

**Adjectival Modification in Cantonese Chinese<sup>1</sup>**  
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Cinque's Universal Hierarchy of Clausal Functional Projections in his (1999) book *Adverbs and Functional Heads: A cross-linguistic perspective* claims that all languages have the same fundamental hierarchical structure at the structure level; and that it is necessary for every projection in this hierarchy to associate with a particular semantic interpretation.

It is in this spirit and based on other earlier proposals that the Chinese adjectival modification in the NP is developed<sup>2</sup>. In this article, by examining different Cantonese adjectival distribution in the DP, I argue that on top of the proposed adjectival modification in the NP, there should be a focus phrase projection in the DP. Furthermore, based on the evidence of certain restricted orderings displayed within the DP, somewhere along the line of projections within the DP, a mirroring image projection of its based-generated prepositional phrase should be able to fit in.

## **0. Introduction**

'Adjectives' in Chinese linguistics is known as a difficult issue to handle and there is not much work contributing to this area in the past. Recently, in order to investigate the possible typological or theoretical account for this area, certain amount of work has been dedicated to research on the adjectival modification and related issues in Mandarin Chinese (Chao, Mui and Scott (2001/in preparation), Huang (1997, 2001), Mui (in preparation), Scott (in preparation), Simpson (2001?), Sproat and Shih (1988, 1991) and Paul (in preparation)).

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<sup>2</sup> Chao, Mui and Scott (2001/in preparation).

This paper is a preliminary attempt to explore other possible projections in the Chinese DP-internal structure on top of the one proposed by Chao, Mui and Scott, and also to check to what extent the proposal could be considered as part of the Universal Grammar (UG)<sup>3</sup>.

As stated in Chao, Mui and Scott (2001/in preparation), Sproat and Shih (1988, 1991) point out that in constructions of direct modification in many languages with a productive class of adjectives, multiple adjectival modifiers can be subject to strict ordering – Sproat and Shih’s *Adjectival ordering Restrictions* (AOR). However, there are ‘counter-examples’ which seem to hinder the ‘universality’ of this AOR.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, I test the validity of the adjectival modification in the NP proposed by Chao, Mui and Scott<sup>5</sup> by examining the ordering and distribution of the adjectival modification in Cantonese Chinese. I argue that regarding the adjectival distribution within the DP, Cantonese is similar to Mandarin with (i) direct modification conforms to Sproat and Shih’s *Adjectival Ordering Restrictions* (AOR) and (ii) indirect modification disobeys AOR. However, I suggest that the adjectival order is basically fixed with the only exception that there should be a Focus Phrase projection within the DP. Moreover I also point out that there is certain rigid ordering in the DP structure. For this, I would suggest this ‘restricted ordering’ is due to a ‘mirror image effect’ provided by the movement of its base-generated prepositional phrase.

In section 1 of this paper I compare Cantonese adjectives with the Mandarin ones. Section 2 briefly presents how the Mandarin adjectival modification in the NP is developed in Chao, Mui and Scott’s co-paper. Section 3 shows how the proposal discussed in section 2 applies to Cantonese adjectival modification in the NP. Section 4 looks at the Cantonese ‘counter-examples’ of AOR and the Chao, Mui and Scott’s proposal and before concluding the paper, section 5 includes my proposals which attempt to explain the Cantonese examples which are incompatible to AOR and Chao, Mui and Scott’s proposal.

## 1. Preliminary characterization of Cantonese adjectives

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<sup>3</sup> That is hoping that the proposals in this article can be applied to other languages to check and see to what extent the ordering is universal or language specific.

<sup>4</sup> Sproat and Shih (1991) mentioned about ‘counter-examples’ to AOR. For instance, in Japanese, there are examples of ‘ (large red dog) and *akai ookina inu*’ (red large dog) and in our co-paper (in preparation), we also point out that there are certain Mandarin adjectival orderings within the DP which is alternative to AOR.

<sup>5</sup> 2001/in preparation.

In this section I will have an initial characterization of Cantonese adjectives. In section 3 to 5, I will provide a more formal analysis. Basically, Cantonese adjectives are similar to the Mandarin ones in a sense of what Duanmu (1998) points out ‘that although many Mandarin adjectives seem to be quite productive in the form [AN] (as in (1) and (2)), he also notes that Zhu (1980) argues that there are also many cases in which show no free combinations in [AN] form with nouns’ (as in (3) and (4)).

