feature with a value [excessive]) at LF. A deontic modal is merged at the specifier of Mod⁰, and values Mod⁰ if it can’t otherwise find a matching goal in its c-command domain⁴. Second, I assume that ŭa possesses some uninterpretable features, *uQuan and uMod; the former attracts a quantity-denoting phrase to its specifier, while the latter is checked by agreeing with an interpretable modal feature. As will be discussed in details below, the excessive ŭa takes the quantity-denoting expression as its specifier, and this configuration derives the meaning of excessiveness. Lastly, head movement takes place from V to ŭa to v, and thus the order V ŭa QP is derived⁵.

One of the merits of this agreement approach is that the locality conditions on ŭa licensing observed in the previous section fall out naturally if there is agreement between the modal and ŭa in the excessive ŭa construction; relevant examples are repeated below:

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⁴ The syntactic status of Chinese modals is still in much debate. While J.-W. Lin and Tang (1995) argue for a ‘modals as verbs’ approach, Tsai (2009) and X. -Y. Huang (2009) adopt the universal hierarchy proposed by Cinque (1999), and claim that there is an adverb- auxiliary distinction among Chinese modal elements, which form spec-head pairs in a Cinquian style. Since both root modal adverbs (yīnggāi ‘should’, kēyī ‘can’), and root modal auxiliaries (yào ‘want’, néng ‘can’) can license excessive ŭa, I assume that they are operators and are base-generated at [SPEC, Mod].

⁵ Evidence in the literature of ŭa being phonologically deficient suggests that the pronoun ŭa might undergo affixation to the verb. Shu (2007) analyzes ŭa as a verbal clitic which forms a constituent with the verb.
(19) a. John xiang mui fa ji-bai-ben
John want buy it several-hundred-CL
book
shu.
‘John wants to buy several hundreds of books.’

b. John xiang zhidao fa mui (*fa)
John want know he buy it
ji-bai-ben shu le ma.
several-hundred-CL book PRF Q
‘John wants to know if he bought several hundreds of books.’

(20) a. wo renshi [xiang lie fa liang-bei]
I know want drink it two-glass
de] ren.
DE person
‘I knew the person who wants to drink two glasses (of wine).’

b. *wo xiang renshi [lie fa liang-bei]
I want know drink it two-glass
de] ren.
de] person
Intended, ‘I want to meet the people who drank two glasses (of wine).’

(19) and (20) demonstrate a locality violation. In the (a) examples, the agreement relation is able to maintain between the modal xiang ‘want’ and fa, since they are both in the same clause, whereas, in the (b) examples, the agreement between these two constituents cannot be established by crossing either the finite clause boundary or the wh-island created by the relative clause. The contrasts shown in (19) and (20) follow naturally if fa-licensing is understood as syntactic agreement in terms of Agree, which obeys the same syntactic conditions as fa licensing (Chomsky 2000, Rackowski and Richards 2005).

To answer the second question of why fa must be immediately followed by a quantity-denoting nominal, we need to first understand the semantic role fa plays in the structure. Yeh (2006) argues that the constructional meaning of the excessive fa construction is postulated as ‘above an implicit norm’. Rather than pursuing a construction-based analysis, I claim that the meaning of the excessive fa construction can be derived in a compositional way. I propose that the non-referential fa establishes a comparison between the degree denoted by the QP in its specifier and the contextual standard/norm. This treatment assimilates the excessive fa with the null positive morpheme assumed in sentences like ‘Sally is tall’ (Kennedy 1999). A gradable predicate such as tall is argued to combine with a null positive morpheme, which may be overtly realized by a for-phrase
(Sally is tall for a third grader), and results in a function of a type that allows it to combine with an individual (Kennedy and McNally 2005). The denotation of the null positive (POS) is given below:

\[
(21) \quad \text{a. } [[\text{POS}]] = \lambda G \lambda x. \exists d [\text{standard}(d)(G)(C) \land G(d)(x)] \\
\text{b. } [[\text{POS}]]([[\text{tall}}])] = \lambda x. \exists d [\text{standard}(d)([[\text{tall}}])](C) \land \text{tall}(x) \geq d] \\
\text{c. } = \text{‘True if and only if there is some degree } d \text{ that counts as } \text{tall} \text{ in context } C, \text{ and } x \text{ is at least } d\text{-tall.’}
\]

(21a) expresses that the function of the null positive morpheme is to restrict the degree argument \( d \) to values no less than a contextual standard of comparison. (21c) shows that after \( \text{tall} \) combines with the null positive morpheme in (21b), the computation takes in an individual \( x \) and returns the value TRUE if and only if there is some degree \( d \) that counts as “positive” in the discourse context \( C \) and \( x \) is at least \( d \)-tall (Kennedy and McNally 2005).

