Once upon an invisible TIME: On Frequentative Phrases in Chinese

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Abstract

In view of Kayne's (2014) analysis, the English expressions of *once*, *twice*, and *#-times* are compared with the corresponding Chinese expression, *#-ci*. This paper shows that data from Chinese not only support Kayne's analysis that treats the silent TIME as classifier, but they also suggest that the frequentative phrase may involve a silent NP and/or PP. The latter provides some possible modifications to Kayne's original analysis of the suffix *-ce*.

Keywords

1. Introduction

Kayne (2014) argues that *once* and *twice* in English are Prepositional Phrases (PP), where *on-* and *tw-* are related to the numeric roots *one* and *two*, and the suffix *-ce* is taken to be a postposition that heads the PP. Moreover, the parallel between examples (1) and (2) suggests that *on-ce* contains a silent counterpart of *time* (namely, a silent TIME), which Kayne assumes to be a (singular) classifier, reminiscent of the silent NUMBER in *a few questions* (Kayne 2007), as in (3):[1]

(1)   We were young once.

(2)   We were young at one time.

(3)   a. a few NUMBER$_{singular}$ questions
       b. [$_{PP}$ [on(e)-TIME$_{singular}$] –ce]

In this squib, frequentative phrases (FrqP) in (Mandarin) Chinese are discussed.[2] I compare them with English ones under Kayne's analysis.

2. Two types of frequentative phrases in Chinese

Chinese does not have distinct forms for 'one time' and 'two times' (like *once* and *twice* in English), and all frequentative phrases are regularly expressed by the sequence *#-ci* '#-time/occasion' (where # is a numeral), which looks very much like a numeral-classifier phrase, as in (4):

(4)   a. Women qu-guo **yi/liang/san/si…-ci**   Beijing.
         we   go-Asp one/two/three/four…-time Beijing
         'We went to Beijing once/twice/three times/four times…'
      b. Women mai-le **yi/liang/san/si…   -ben** shu.
         Women buy-Asp one/two/three/four…-Cl   book
         'We bought one/two/three/four books.'

Interestingly, the frequentative phrase may also occur in the preverbal position, in which case, it looks less like a numeral-classifier phrase, as in (5):

(5)   a. Zhangsan **yi-ci**   dasi-le   qi-zhi.
         Zhangsan   one-time kill-Asp   seven-Cl
         'Zhangsan killed seven at one time/strike.'
      b. Zhangsan   guji   san-ci   keyi xie-wan   ta-de   baogao.
         Zhangsan   estimate three-time can write-finish is   paper
         'Zhangsan estimated that he can finish his paper in three times.'

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[1]   I follow Kayne's convention in representing silent elements with capital letters.
[2]   Unless otherwise specified, Chinese will refer to the variety of Mandarin Chinese in this paper.

In the following sections, I shall argue that both types of FrqPs are actually numeral-classifier (Num-CL) phrases that may involve additional silent NPs and/ or silent PPs, which immediately recalls Kayne's analysis of the English words *once* and *twice*. I will return to the English *-ce* in Section 2.3.

2.1 FrqP and classifier

The idea of treating FrqP as Num-CL (rather than a simple noun phrase) can be supported by the following facts. First, the nominal element *-ci* 'time' cannot be topped by the default classifier *ge* (or any other classifiers), indicating that it is not a substantive noun but a classifier, comparable to the classifier *tian* 'day', as in (6), and is in contrast to the more 'nounish' *yue* 'month', as in (7) (Tang 2005):[3]

(6) a. yi (*ge) ci   [ci = +classifier, - noun]
         'once/one time'
     b. yi (*ge) tian   [$tian$ = +classifier, -noun]
         one Cl   day
         'one day'
(7) yi *(ge)   yue   [yue = -classifier, +noun]
     one Cl   month
     'a month'

Second, as typical substantive nouns cannot combine with numerals directly, the fact that *-ci* can be directly preceded by numerals provides another piece of evidence that *-ci* should be treated as a classifier.[4] An anonymous reviewer raises a concern regarding the first test, claiming that many substantive nouns cannot be combined with the default classifier *ge*, yet they are nouns, not classifiers. However, substantive nouns must be counted with classifiers in Chinese (it does not matter whether the classifier is *ge* or other classifiers), but one simply is not able to find a classifier for *-ci*.

