

GE-insertion as a Syntactic Variable in Hongkong Cantonese

Wai Lan TSANG
University of Hong Kong

1. Introduction

Of all Cantonese particles, 嘅 *ge3*¹ clearly has the widest range of uses. This is acknowledged by many linguists: for example, Cheung (1972) states that it has the most functions while Luke and Nancarrow (1993) also observe that it is 'the most frequently occurring grammatical unit in Cantonese'. This particle can be used in numerous ways. It can

- i. indicate possession : 1. 我 嘅 車
ngo5 ge3 che1
My PT car
My car
- ii. indicate modification : 2. 厚 嘅 書
hau5 ge3 syu1
thick PT book
thick book
- iii. occur at the end of a sentence : 3. 佢 好 有 自 發 性 嘅
keoi5 hou2 jau5 zi6 faat3 sing3 ge3
He very have initiation PT
He is very initiative.

As noted by Cheung (1972:91), 嘅 *ge3* can also be inserted between the classifier and the head noun provided that the former is a 'measure' or a noun-derived classifier, as in (4):

¹ The romanisation system for Cantonese in this study is the one devised by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong.

4. 一 斤 嘅 豬 肉
 jat1 gan1 ge3 zyul juk6
 one catty GE pig meat
 one catty of pork

On the contrary, according to Cheung, the insertion is not possible if the classifier is, in his term, ‘a determinative measure’, as in (5):

5. * 一 條 嘅 魚
 jat1 tiu4 ge3 jyu2
 one CL GE fish
 a fish

To facilitate the understanding of this distinction in Cantonese, a typology of classifiers in Cantonese is shown in Figure 1, which is based largely on Matthews and Yip (1994):

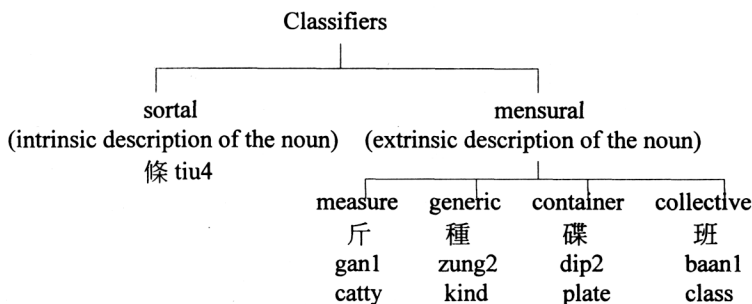


Figure 1

The insertion of the particle 嘅 *ge3* between the classifier and the head noun is mentioned by Luke and Nancarrow (1993) and Matthews & Yip (1994:90). What is notably different from Cheung’s observation is that they talk about 嘅 *ge3* with classifiers like 個 *go3* and 種 *zung2*. Sentences like the following are also found in my data :

6. 呢 四 首 嘅 民 謠
 ne1 sei3 sau2 ge3 man4 jiu4
 this four CL GE folk song
 these four folk songs

Out of intuition, hesitation or the desire of keeping the turn might be one of the stimulants of the insertion, as in (7) :

7. 呢 個 嘅 ... 記 事 簿 電 腦
 ne1 go3 ge3 ... gei3 si6 bou2 din6 nou3
 this CL GE notebook computer
 this ... notebook computer

Besides 嘅 *ge3*, other particles like *ah3*, *eh3* or a combination of them can be used.²

While the above consideration is conceivable, two questions are still open : Why is there often no pause between GE and the head noun, as in example 6? Moreover, why is 嘅 *ge3*, not other particles or sounds, selected for the non-hesitant version? In view of the above brief analyses and an apparent change in the type of classifier compatible with 嘅 *ge3*, these questions really justify an investigation of the particle in terms of its grammatical properties and certain linguistic concepts. For the sake of clarity in my discussion, the particle between the classifier and the head noun is referred to as GE as in example 6 and other occurrences of the particle as PT, as in example 1.

² There might also be some relationship between GE-insertion and 'code-mixing'. As shown in the following examples, the speakers switch to an English head noun after the inserted particle *ge3* and sometimes a pause :

8. 一 張 嘅 ... CD
 jat1 zoeng1 ge3 ... CD
 one CL GE ... CD
 a ... compact disc

9. 個 啲 嘅 ... proper names
 go2 di1 ge3 ... proper names
 that CL GE ... proper names
 those ... proper names

In this paper, the issues concerning GE-insertion will be addressed below mainly through the discussion of its status. Before that, I will outline the hypotheses and methodology of the study.

2. Summary of Hypotheses

Based on my intuition as a native speaker of Cantonese and reading of some related literature, I have formulated some hypotheses about the status of GE-insertion which can be divided into three main areas : syntactic, stylistic and sociolinguistic.