I suggest that the excessive \( \text{fā} \) performs the same semantic function as the null positive morpheme in the sense that an implied context-sensitive degree \( d \) is compared with/related to a degree denoted by the quantity-denoting phrase by a partial ordering relation \( \geq \); a \( \text{fā} \) sentence is true if and only if the degree \( d \) denoted by the quantity-denoting phrase no less than the quantity implied in the context \( C \), and thus the meaning of excessiveness is derived.

So far I have answered the first two questions listed in the beginning of the section, that is, the licensing conditions on \( \text{fā} \) and the obligatoriness of the presence of the quantity-denoting complement.

Regarding the issue of why the excessive \( \text{fā} \) doesn’t take objects headed by the quantifier \( \text{měi} \) ‘every’, \( \text{súoyōude} \) ‘all’, \( \text{dábīfēn} \) ‘most’ and \( \text{hēnďōu} \) ‘many’, but \( \text{jī} \) ‘several’. J.-W. Lin (1994) notices that the quantifiers that can appear with the non-referential \( \text{fā} \) are those that can be preceded by demonstratives. In (22a), \( \text{jī} \) ‘several’, a few’ is licit with the demonstrative \( \text{zhè} \) ‘this/these’, whereas it is not possible to have \( \text{měi} \) ‘every’, \( \text{súoyōude} \) ‘all’, \( \text{dábīfēn} \) ‘most’ and \( \text{hēnďōu} \) ‘many’ in the same context, as shown in (22b).

\[
(22) \quad \text{a. } \text{zhè jī-bēn shū} \quad \text{these } \text{several-CL book} \quad \text{‘these several books’} \\
\quad \text{b. } *\text{zhè měi/súoyōu/dábīfēn/hēnďōu-bēn shū} \quad \text{these } \text{every/all/most/many-CL book} \quad \text{‘these *every/*all/*most/many books’}
\]

On the basis of the data above, J.-W. Lin and Zhang (2006) claim that the quantifiers which do not occur with demonstratives are themselves D-elements. Therefore, the issue of why the excessive \( \text{fā} \) is incompatible with certain
quantifiers and demonstratives now can be unified as the question of why *fa cannot take DP as its argument. In Su (2012), I have proposed that the co-occurrence restriction on the excessive *fa with D-elements should be re-interpreted as a co-occurrence restriction between the D-elements and the classifier ge, which seems to optionally appear in the excessive *fa construction. I claimed that the classifier ge, as an indefinite determiner, occupies a D position, and thus excludes other D-like quantifiers and demonstratives in the excessive *fa construction.

Now I turn to the last question: why is *fa barred from double object constructions? The relevant example is repeated below:

(23) wō yāo sòng (*fa) [teo săn-ge háizī]
    I want give it three-CL child
    [teo săn-bên shū],
    three-CL book
    ‘I want to give three children (a quantity of) three books.’

In Section 1.2.1, I have argued that the argument analysis of *fa cannot be correct, and the example below further shows that it is possible to have excessive *fa in a prepositional dative sentence without an indirect object:

(24) wō yāo sòng *fa (ge)[teo săn-bên shū]
    I want give it CL three-CL book
    *(teo gēi săn-ge háizī).
    to three-CL child
    ‘I want to give three books (to three children).’

As (24) indicates, *fa can appear in a prepositional dative sentence when the indirect object is absent (*gēi săn-ge háizī ‘to three children’). Based on the fact in (24), I suggest that the prohibition of excessive *fa in double object constructions is due to incompatibility between excessive *fa and the indirect object, which may be linked to the ditransitive usage of excessive *fa at an earlier stage. The incompatibility between an ethical dative pronoun and an indirect object is also observed in English personal datives (PDs):

(25) He, needs him, a little more sense.

(Horn 2008: 172)

(25) illustrates an English PD sentence, in which “an optional occurrence of a non-subcategorized personal datives pronominal in transitive clauses which obligatorily coindexes the subject” (Horn 2008: 169). Rotschy McLachlan and Queller (2010) claim that English personal datives evolved from the ditransitive construction; it “begins as a recipient/beneficiary reflexive dative pronoun marking the third argument in the construction and is later reanalyzed as an
It is possible that Mandarin excessive ｆａ construction undergoes a similar process of grammaticalization as English PDs, and the ditransitive usage of the excessive ｆａ construction at an earlier stage may impose a restriction on the co-occurrence of ｆａ and the indirect object, as ｆａ was used as an indirect object. As (24) shows, the presence of an indirect object in the excessive ｆａ construction is marginally accepted, which suggests that since excessive ｆａ has taken on a new structure, and doesn’t bear the recipient role, the restriction on the co-occurrence of ｆａ and the indirect object is not as strict. However, more diachronic research on the development of the excessive ｆａ constructions and cross-linguistic studies on personal datives/ethical datives need to be done.

References