Mandarin

1. *bai zhi* ‘white paper’

Cantonese

2. *san syu* ‘new book’

Mandarin

3. \**bai shou* ‘white hand’

Cantonese

4. \**san tauh* ‘new head’

In Cantonese (and also Mandarin) Chinese, adjectives can be argued to be syntactically classified as nominal modifiers, which fall into the category of ‘languages with partial restrictions’. There seems to be certain restrictions on Chinese adjectives to combine in the [AN] form with nouns as we have seen from the above examples (1) to (4).

Sproat and Shih (1988,1991) group Mandarin Chinese adjectives into two classifications: Direct and Indirect modification as in (5) to (8) below.

(i) Direct modification

Mandarin

5. (a) *qian zongtong* ‘former president’

(b) \**gao ren* ‘tall person’

Cantonese

6. (a) *chihn jyu-jik* 'former chairman'  
(b) \**gou syuh* 'tall tree'

(ii) Indirect modification

Mandarin

7. (a) \**qian de zongtong* 'former president'  
(b) *gao de shu* 'tall tree'

Cantonese

8. (a) \**chihn ge jyu-jik* 'former chairman'  
(b) *gou ge syuh* 'tall tree'

As we can see, Cantonese adjectives are similar to the Mandarin ones in terms of restrictions of certain combinations with nouns whether in the case of direct modification or indirect modification.

## 2. AP-related functional projections in the NP/DP

Cinque (1999) proposes the Universal Hierarchy of Clausal Functional Projections, which consists of a strict systematic syntactic and semantic relationship between sentence and VP adverbials, and their semantically-related clausal functional projections. Cinque argues that adverbs are generated in the Spec of the relevant functional projections. He proposes that these functional projections are highly articulated projections of Mood, Tense, Modal and Aspect, and this holds universally in terms of the hierarchical order in every language. Mui (1998), Mui and Chao(1999) and Chao and Mui (2000) validate Cinque's (1999) proposal of the universal hierarchical order of the functional projections in the clause with evidence from Cantonese (as in (9)).

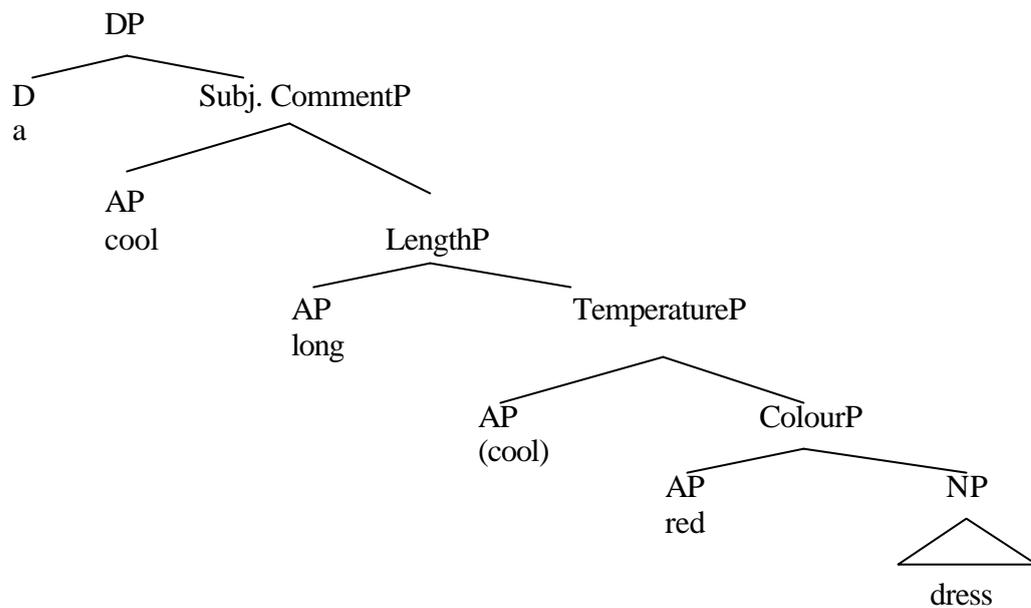
**(9) The universal hierarchy of clausal functional projections**

(From Chao and Mui (2000), based on Cinque (1999))