2.1 *Hypotheses on Syntactic Aspects of GE-insertion*

Syntactically, some kind of relationship between the particle and the other constituents of the noun phrase is likely to exist:

Hypothesis 1 : As quoted before (Cheung 1972:91), measure classifiers or noun-derived ones can take 嘅 *ge3*. Then, mensural classifiers like 類 *lei6* (kind) and 盒 *hap2* (box), with their homophonous nominal counterparts, will have a tendency to be more compatible with GE-insertion than classifiers like 個 *go2* or 條 *tiu4*.

Hypothesis 2 : The insertion of GE between the classifier and a polysyllabic head noun such as 朱古力 *zyu1 gu1 lik1* (chocolate) is more likely to be accepted than that between the classifier and a monosyllabic head noun.

Hypothesis 3 : GE-insertion will be more acceptable with complex premodifying phrases like relative clauses than with simple premodifiers such as numerals or demonstratives.

2.2 Hypothesis on Stylistic Aspects of GE-insertion

Hypothesis 4 : GE-insertion might be more frequent in formal or refined discourse contexts as in news forums (or news reviews) and informative programmes, owing to the nature of these contexts.

2.3 Hypotheses on Sociolinguistic Aspects of GE-insertion

In all probability, an informant's responses in a survey are somehow related to their personal background. So, the background of the informants, including their age, sex and educational level, are taken into consideration to examine their correlation with acceptability of the structure concerned. The attitude of older informants versus that of younger ones (in terms of 'change in apparent time'), women versus men, and educated people versus less educated ones will be handled in my thesis.

Since I am still working on the sociolinguistic aspects, this paper will only investigate hypotheses 1 to 4.

3. Outline of Methodology

For this study, there are two main sources of data : recordings from radio and television, and interviews in the form of a questionnaire. To examine the

attitude of the native speakers to GE-insertion, twenty-five sentences, including four control ones, were devised. The twenty-one target sentences were sub-divided into four groups to test the relationship of classifiers and GE-insertion (See Appendix - Original Ordering of Sample Sentences). In order to minimise ordering effects, four versions were presented to different groups of informants. In each version, sentences were randomly ordered with respect to the structures under study.

In total, one hundred informants were interviewed, who were evenly distributed over both sexes and four age groups. The informants of each group were further subcategorised by their educational levels. Interviews were carried out on an individual basis, with a briefing session before the interview. Informants were reminded to take the same viewpoint as expressed in the sentence, so they should not judge the sentence in terms of its meaning. Their job was to evaluate the sentences in terms of their forms ('形式' / '方式') and rate them according to the following options written in Cantonese in the response sheet³:

1 for total rejection - most people, including me, do not say it this way

2 for passive acceptance (p.a.) - I do not say it this way, but other
people might

3 for active acceptance (a.a.) - I (might) say it this way

³ The scale is largely adapted from Sobin (1987: 43). In his study about complementiser-trace effects, he equates the following options with 'active acceptance', 'passive acceptance' and 'rejection':

- a. 'it sounds like a sentence that you (the informant) might say in the right context or situation'
- b. 'it sounds like a possible English sentence, one that even you don't say it that way, you would not be particularly surprised to hear someone say it to you that way or see it written'
- c. 'it sounds odd, so that you doubt that people say it that way'

4 for not sure

I went through the options one by one with the informant before the start of the test. After the judgement test, they were asked to fill in a background data sheet. Last came an informal follow-up session in which they were asked to explain their rejection of some sentences.

4. Status of GE-insertion

4.1 Overall Results of the Survey (See Appendix - Charts 1 and 2)

About 50% to 60% of the informants actively accepted the majority of the sentences. The one which shows the highest level of acceptance (80%) is example 10, which also has the lowest rate of rejection:

10. 希 望 政 府 可 以 注 意 吓 呢 一 類 嘅
 hei1 mong6 zing3 fu2 ho2 ji3 zyu3 ji3 haa5 nei1 jat1 lei1 ge3
 hope government can note PT this one CL GE
 問 題 啦 ! (#17)⁴
 man6 tai4 laa1
 question PT

It is hoped that the government can pay attention to this kind of problem.

The second highest active acceptance rate is 70% for example 11:

11. 呢 一 盒 嘅 朱 古 力 好 好 味 呀 ! (#12)
 nei1 jat1 hap6 ge3 zyu1 gu1 lik1 hou2 hou2 mei6 aa3
 this one CL GE chocolates very very tasty PT
 This box of chocolates is very tasty.

The sentence with the least active acceptance is example 12, whose passive acceptance rate is higher than its active acceptance:

⁴ The mark '#' is used to indicate the ordering of the sentence in the original version of the survey.