Third, on a par with classifiers, *ci* can undergo reduplication, as in (8), again in contrast to the noun in (8c):

(8) a. yi   ci-ci   b. yi   bei-bei
         one   time-time   one   cup-cup
         'once after another'   'one cup after another'
     c. *yi   (ge)   yue-yue
         one   Cl   month-month

Fourth, from the behavior of DE, we have another piece of evidence that FrqP behaves on a par with Num-CL (rather than modifiers). In Chinese, DE is obligatory under NP-fronting when it is a modifier-DE; on the other hand, DE cannot appear if it is a classifier-DE (Li 2013, Tang 2005). This contrast is illustrated in (9):[5]

(9)   a. modifier-DE: obligatory under NP-fronting
         Niunai, Zhangsan   he-le   bu-xinxian*(-de)
         milk   Zhangsan   drink-Asp   not-fresh-DE
         'Zhangsan had some spoiled milk.'
      b. classifier-DE: illegitimate under NP-fronting
         Niunai, Zhangsan   he-le   wu-ping(*-de)[6]
         milk,   Zhangsan   drink-Asp   five-bottle
         'Zhangsan had five bottles of milk.'

The following example shows that the FrqP behaves like classifier in that DE cannot appear when the noun is fronted:

(10) Beijing,   women   qu-guo   **yi/liang/san/si…-ci**   (*de).
       Beijing   we   go-Asp   one/two/three/four…-time   DE
       'We went to Beijing once/twice/three times/four times…'

We can therefore safely conclude that FrqP is a type of Num-CL phrase in Chinese, and the noun after the FrqP is a noun classified by the Num-CL, as in (11), in which the FrqP has the following structure:[7]

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[5]   As generally assumed, only two types of objects are permitted when two syntactic objects merge: (i) adjuncts/modifier-X(P) (by adjunction) and (ii) head-complement (by substitution) (Kayne 1994, Chomsky 1995, among many others).

[6]   With DE, the sentence may have a meaning where five-bottle is a modifier of milk (i.e., a five-pack milk).

[7]   One anonymous reviewer points out the following counterexample, where the fronted object is a DP, not simply an NP:
(i)   Zhe   yi   ben   shu,   wo   kan-le   san   ci
         this   one   Cl   book   I   read-Asp   three   time
         'This book, I read it for three times.'
It is possible, however, that a classifier may take DP as its complement, as discussed in Liao and Wang (2011):
(ii)   Wo   kan-guo   san   ci   [DP   zhe   ben   shu].
         I   read-Asp   three   time   this   Cl   book
         'I read this book for three times.'
As Liao and Wang observes, it is not possible to omit the demonstrative of the following DP:
(iii) *Wo   kan-guo   san   ci   [yi   ben   shu].
         I   read-Asp   three   time   one   Cl   book
Likewise, the following sentence is ungrammatical:
(iv)   *Yi   ben   shu,   wo   kan-guo   san   ci
         one   Cl   book   I   read-Asp   three   time

(11)

NumP (=FrqP)

Num   CLP

Cl   NP/DP

yi/liang/san/si…   ci   Beijing
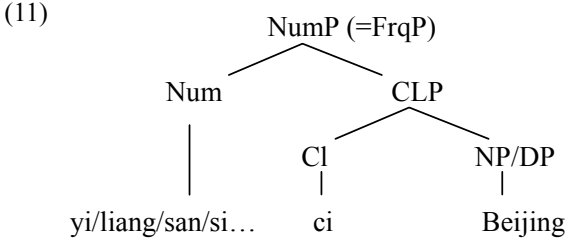
The proposal that *yi ci Beijing* forms a single constituent can be evidenced by the fact that it may undergo *lian…dou* focalization as a unit, as shown in (12):

(12) Zhangsan lian [yi ci   Beijing] dou mei qu-guo [~~yi ci Beijing~~]
      Zhangsan even one time Beijing all   not go-Asp
      'Zhangsan has never been to Beijing, not even once.'