		<i>Spec</i>	<i>Head</i>
MOOD	<i>Speech Acts</i>	[frankly	Mood/speech act
	<i>Speaker-oriented</i>	[fortunately	Mood/evaluative
	<i>Epistemic</i>	[allegedly	Mood/evidential
		[probably	Mood/epistemic
TENSE/ MOOD	<i>Realis</i>	[once	Tense(Past)
		[then	Tense(Future)
	<i>Irrealis</i>	[perhaps	Mood/irrealis
MODALS	<i>Alethic Modality</i>	[necessarily	Modal/necessity
		[possibly	Modal/possibility
	<i>Root Modality</i>	[willingly	Modal/volitional
		[inevitably	Modal/obligation
		[cleverly	Modal/ability or permission
ASPECT	<i>External Aspect</i>	[usually	Asp/habitual
		[again	Asp/repetitive I
		[often	Asp/frequentative I
		[quickly	Asp/celerative I
	<i>Perfective/ Imperfective</i>	[already	Tense (anterior)
		[no longer	Asp/terminative
		[still	Asp/continuative
		[always	Asp/perfect
		[just	Asp/retrospective
		[soon	Asp/proximative
	[briefly	Asp/durative	
	[characteristically	Asp/generic or progressive	
	[almost	Asp/prospective	
	<i>Internal Aspect</i>	[completely	Asp/sg. completive I
		[well	Asp/manner and voice
		[quickly/early	Asp/celerative II
		[tutto	Asp/pl. completive II
	<i>Manner, etc.</i>	[again/several times	Asp/ repetitive or frequentative II

Following the argument of that clausal and nominal functional projections correspond fairly directly to each other, and based on other proposals such as Sproat and Shih's Adjectival Ordering Restrictions, Scott's (1998) proposes that AOR might be applied to argue that a similar hierarchy holds in the DP as in (10).

(10)



For example, as noted in the Chao, Mui and Scott's<sup>6</sup> co-paper that "the particular interpretation that a modifier has is semantically composed from both its 'base' meaning and the interpretation of the functional projection with which it is associated." This can be further illustrated by examples (11) and (12).

(11) what a long *cool* red dress!  
 ["ungrammatical" where *cool* receives the interpretation *excellent*]  
 ["grammatical" where *cool* receives the interpretation *not hot*]

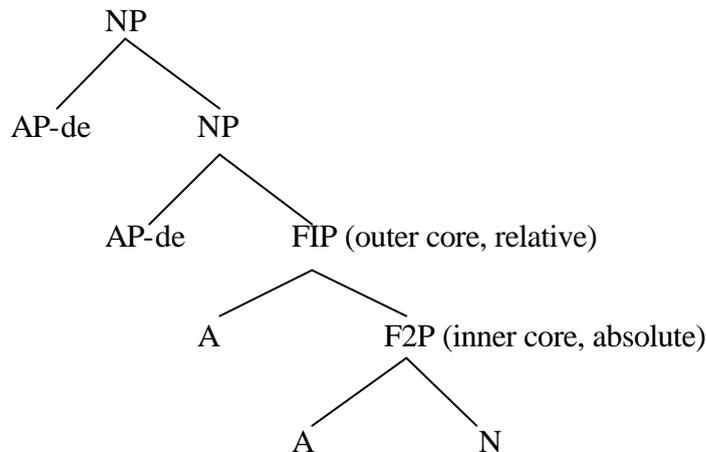
(12) what a *cool* long red dress!  
 ["ungrammatical" where *cool* receives the interpretation *not hot*]  
 ["grammatical" where *cool* receives the interpretation *excellent*]

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<sup>6</sup> In preparation.

Applying the idea in (10) and adopting Sproat and Shih's concept of AOR, a revised hierarchy of functional projections in the NP/DP is then proposed as in (13)<sup>7</sup>

**(13) Adjectival Modification in the NP**



Basically, in Mandarin, as we argue “we only get direct modification in a hierarchical configuration. Whereas, indirect modifiers are treated as adjuncts. Further, following the argument presented in Chao and Mui’s (2000) earlier work: the existence of internal and external aspectual projections, we argue that there are also division of outer core and inner core in the DP internal structure. The functional projection F1P is the projection for the outer core, which correlates with the external aspect such as the relational SIZE in (14), and F2P is the projection for the inner core, which correlates with internal aspect such as the absolute COLOUR.