12. 買 一 籠 嘅 雀 要 好 多 錢 㗎! (#13)
 maai5 jat1 lung4 ge3 zoek2 jiu3 hou2 do1 cin2 gaa3
 buy one CL GE bird need very much money PT
 To buy a cage of birds needs much money.

and example 13 is the second lowest :

13. 住 喺 大 球 場 附 近 嗰 班 嘅 有
 zyu6 hai2 daai6 kau4 coeng4 fu6 gan6 go2 baan1 ge3 jau5
 live at big ball field near that CL GE have
- 錢 佬 喺 度 開 嚟 記 者 招 待 會。 (#21)
 cin2 lou2 hai2 dou6 hoi1 gan2 gei3 ze2 ziu1 doi6 wui6
 money men is PT open ASP journalist conference

That group of wealthy men who live near the Stadium are holding a press conference.

While examples 12 and 13 received 10% and 13% 'not sure' responses respectively, they are not the ones with significant rate of rejection. Of all the sentences in the sample, none has a rejection rate over 30%. The one which was most disapproved of (29%) is example 14:

14. 唔 該, 我 要 三 個 嘅 橙。 (#1)
 m4 goi1 ngo5 jiu3 saam1 go3 ge3 caang2
 please I want three CL GE orange
 Excuse me, I would like to have three oranges.

4.2 Syntactic Considerations

GE-insertion can be analysed in terms of the following syntactic factors :

1. Classifiers
2. Head Nouns
3. Premodifiers

4.2.1 Classifiers

As Cheung (1972:91) states, most measure classifiers are compatible with the insertion of the particle 嘅 *ge3*. Not surprisingly, as shown in table 1, the average acceptance rate for mensural classifiers is slightly more active than that for sortal ones, though the difference is small and not statistically significant.

	Average Acceptance Rate (%)		
	Rejection	Passive Acceptance	Active Acceptance
Sortal Classifiers	11.63	31.67	56.80
Mensural Classifiers	8.77	30.66	60.57

$\chi^2(df=2, N=100) = 0.54, 0.75 < p < 0.90$
(adjusted to % of sure responses)

Table 1 : Acceptance Pattern in terms of Two Main Types of Classifiers

Mensural classifiers also have an average rejection rate a little lower than sortal ones.

	Average Acceptance Rate (%)		
	Rejection	Passive Acceptance	Active Acceptance
Sortal Classifiers	11.63	31.67	56.80
Container Classifiers	8.51	34.04	57.45
Generic Classifiers	10.21	29.06	60.73
Collective Classifiers	7.45	30.59	61.97

$\chi^2(df=6, N=100) = 1.82, 0.90 < p < 0.95$
(adjusted to % of sure responses)

Table 2 : Acceptance Pattern in terms of Four Types of Classifiers

Table 2 presents a comparison of sortal classifiers with three types of mensural classifiers, which delineates the pattern predicted by hypothesis 1⁵: container, generic and collective classifiers have a slightly higher average active acceptance rate than sortal classifiers. The average passive acceptance rate and rejection rate also fall slightly from sortal to collective classifiers.

4.2.2 Head Nouns

Hypothesis 2 deals with the syllabicity of head nouns. As expected, a polysyllabic head noun with GE was accepted by subjects at a slightly higher level than a monosyllabic or disyllabic one with GE. The average rejection rate and passive acceptance rate of sentences with monosyllabic head nouns are comparatively higher. Table 3 illustrates this pattern of increasing acceptability from sentences with monosyllabic head nouns to those with polysyllabic ones.

Head Nouns	Average Acceptance Rate (%)		
	Rejection	Passive Acceptance	Active Acceptance
Monosyllabic	16	33.05	50.95
Disyllabic	9.48	31.85	58.67
Polysyllabic	7.26	29.37	63.47

$$\chi^2(df=4, N=100) = 5.39, 0.10 < p < 0.25$$

(adjusted to % of sure responses)

Table 3 : Overall Acceptance Pattern in terms of Syllabicity of Head Nouns

⁵ Sample Sentence 13 is dropped in the calculation as it carries a negative connotation going against traditional Chinese culture. Some people, especially the older ones, tend not to be so outspoken in commenting on gifts from other people. Their semantic and stylistic bias might be so strong that it finally overrides syntactic considerations.

A similar pattern is also found when we look at the sentences in terms of two groups of classifiers.