Therefore, instead of treating the durative phrase as an adverb (forms constituent with VP), evidence shows that it forms constituent with NP/DP. The fact is accounted for if the durative phrase is treated as numeral-classifier in Chinese. [8]

However, this analysis is faced with some potential challenges. Specifically, FrqP can be used in the unergative construction, where no object NP is observed, as in (13):

(13) Zhangsan   ku-le   san-ci.
      Zhangsan   cry-Asp three-time
      'Zhangsan cried for three times.'

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[8]   An anonymous reviewer argues that (11) cannot explain why the frequentative-NP cannot be topicalized or be the *ba*-NP, and the ungrammaticalities of (i) and (ii) suggest that [*yi ci Beijing*] is not a constituent:
(i) *Yi   ci   Beijing, women qu-guo.
    one   time Beijing we   go-Asp
(ii) *Zhangsan ba yi   ci   Beijing   qu-guo.
    Zhangsan   BA one   time   Beijing   go-Asp
    '[intended:] We have been to Beijing once.'
I believe that the sentences are ruled out for an independent reason that the topicalized NP/DP and *ba*-NP must be specific/generic (see Liu 1997 and the references therein). If the topicalized BA-NP is specific, the sentences are very much improved:
(iii) Zhe   yi   ci   Beijing, wo dai   zui   jiu.
    this   one time   Beijing   I   stay   most   long
    'I stay in Beijing for the longest time this time.'
(iv) Ta ba zhe ji   nian shu nian dao nali   qu le?
    he BA this several year book read to   where go SFP
    'He has wasted his several years of education. (lit. Where does he put his several years of education?)'

This problem can be circumvented if we assume the theory of Hale and Keyser (2002), who argue that unergative verbs like *dance*, *cry*, *dream*, etc., actually involve empty cognate nouns at the level of l-syntax, represented as follows (Hale and Keyser 2002: 93):

(14)

$$
\begin{array}{c}
\text{V} \\
\diagup \diagdown \\
\text{V}_{\{dance\}} \quad \text{N}_{\{dance\}} \\
| \\
\text{dance}
\end{array}
$$
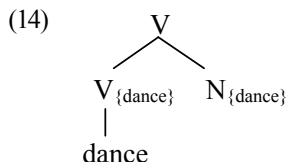
In this sense, examples like (13) may also contain an empty cognate N (or NP) projected from the l-syntax of such verbs, which is classified by the Num-CL (or the FrqP), as in (15):[9]

(15) Zhangsan   ku-le   san-ci   N$_{\{cry\}}$.
      Zhangsan   cry-Asp three-time
      'Zhangsan cried for three times.'

Another puzzle is from the preverbal FrqPs in (5). If we analyze them as Num-CL phrases as well, they would also need to contain silent NPs (since a classifier requires a noun to classify). Let's assume that these expressions also contain a silent NP, meaning EVENT or OCCASION, similar to the English expressions like *on one* TIME *occasion* (if we take TIME to be the counterpart of the frequentative classifier *-ci*). This also suggests that *once* and *twice* in English may also take a silent NP, in addition to the silent classifier TIME: [[[one-TIME] NP] -ce].

Taking TIME as classifier in English may also explain why it is only compatible with the numeral *one* and *two*. In classifier languages, we do find similar restriction between numerals and classifiers (but not between numerals and nouns). For example, in Chinese, the classifier *xie* and *dian* is limited to *yi* 'one' (Chao 1968, Liao and Vergnaud 2013, Sio 2006) (In some varieties of Mandarin Chinese,

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9   The analysis also recalls the syntax–semantic mismatch of the Chinese durative phrase in Huang (1997), where the N-to-V raising in Huang might be viewed as a chain-formation in the l-syntax.

however, *liang-xie* 'two-XIE' also seems possible).[10] This also points out to a very important distinction between classifier TIME and substantive *time*, where the former is restricted to the numeral *one* and *two*, and the latter is immune from such a restriction (it could be argued that *one time* and *two/three… times* may also involve silent classifier NUMBER, i.e., [[*two* NUMBER] *times*], in the sense of Kayne (2007), and the silent classifier NUMBER does not pose any selectional restriction on numerals).