**(14) Hierarchy of Functional Projections in the DP/NP (revised)**

- DP: DETERMINER > ORDINAL NUMBER > CARDINAL NUMBER
- NP:
  - OUTER CORE: SUBJECTIVE COMMENT > EVIDENTIAL > SIZE
  - INNER CORE: LENGTH > HEIGHT > SPEED > DEPTH > WIDTH > WEIGHT > TEMPERATURE > AGE > SHAPE > COLOUR > NATIONALITY/ORIGIN > MATERIAL
- N<sup>0</sup>: COMPOUND ELEMENT > NP

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<sup>7</sup> For details of this proposal, see Chao, Mui and Scott (in preparation).

### 3. A Test: Application of the proposed Mandarin adjectival modification in the NP to Cantonese.

If we expect the proposal in ((13) and (14)) to hold to universally across languages, we should be able to see that the proposal is applicable to give an account for the Cantonese adjectival distribution. In this section, we look at the evidence provided in Cantonese to serve this purpose.

#### 1. Direct modification

Same as the Mandarin adjectives, this type of adjectival distribution in Cantonese is the type we have seen in (1) to (4) which is expected to obey AOR. Indeed, this turns out to be the case: Cantonese direct modification conforms to AOR. Therefore, (15) is grammatical and (16) is ungrammatical. This is due to the violation of the restricted ordering of F1P (SIZE in the outer core) has to precede F2P (SHAPE in the inner core).

Cantonese

- |      |                        |                      |                      |
|------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| (15) | <i>daaih</i><br>big    | <i>yuhn</i><br>round | <i>toih</i><br>table |
| (16) | * <i>yuhn</i><br>round | <i>daaih</i><br>big  | <i>toih</i><br>table |

### 4. ‘Counter-examples’ of AOR and the proposed hierarchy in section (2)

#### 2. Indirect modification

This type of adjectival modification is considered to be the ‘counter-examples’ of AOR and the proposal of the Mandarin Chinese adjectival distribution discussed in section (2). Examples (17) and (18) indicate that the violation of the proposed order (SIZE (outer core, relative) > SHAPE (inner core, absolute)) does not make (18) ungrammatical.

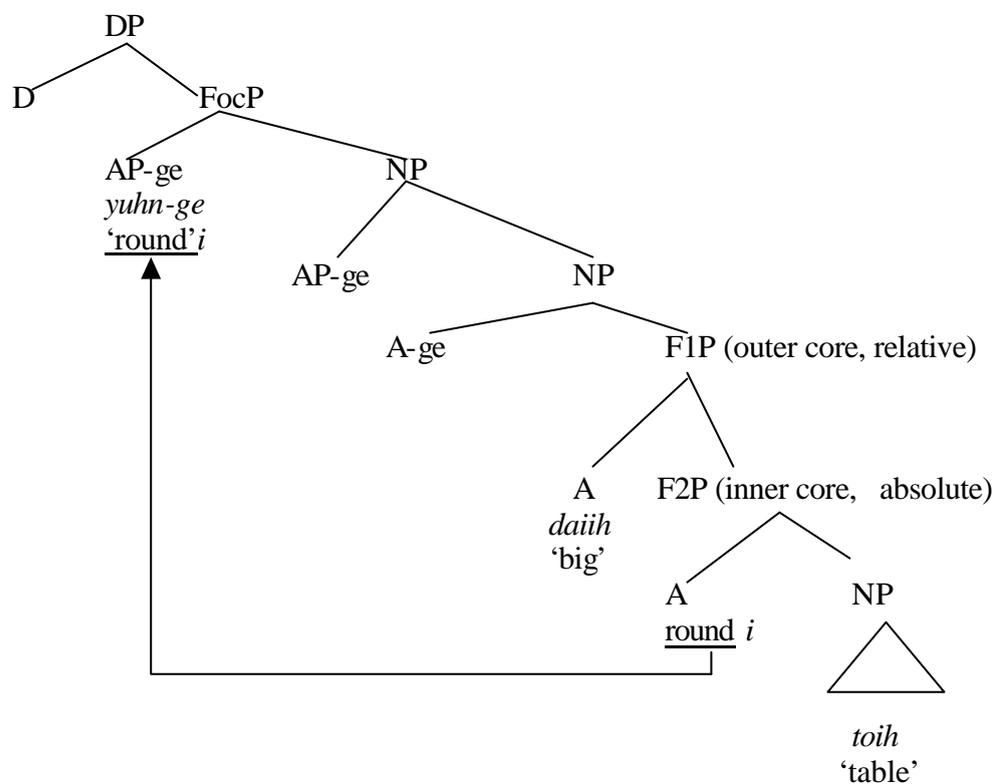
Cantonese

- |      |                         |                      |                      |
|------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| (17) | <i>daaih-ge</i><br>big  | <i>yuhn</i><br>round | <i>toih</i><br>table |
| (18) | <i>yuhn-ge</i><br>round | <i>daaih</i><br>big  | <i>toih</i><br>table |