Head Nouns	Average Acceptance Rate (%)		
	Rejection	Passive Acceptance	Active Acceptance
Monosyllabic	22.28	26.94	50.78
Disyllabic	10.24	34.48	55.38
Polysyllabic	7.76	31.02	61.32

$$\chi^2(df=4, N=100) = 10.91, 0.025 < p < 0.05$$

(adjusted to % of sure responses)

Table 4 : Acceptance Pattern of the Sortal Group

In table 4, sentences within the sortal group are categorised into three sub-groups according to the syllabicity of their head nouns. Clearly, the first sub-group has a significantly higher average rejection rate than the other two which are a little bit more actively or passively accepted on average. This significant finding seems to imply that syllabicity is an important factor for GE-insertion, at least when the classifier is sortal. Moreover, instead of falling from sentences with monosyllabic head nouns to those with polysyllabic ones, the average passive acceptance rate of the second sub-group is the highest among the three. This seems to suggest a transition in which disyllabic head nouns are in the middle, if one looks at the table diagonally.

Table 5 illustrates the average acceptance pattern of sentences within the mensural group.

Head Nouns	Average Acceptance Rate (%)		
	Rejection	Passive Acceptance	Active Acceptance
Monosyllabic	62.70	37.23	51.06
Disyllabic	65.9	28.18	63.23
Polysyllabic	67.5	27.68	65.77

$$\chi^2(df=4, N=100) = 5.31, 0.25 < p < 0.50$$

(adjusted to % of sure responses)

Table 5 : Acceptance Pattern of the Mensural Group

In a like manner, sentences with monosyllabic head nouns have a slightly higher rejection rate and lower acceptance rate. The acceptance pattern of sentences with polysyllabic head nouns is clearly the most positive one.

4.2.3 Premodifiers

Three types of premodifiers are examined:

1. NUM / DEM + CL + GE + N like 三個嘅橙 *saam1 go3 ge3 caang2*
(three oranges)
2. DEM + NUM + CL + GE + N such as 呢一盒嘅朱古力 *nei1 jat1 hap6 ge3 zyul gu1 lik1* (this box of chocolate)
3. RELATIVE CLAUSE + GE + N like 佢畫嗰幅嘅畫 *keoi5 waak6 go2 fuk1 ge3 waa2* (the picture which he draws)

	Average Acceptance Rate (%)		
	Rejection	Passive Acceptance	Active Acceptance
Premodifier 1	28.57	30.69	40.74
Premodifier 2	28.57	30.92	40.51
Premodifier 3	41.03	31.38	27.59

$$\chi^2(df=4, N=100) = 0.40, 0.975 < p < 0.99$$

(adjusted to % of sure responses)

Table 6 Overall Acceptance Pattern in terms of Type of Premodifier

The pattern as shown in table 6 seems to be different from the expectation of hypothesis 3, which predicts a higher acceptance level for sentences with a type 3 premodifier. Compared to sentences with the other two types of premodifiers, sentences with a type 2 premodifier have a slightly more positive acceptance pattern. This is particularly obvious with examples 9 and 10, which are the two that over half of the informants actively accepted. Surprisingly, a more negative acceptance pattern is seen for sentences with a type 3 premodifier.

4.2.4 Concluding Remarks

The acceptance patterns of the results are consistent with hypotheses 1 and 2 : GE-insertion seems to be more compatible with mensural classifiers than sortal ones and with disyllabic or polysyllabic head nouns rather than monosyllabic ones. However, the statistical difference is so small that the data seem to have failed to confirm the hypotheses. The only statistically significant finding is that syllabicity is relevant to GE-insertion with sortal classifiers. Hypothesis 3 is not confirmed by the acceptance pattern in terms of type of premodifier. This overall outcome tends to imply that acceptability of GE-insertion might relate to aspects other than syntactic ones.

4.3 Stylistic Considerations

Luke and Nancarrow (1993) cite radio programmes, sermons and lectures as possible contexts where one can find GE-insertion. In my recordings and observations of some radio and television programmes, GE-insertion can easily be heard in the following contexts, with some actual examples illustrated :

- a. news reviews after news reports or news forums in some phone-in programmes on radio

e.g. 15. 佢 哋 個 嘅 加 價 申 請
 keoi3 dei6 go2 go3 ge3 gaa1 gaa3 san1 cing2
 they that CL GE add price application
 their application for a price increase

16. 呢 十 七 宗 嘅 案
 nei1 sap6 cat1 zung1 ge3 on3
 this ten seven CL GE case
 these seventeen cases

- b. news reports on television

e.g. 17. 一 個 嘅 候 選 舉 人
 jat1 go3 ge3 hau6 syun2 geoi2 jan4
 one CL GE wait election person
 one candidate

18. 五 十 九 個 嘅 居 民
 m3 sap6 gau2 go3 ge3 geoi1 man4
 five ten nine CL GE resident
 fifty-nine residents

- c. some 'commercial' or 'leisure' television programmes reporting current affairs (as in 'Hongkong Today' (今日睇真D) on ATV)

e.g. 19. 呢 一 行 嘅 符 號
 nei1 jat1 hong4 ge3 fu4 hou6
 this one CL GE symbols
 this row of symbols