A related question considers the semantic functions of the durative/frequentative classifiers.[11] Unlike typical classifiers, the durative/frequentative classifiers do not directly measure the "quantities of objects", but they measure the "quantities of events". That is to say, there will be a syntax–semantic mismatch if the durative/frequentative phrases are really classifiers. In a way, the mismatch is reminiscent of Huang's (1997) famous example in the following:

(16) Zhangsan   mai-le   [yi-nian de   yu].
      Zhangsan   sell-Asp one-year DE   fish
      'Zhangsan has been selling fish for one year.'

In (16), the existence of *de* signals that *yi-nian* is part of the NP-constituent, although the durative phrase somehow measures the length of the fish-selling event. The syntax–semantic mismatch, however, is not specific in Chinese. Larson (2003) observes the following examples in English:

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10 The following passage is from *Lao Can Youji* 老殘遊記 'The Travels of Lao Can':
    (i) 老殘連忙起身讓坐，說：我因為這兩些天困於酒食，覺得怪膩的慌。（老殘遊記第一回
       Lao Can lianmang qishen rang   zuo, shuo: "wo yinwei   zhe liang-xie
       Lao Can in.a.hurry stand.up yield seat say I because this   two-XIE
       tian kun   yu jiushi,   juede guai ni   de huang."
       day stuck by food.and.drink feel very tired DE very
       "Lao Can stood up politely in a hurry, and said 'I have indulged in drinking and eating for a few days and felt rather exhausted.'"
    A simple Google search of "兩些" on the Internet also returns some interesting examples:
    (ii) 前兩些天看了房子，折扣真是太少了(http://sh.focus.cn/group/group_tag_list.php?tag_id=6557)
       Qian liang-xie tian kan-le   fangzi, zhekou zhen   shi   tai shao   le.
       Past two-XIE day look-Asp house discount really is   too little   SFP
       'For the past few days, we have looked at some houses, but the discounts are really too small.'
    (iii) 主站的同事找來了日本Sony的Nicolas Doucet為我們講解這兩些產品怎樣運作
       Zhu-zhan   de tongshi zhaolai-le   Riben Sony de Nicolas Doucet
       master-station DE colleague find-Asp   Japan Sony DE Nicolas Doucet
       wei women jiangjie   zhe liang-xie canping zenyang yunzuo.
       for us   demonstrate this two-XIE products how   operate
       'Our colleagues in the master station invited Nicolas Doucet from Sony in Japan to demonstrate how to operate these few products.'
       (http://cn.engadget.com/2013/06/12/lets-take-a-closer-look-at-the-playstation-4-dualshock-4-and-p/)
    However, we are not able to exclude the possibility that these examples contain typographic errors.
11 I would like to thank an anonymous SCL reviewer for raising the question.

(17) a. get [two hours of sleep] = 'sleep for two hours'
　　　b. get [two feet of rope]

The same syntax–semantic mismatch is found in (17a), where *two hours* behaves like a 'classifier' on a par with *two feet* in (17b), yet it is able to behave like a VP-modifier at LF.[12] Larson's solution toward such mismatches is to employ the event argument in the sense of Davidson (1967), and Larson proposes that "measurement (M)" is a higher-ordered predicate over the whole proposition, and therefore, just like the object measurement in (18), one can directly measure the event argument, as in (19) (both from Larson 2003):

(18) a. Mary bought two spoonfuls of sugar.
　　　b. $M_{spoonfuls}$[the x: sugar(x) & buy(Mary, x)]=2
　　　　　'Measured in spoonfuls, the amount of sugar bought by Mary is 2.'