In the next section, I will add another functional projection in order to explain the existence of such a phenomenon which is disallowed in AOR and the proposed DP-internal structure.

## 5.0 A proposal: FocP in the DP

### (19) DP-internal structure (revised)<sup>8</sup>



In the above diagram, we can see that the *yuhn* 'round' (the SHAPE adjective in the inner core) is projected to the A<sub>ge</sub> position (Spec of FocP) and this explains why there is a violation of the AOR in the structure (18).

The argument of this proposal follows the earlier discussion: If the structure of the adverbial distribution can be reflected in the adjectival distribution<sup>9</sup>, then the FocP should

<sup>8</sup> This is a proposed revised version of the structure of the Chinese adjectival modification in the NP proposed by Chao, Mui and Scott (2002).

<sup>9</sup> Following Cinque (1999), Sproat and Shih (1991), Scott (to appear) and Chao, Mui and Scott (2002).

also be allowed to fit into the adjectival distribution in the DP-internal structure. Such a proposal is based on the following prediction: If a similar hierarchy of adverbial distribution holds for the adjectives in the DP, and there is a FocP in the adverbial hierarchy for the adverbs to move up when necessary, then the same should also hold for the adjectives in the DP.

As we can see in the revised DP-internal structure (19), there is a projection of the SHAPE adjective from the Spec of F2P (inner core) up to the Spec of FocP. This explains why the indirect modification ‘round-*ge* big table’ does not conform to AOR but still grammatical. With regard to this, following what pointed out by Kiss (1997), that contrastive focus involves movement (as compared to information focus), the proposal here shows exactly there is an emphasis in the ‘round-*ge* big table’ phrase since in Cantonese Chinese, we can have this phrase in the following context, ‘Yes, I would like to buy this big table, please. Oh, it’s the ROUND big one that I meant. I didn’t mean the SQUARE big one next to this ROUND big table...’

As proposed by Chao and Mui (2000) and also based on what proposed in the earlier chapters, certain adverbs in Chinese can be projected up to other functional categories in the Universal Hierarchy of Clausal Functional Projections due to various reasons. For example, a Modal adverbial ‘possibly’ can move up to the Spec of Mood when realized as an evaluative adverb; and an adverb of Modal/necessity can be moved up to the Spec of FocP for emphatic purpose. Based on the same reasoning, I propose that there should be a FocP in the Cantonese DP-internal structure, and adjectives in the DP could be projected to the Spec FocP for emphatic reasons.

### 5.1 Another proposal: Part of the NP is based-generated from PP

In the last section I have suggested that there should be a FocP in the DP. In this section I will argue that certain restricted orderings may be possible along the line of projections in the Cantonese DP above F1P and F2P.

In Cantonese<sup>10</sup> the following phrase in (20) is perfectly grammatical.