20. 另一組嘅器官
 ling6 jat1 zou2 ge3 hei3 gun1
 another one CL GE organs
 another group of organs

d. programmes about classical music or music history or development

- e.g. 21. 呢一首嘅英文歌
 nei1 jat1 sau2 ge3 jing1 man4 go1
 this one CL GE English song
 this English song

22. 一種嘅音樂元素
 jat1 zung2 ge3 jam1 ngok6 jyun4 sou3
 one CL GE music element
 a kind of musical element

e. informative programmes (such as those about advances in computer technology)

- e.g. 23. 呢個嘅線路
 nei1 go3 ge3 sin3 lou6
 this CL GE line road
 this circuit

24. 嗰個嘅熱光瓶
 go2 go3 ge3 jit6 gwong1 ping4
 that CL GE hot light bottle
 that LCD

The above examples do somehow correspond to some predictions I have made in the previous part on syntactic considerations. The NPs consist of either a type 1 premodifier or a type 2 premodifier. All head nouns, except one, in the above examples are either disyllabic or polysyllabic. The exception might be due to the use of a more literary classifier 宗 *zung1*, which can be replaced by colloquial 單 *daan1* in example 16. Similar literary classifiers in the examples are 首 *sau2* and 組 *zou2*. The presence of these literary classifiers can indeed explain the divergent acceptance patterns of examples 25 and 10, repeated here as 26 :

25. 嗰 兩 種 嘅 問 題 真 係 要 快 啲 攞 掂
 go2 loeng5 zung2 ge3 man6 tai4 zan1 hai6 jiu3 faai3 dit1 gaau2 dim6
 that two CL GE question really is need soon-er handle

佢 呀! (#14)
 keoi5 aa3
 it PT

There is really a need to handle those two kinds of problems as soon as possible.

26. 希 望 政 府 可 以 注 意 吓 呢 一 類 嘅
 hei1 mong6 zing3 fu2 ho2 ji3 zyu3 ji3 haa5 nei1 jat1 leoi1 ge3
 hope government can note PT this one CL GE

問 題 啦! (#17)
 man6 tai4 laa1
 question PT

It is hoped that the government can pay attention to this kind of problem.

The generic classifier 種 *zung2* in example 25 seems to be more colloquial than 類 *leoi6* in example 26. Furthermore, example 26 is related to the political arena which is in some sense an example of 'formal' context.

Then, what is the connection between these syntactic features of GE-insertion and the genre of these programmes? A shared feature between GE-insertion and the programmes is the association with the idea of 'formality'. As illustrated by Bauer (1988: 252), the Cantonese particle *ge3* can be found in formal contexts like news reportage. In the discussion of NPs, Matthews and Yip (1994:107-111) state twice that structures with the particle tend to be related to 'formal registers'. With this relationship shown in the literature, the insertion of the particle between the classifier and the head noun might be another structure which links to the concept of 'formality'.

Meanwhile, one common characteristic of the programmes concerned is their formal presentation of their content. News reports, reviews or forums are typical examples. Bauer (1988:249-252) echoes Kwok's idea (1984) in treating news reporting as an instance of 'formal Cantonese register'. Though reporting the news in Cantonese, the reporters will use certain patterns which resemble those of Standard Written Chinese, 'in lexis, phraseology and grammar ...' (Kwok 1984:106). Similarly, in the news forums in some phone-in programmes or talk shows, the hosts, in order to sound more serious or professional, will tend to speak more formal Cantonese and GE-insertion is among one of the possible indicators of their nature.

In 'commercial' or 'leisure' television programmes, the hosts tend to use more colloquial Cantonese to report gossip, as in (27) and (28):

27. 呢 種 傢 伙
 neil zung2 gaa1 fo2
 this CL jerk
 this kind of jerk

28. 一 啲 街 坊
 jat1 di1 gaai1 fong1
 one CL street lane
 some neighbours

(Source : 'Hongkong Today' on ATV on 26th September, 1995)

However, they use more formal Cantonese for current affairs about society in order to bring an impression that they tell the truth and are informative. In focusing on the difference between standard and dialect, Bell (1984:182) expresses the view that less standard form indicates 'anecdotal colour' whereas standard one implies 'intellectual authority'. This statement can, on a similar basis, explain the switch of the type of Cantonese in these programmes.

Similarly, informative programmes on radio also use more formal Cantonese when the topics are about technology such as computer advances. Programmes about music history or classical music are conducted in less colloquial Cantonese to suit the classical or historical atmosphere.