(19) a. Mary observed two hours of walking.
　　　b. M_{hours}[the e: walking(e) & observe(Mary, e)]=2
　　　　　'Measured in hours, the amount of walking observed by Mary is 2.'

In the sense of Larson (2003), then, the durative/frequentative classifier in Chinese may also measure the event argument in VP, despite it being a nominal classifier in syntax:

(20) a. Lisi　　　mai-le　　yi-nian　(de)　　yu.
　　　　　Lisi　　　sell-Asp　one-year　DE　　fish
　　　　　'Lisi sold fish for a year.'
　　　b. M_{year}[the e: selling(e) & Agent (Lisi, e) & Participant (fish, e)]=1

2.2 FrqP and the silent PP

Lin (2011) observes that the bare durative phrases tend to have a completive meaning in the preverbal positions, while they have a durative meaning in the postverbal positions:

(21) a. Zhangsan　san-tian　　xie-le　　shu.　　　[completive]
　　　　　Zhangsan　three-day　write-Asp　book
　　　　　'Zhangsan finished a/the book **in** three days.'
　　　b. Zhangsan　xie-le　　san-tian　shu.　　　[durative]
　　　　　Zhangsan　write-Asp　three-day　book
　　　　　'Zhangsan wrote books **for** three days.'

12　The mismatch is also found in transitive verbs in English:
　(i) *You hear some nice harmonies and very good voices **[sing two hours of songs]***.
　(http://www.floridatoday.com/story/entertainment/arts/pam-harbaugh/2014/10/29/ellen-pavlakos-exhibits-fifth-avenue-art-gallery/18132539/)

The same difference can also be observed in the FrqPs. Therefore, in (5) and (21a), the FrqP "delimits" the occurrence of the event (as the completive phrase delimits the event), and in (4) and (21b), the FrqP "measures" the occurrence of the event (as the durative phrase measures the duration of the event) (Krifka 1988). This shows that instead of using different prepositions to elicit different readings as in English, Chinese employs a strategy that distinguishes the contrast by syntactic positions. It is also plausible to assume that the preverbal FrqP contains a silent preposition of the completive IN-type (cf. Emonds 1987, McCawley 1988), and such a preposition is structurally licensed in the preverbal position:[13]

(22) a. Zhangsan [IN   san-tian] xie-le   yi-ben   shu.
          Zhangsan   three-day write-Asp one-Cl   book
       'Zhangsan finished a book in three days.'

Concluding from our discussion above, the underlying structure of the FrqP in Chinese can be illustrated in (23), where the preposition is limited to the IN-type, and the NP may be a silent OCCASION/EVENT, or it can be an NP classified by the classifier -*ci*:

(23) $[_{PP}$ (IN)…$[_{NumP}$ # $[_{CLP}$ –ci [NP]]]]

One issue arises regarding the projection of the preposition. The preposition is projected only when it occupies a preverbal position, where no Case is assigned by the structure. This is reminiscent of the Case Filter (Chomsky and Lasnik 1977, Vergnaud 1985), and the preposition does not appear when the verb is able to assign a structural Case to the Num-CL NP (or possibly a DP) when it occurs in the object position.

2.3 The suffix –*ce* and preposition

Coming back to the English expressions *once* and *twice*, a similar question can be raised of whether they are always projected to PPs. In cases comparable to Chinese preverbal FrqPs and English adverbial phrase *in one/two times*, the projection of P seems justified. In cases comparable to Chinese post-verbal FrqPs, however, the projection of P looks unmotivated, as in (24), where the corresponding expression *three times* does not allow a preposition either:

(24) John ate [(*for) twice/three times the amount of food] last night.