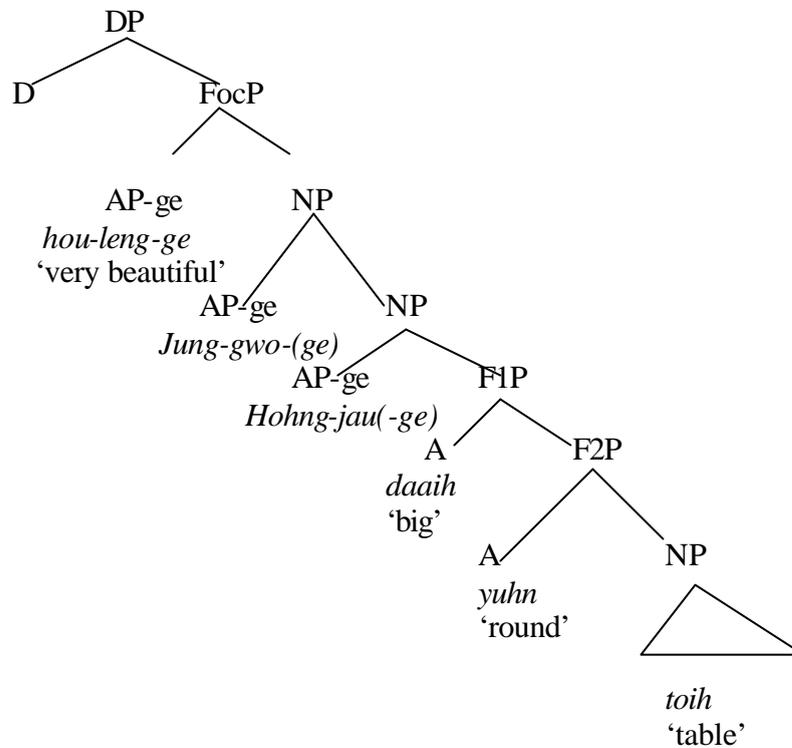
(20) *hou-leng-ge*      *Jung-gwo(-ge)*   *Hohng-jau(-ge)*      *daaih yuhn toih*  
       very beautiful      China                      Hang-zhou              big    round   table

However, the order within the DP of the above phrase must be fixed as in (21). This seems to contradict with what proposed in the earlier version of the Chinese adjectival modification in the NP.

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<sup>10</sup> It is believed that this should also be the case in Mandarin. Further investigation will be carried out in Mui (in preparation) to confirm.

(21)



In regard to this issue, instead of considering all indirect modifiers to be real adjuncts, I would argue that certain restricted orderings should be allowed in the NP/DP. Furthermore, I would also argue that the indirect modifiers in the NP's in (21) are indeed in a mirror image ordering of the prepositional phrases in English<sup>11</sup>.

This is further illustrated as in (22) (a) and (b)).

(22) a. Cantonese

[[[AP-ge daaih-hohk-ge] AP-ge mahn-hohk-yun-ge] NP hohk-saang]  
of the University of the Faculty of Arts the student

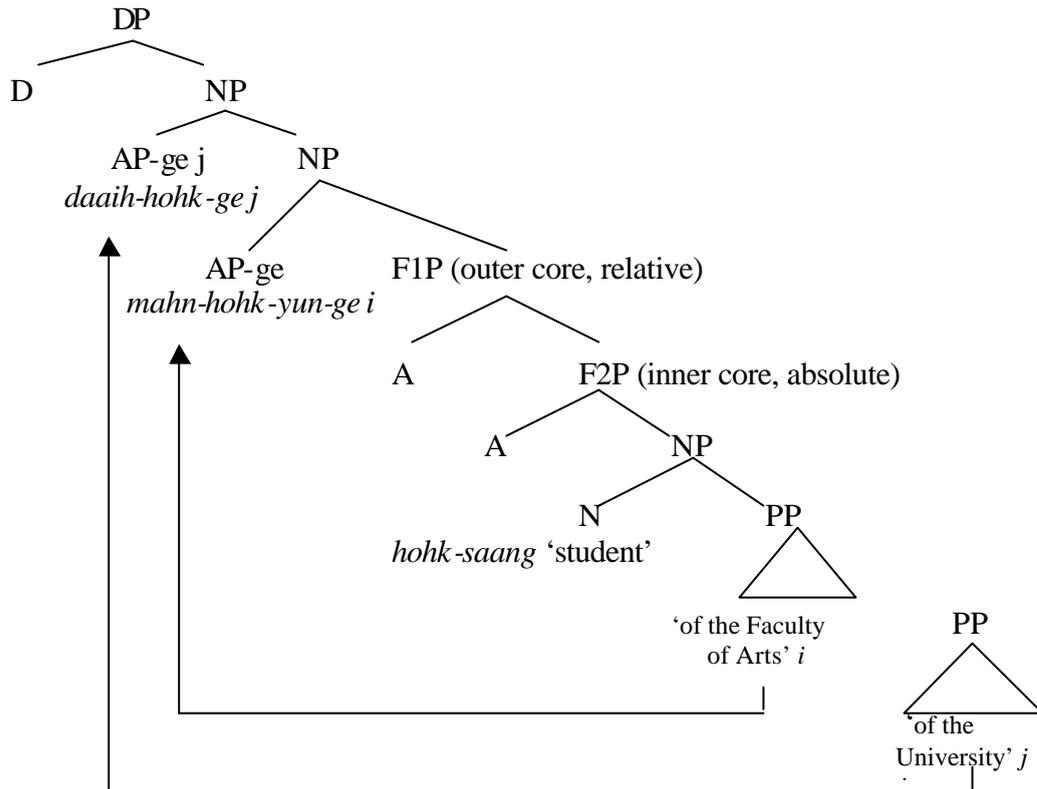
b. English

[NP the student [PP of the Faculty of Arts [PP of the University]]]