One might ask whether the relationship between GE-insertion and the genre of the programmes is an instance of regular register variation or just arbitrary. According to Ferguson (1994:20), the term ‘register variation’ assumes that ‘a communicative situation that recurs regularly in a society (...) will tend over time to develop identifying markers of language structure and language use, different from the language of other communication situations’. Finegan and Biber (1994:339-340) also point out the systematic nature of register variation which can demonstrate ‘a correspondence between elaboration features and more literate varieties ...’. Just as the presence of ‘that’ before a nominal clause in written English marks a more formal register than its omission, the insertion of GE marks a more formal register than its omission. At this stage, it might not be possible to say that GE-insertion is an ‘established marker’ of the mass media as the structure without GE can still be heard in the above formal or refined contexts, such as:

29. 一個非法狗場
 jat1 go3 fei1 faat3 gau2 coeng4
 one CL illegal dog place
 an illegal kennel

30. 呢 間 中 學
 neil gaan1 zung1 hok6
 this CL middle study
 this secondary school

(Source : 'Hongkong Today' on ATV on 16th October, 1995)

Yet, owing to the nature and needs of particular programmes, more formal Cantonese might be increasingly required and GE-insertion is considered as one feature of this kind of language. Therefore, this selection of GE-insertion is not arbitrary but might be developing gradually as one 'marker' of a specific register.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined the status of GE-insertion as a syntactic variable. The sample sentences of the survey were quite widely accepted by informants of all ages and backgrounds. In terms of acceptance patterns, GE-insertion seems to be more compatible with mensural classifiers than sortal ones and with disyllabic or polysyllabic head nouns rather than monosyllabic ones. The statistically significant relationship of GE-insertion and syllabicity for sortal classifiers seems to be another instance of the interface between phonological and syntactic structure.

Stylistically, GE-insertion tends to be associated with the idea of 'formality'. In some registers, the speakers might unconsciously treat the structure as more formal. Yet, at this stage, there is no quantitative support for this hypothesis, which therefore requires a more systematic collection of data to assess more deeply the link between the structure and register variation.

Appendix

1. Bibliography
2. Original Ordering of Sample Sentences
3. Chart 1 - Acceptance Patterns of Sample Sentences
4. Chart 2
 - a. Acceptance Patterns of Sentences with Sortal Classifiers
 - b. Acceptance Patterns of Sentences with Mensural Classifiers

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Original Ordering of Sample Sentences

Sortal Classifier

1. 唔 該，我 要 三 個 嘅 橙。

m4 goi1 ngo5 jiu3 saam1 go3 ge3 caan2

please I want three CL GE orange

Excuse me, I would like to have three oranges.

2. 你 而 家 最 好 聽 咗 呢 一 個 嘅 介 紹

nei3 ji4 gaal zeoi3 hou2 teng1 zo2 nei1 jat1 go3 ge3 jaai3 siu6

you now most good listen ASP this one CL GE recommendation

先 laa。

sin1 laa1

first PT

You had better listen to this recommendation first.

3. 我 講 俾 你 聽 呢 個 嘅 故 仔 得 唔 得 意 呀？

ngo5 gong2 bei2 nei3 teng1 nei1 go3 ge3 gu2 zai2 dak1 m4 dak1 ji3 aa3

I tell to you listen this CL GE story in- not interesting PT

Is the story that I told you interesting?

4. 佢 哋 嗰 個 嘅 加 價 申 請 根 本 就 唔 合 理。

keoi5 dei6 go2 go3 ge3 gaal gaa3 san1 cing2 gan1 bun2 zau6 m4 hap6 lei5

they that CL GE add price application indeed ASP no reasonable

Their application for price increase is indeed unreasonable.

5. 你 有 冇 聽 到 嘅 電 視 嗰 個 嘅 宣 佈 呀？

nei3 jau5 mo5 teng1 dou2 hai2 din6 si6 go2 go3 ge3 syun1 bou3 aa3

you have no hear ASP in television that CL GE announcement PT

Have you heard the announcement on television ?

6. 我 哋 有 請 兩 位 嘅 頒 獎 嘉 賓。
 ngo5 dei6 jau5 ceng2 loeng3 wai2 ge3 baan1 zoeng2 gaal ban1
 we have invite two CL GE give prize guest
 Let us welcome two prize-giving guests.
7. 十 首 嘅 金 曲 已 經 先 後 頒 發 過 la。
 sap6 sau2 ge3 kam1 kuk1 ji5 ging1 sin1 hau6 baan1 faat3 gwo3 la3
 ten CL GE gold song already first last honour ASP PT
 Ten solid golds have been honoured one by one.
8. 呢 一 份 嘅 中 文 報 紙 有 好 多 讀 者 㗎。
 nei1 jat1 fan6 ge3 zung1 man4 bou3 zi2 jau5 hou2 dol duk6 ze2 gaa3
 this one CL GE Chinese newspaper have very lot reader PT
 This newspaper has a large readership.
9. 喂，有 兩 部 嘅 流 動 捐 血 車 喺 樓 下 呀。
 wai3 jau5 loeng5 bou6 ge3 lau4 dung6 gyun1 hyut3 ce1 hai2 lau4 haa6 aa3
 have two CL GE mobile donate blood car at downstairs PT
 Hei, there are two blood-donation buses downstairs.
10. 佢 畫 嗰 幅 嘅 畫 真 係 好 靚 㗎。
 keoi5 waak6 go2 fuk1 ge3 waa2 zan1 hai6 hou2 leng1 wo3
 he draw that CL GE picture really is very beautiful PT
 The picture which he draws looks nice.