This leads to a question why the preposition is needed in the preverbal non-argument position. The fact that prepositions are not required in "argument

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[13] One plausible overt realization of the silent adposition might be the postposition –*nei* 'within':
   (i) Zhangsan [san-tian-nei]   xie-wan   yi-ben   shu.
       Zhangsan three-day-within write-finish one-Cl   book
       'Zhangsan finished a book **in** three days.'

positions" may suggest that this problem is related to Case licensing. That is, *once* and *twice* must occur in a Case-licensed position, and a major difference between *once* and *twice*, and the regular expressions (#-*times*) lies in the ability to self-contain a Case-licensor. That is, *once* and *twice* can license their own Cases when no other licensors are present. In a similar vein to Kayne's analysis, we may assume that this is the role played by the suffix -*ce*. In a minimalist term, which slightly departs from Kayne's original analysis, we may describe such a rule by assuming that the suffix -*ce* contains a unvalued K-feature that must be locally licensed (perhaps -*ce* heads a KP below PP, as suggested by Kayne (2014) in a footnote), and such a local licensing condition can be done either by head-raising or by agreement with a local head (be it a preposition or a verb). The mechanisms are illustrated as follows:

(25)   Head-raising of -*ce* to P (when P is not occupied by an overt preposition)

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            PP
          /    \
         P      KP
              /    \
            -ce     …
             |
            [uK]
```
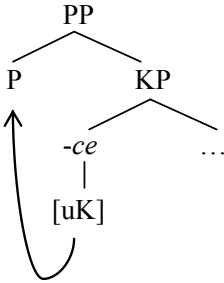
(26)   Agreement of -*ce* by V or P (when P is occupied by an overt preposition)[14]

```
            PP/VP
          /      \
        V/P       KP
         |       /   \
       [iK]  -ce      …
               |
              [uK]
```
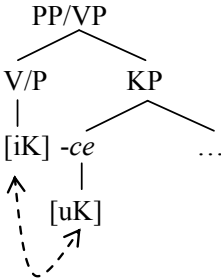
This mechanism (which is reminiscent of the mechanism of satisfying the EPP feature on T through subject raising or through merger of an expletive) then allows us to account for why -*ce* sometimes seems to head a PP (as argued in Kayne), and

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14   It has been suggested in the Strong Minimalist Thesis that Case be reduced to other features (or feature-bundles), and that the Accusative Case is valued by little v (Chomsky 1995, 2001). The analysis presented here can be adjusted accordingly.

why it sometimes does not. The analysis also provides an alternative account for why *once* cannot occur as a relative head, as observed in Kayne (2014):

(27) They told us about the *once/*^{ok}one time they thought they were really in danger.

The reason is that *once*, but not *one time*, must occur in a locally Case-licensed position (due to the presence of -*ce*), and the external determiner in the relative clause (Kayne 1994) fails to license/assign a proper Case to *once*.[15]

3. Conclusion

Guided by the provocative analysis in Kayne (2014), I have compared the English expressions, *once/twice* and *#-times*, with the Chinese ones, (*#-ci*). The findings suggest that these expressions share a universal structure that involves numeral-classifier phrases, and may also involve empty NPs and/or PPs. The observation regarding Chinese PPs also provides some modification to Kayne's (2014) original analysis of -*ce*.

Acknowledgments

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[15] It should be noted that *this once* (or [%]*the once*) is possible in English (Kayne 2014), where *this* is internal to the PP structure: [$_{PP}$ [$_{KP}$ -*ce* [$_{DP}$ *this/the on(e)*-]]]. On the other hand, in relative clauses, the determiner comes from external to the –*ce* phrase (assuming the analysis in Kayne 1994), and this results in the wrong structure: *[$_{DP}$ the [$_{KP}$ -*ce* …]], and –*ce* must be locally licensed by a Case-assigning [-N] category.

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消失的"時間":談漢語的計次詞組

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提要

本文從 Kayne (2014) 提出的分析談起,比較漢語與英語的計次詞組。我們提出證據指出計次詞組在漢語應該分析為量詞組,這呼應了 Kayne 提出的空成分 TIME 應該分析為量詞的論點。本文進一步指出在某些環境下,這些量詞組應該也包含了空的名詞與介詞。這些從漢語得到觀察與分析不但呼應了 Kayne 對英語的分析,也對 Kayne 原來的分析提供了一些可能的修改方向。

關鍵詞

無聲成分,時 / 次量詞組,量詞,漢語句法