<sup>11</sup> Following the phenomena discussed in Cinque (1994), Larmarche (1991), Laenzlinger (2002) and Shlonsky (2000), there are obviously certain mirroring image projections in some phrasal structure across languages.

I would argue that basically there is a movement from the base-generated PP to the Cantonese NP as in (23) and thus there must be a restricted ordering in the phrasal structure. This explains why (24) is grammatical and (25) is not.

(23)



(24) hou-leng-ge    Jung-gwo(-ge)    Hohng-zhou(-ge)    daaih    yuhn    toih  
 very beautiful    China    Hang-zhou    big    round    table

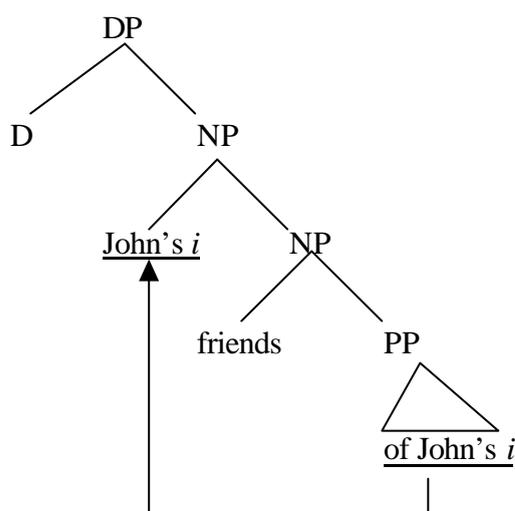
(25) \*hou-leng-ge    Hohng-zhou(-ge)    Jung-gwo(-ge)    daaih    yuhn    toih  
 very beautiful    Hang-zhou    China    big    round    table

Nevertheless, this analysis needs further explanation relating to the optional realization of '-ge' in the Cantonese NP/DP. This alternation of '-ge' in the Cantonese NP/DP is accounted for by the proposal of a [+Stress/Link Focus] feature in the structure<sup>12</sup>. (26) illustrates the basic idea derived for this proposal.

<sup>12</sup> See Mui (in preparation) for details.

**(26) DP-internal movement: PP raising**

friends of John's  $\Rightarrow$  John's friends



The idea is to adopt and apply the concept of the Principle and Parameter to the DP-internal movement: The principle is that there is/are PP raising(s) in the DP-internal movement only except that there are different parameters with regard to different languages. For instance, in English as we can see in (26), the movement costs a deletion of the preposition which originally realized in the base-generated prepositional phrase<sup>13</sup>.

Whereas in Cantonese Chinese, the parameter of this DP-internal movement is that the final position of the AP-ge phrase triggers the [+Stress/Link Focus] feature of the phrase and thus leads to the realization of the '-ge' of the final AP-ge phrase of the Cantonese Chinese indirect adjectival modification.

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<sup>13</sup> This is just a rough idea about the possible DP-internal movement in English to be borrowed to explain the Chinese DP-internal movement. Further research could possibly be carried out relating to this issue to explore other possible analyses of the DP-internal movements.

## 6. Conclusion

In this article I have investigated the Cantonese adjectival distribution in the NP/DP, provided evidence in support of, and concluded that its direct modification follows the Chao, Mui and Scott's Mandarin adjectival modification of the NP/DP. However, with alternative examples in the indirect modification, and confirmation of certain rigid orderings found in the Cantonese NP/DP, it is argued that part of the DP-internal structure could be accounted for by the mirroring image projection of its base-generated prepositional phrase.

This paper also includes a proposal of the FocP projection within the DP by arguing that if adverbial projections can be revealed in the adjectival distribution in the DP, a focus phrase which is available in the clausal functional projections should also be able to take part along the line of projections within the DP.

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