Container Classifier

11. 佢 送 俾 我 個 籃 嘅 生 菓 都 唔 好 食 㗎。
 keoi5 sung3 bei2 ngo5 go2 laam4 ge3 sang1 gwo2 dou1 m4 hou2 sik6 ge2
 he give to I that CL GE fruit ADV no good eat PT
 That basket of fruit which he gives me does not taste good.
12. 呢 一 盒 嘅 朱 古 力 好 好 味 呀！
 nei1 jat1 hap6 ge3 zyu1 gul lik1 hou2 hou2 mei6 aa3
 this one CL GE chocolate very good taste PT
 This box of chocolates is very tasty.

13. 買 一 籠 嘅 雀 要 好 多 錢 㗎 !
 maai5 jat1 lung4 ge3 zoek2 jiu3 hou2 do1 zin2 gaa3
 buy one CL GE bird need very lot money PT
 To buy a cage of birds need much money.

Generic Classifier

14. 個 兩 種 嘅 問 題 真 係 要 快 啲 攞 掂
 go2 loeng5 zung2 ge3 man6 tai4 zan1 hai6 jiu3 faai3 dit1 gaau2 dim6
 that two CL GE question really is need soon-er handle

佢 呀 !

keoi5 aa3

it PT

There is really a need to handle those two kinds of problems as soon as possible.

15. 玩 呢 一 種 嘅 電 腦 遊 戲 唔 會 晒 好 多
 waan2 neil jat1 zung2 ge3 din6 nou5 jau4 hei3 m4 wui5 saai1 hou2 do1
 play this one CL GE computer game no AUX waste very lot

時 間 嘅 啫 !

si4 gaan3 ge3 je3

time PT PT

To play this kind of video game will not waste much time.

16. 個 兩 隻 嘅 米 好 多 人 買 㗎 !
 go2 loeng5 zek3 ge3 mai5 hou2 do1 jan4 maai5 gaa3
 that two CL GE rice very lot people buy PT
 Many people buy those two brands of rice.

17. 希 望 政 府 可 以 注 意 吓 呢 一 類 嘅
 heil mong6 zing3 fu2 ho2 ji3 zyu3 ji3 haa5 nei1 jat1 lei6 ge3
 hope government can note PT this one CL GE

問 題 啦!
 man6 tai4 laa1
 problem PT

It is hoped that the government can pay attention to this kind of problem.

Collective Classifier

18. 你 收 到 第 二 次 嘅 繳 款 通 知 未 呀?
 nei3 sau1 dou3 dai6 ji6 ci3 ge3 giu2 fun2 tung1 zi1 mei6 aa3
 you receive ASP / two CL GE instalment notify no PT
 Have you received the statement for the second instalment?

19. 呢 一 抽 嘅 提 子 都 幾 重 嘅 㗎!
 nei1 jat1 cau1 ge3 tai4 zi2 dou1 gei2 cung5 ge3 wo3
 this one CL GE grapes ADV quite heavy PT PT
 This bunch of grapes is quite heavy.

20. 我 買 個 疊 嘅 紙 用 晒 la3。
 ngo5 maai5 go2 daap6 ge3 zi2 jung6 saai3 la3
 I buy that CL GE paper use over PT
 The pile of paper which I buy has been used up.

21. 住 喺 大 球 場 附 近 嗰 班 嘅 有 錢 佬 嘅
 zyu6 hai2 daai6 kau4 coeng4 fu6 gan6 go2 baan1 ge3 jau5 cin2 lou2 hai2
 live at big ball field near that CL GE have money man is

度 開 嚟 記 者 招 待 會。
 dou6 hoil gan1 gei3 ze2 ziul doi6 wui2
 PT open ASP journalist serve meeting

That group of wealthy men who live near the Stadium are holding a press conference.

Control Sentence

22. 你 鍾 唔 鍾 意 呢 一 班 學 生 呀 ?

nei5 zung1 m4 zung1 ji3 nei1 jat1 baan1 hok6 sang1 aa3

you no like this one CL student PT

Do you like this class of students?

23. 嗰 種 花 喺 香 港 好 難 見 㗎 。

go2 zung2 faa1 hai2 hoeng1 kong2 hou2 naan4 gin1 gaa3

that CL flower at Hong Kong very difficult see PT

It is difficult to see that kind of flower in Hong Kong.

24. 我 哋 食 咗 兩 籠 叉 燒 包 。

ngo1 dei6 sik6 jo2 loeng3 lung4 caal siu1 baau1

we eat ASP two CL fork roasted bread

We have eaten two cages of 'ca-siu-baau'.

25. 個 細 路 要 買 呢 個 公 仔 。

go3 sai3 lou6 jiu3 maa13 nei1 go3 gung1 zai2

CL little road want buy this CL doll

The kid wants to buy this doll.

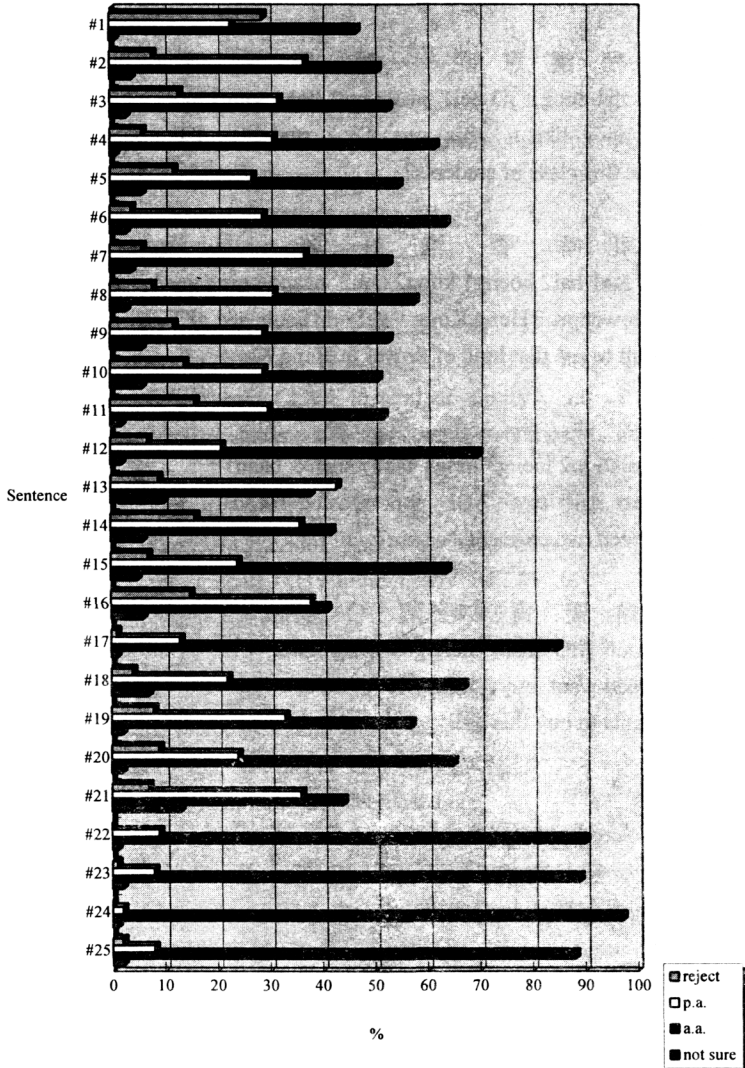
Chart 1 : Acceptance Patterns of Sample Sentences (N=100)


Chart 2a : Acceptance Patterns of Sentences with Sortal Classifiers (N=100)

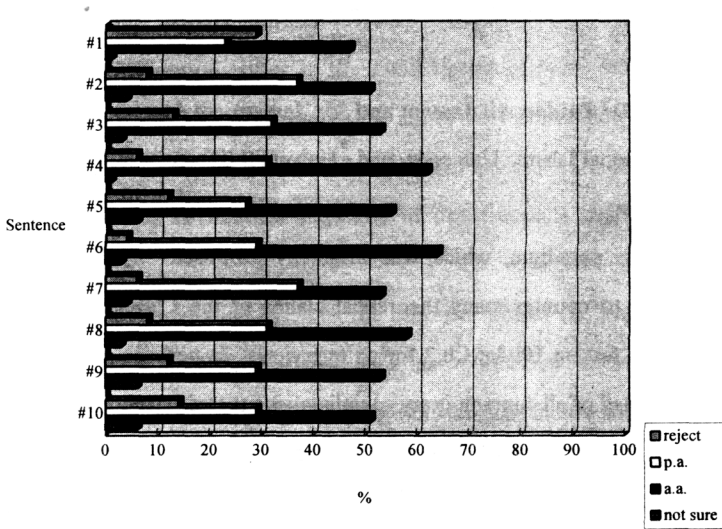


Chart 2b : Acceptance Patterns of Sentences with Mensural Classifiers (N=100)

