Structural Relationships of Mandarin Pseudopartitives and Verb Reduplication

In extended noun phrases, a pseudopartitive is formed by a measure phrase and a nominal (e.g. a group of people, many students, etc). There are at least two surface forms of Mandarin pseudopartitives: [Measure phrase + Noun] (e.g. yi dui shu ‘one bunch book’) and [Noun + Measure phrase] (e.g. shu yi dui ‘book one bunch’). This paper focuses on (1) the relationship between the measure phrase and the nominal in pseudopartitives (2) the structural relationships of [Measure phrase + Noun] and [Noun + Measure phrase].

'Ruci (so)' Substitution of Predicate and Measure Phrases. Following Covert’s (1998) proposal of the ‘so’ substitution in English, we propose a substitution test ‘ruci (semantically identical to the English ‘so’))’ for measure phrases to determine whether they are predicates (e.g. adjectives, common nouns, verbs, etc) or proper names which are denoting individuals or entities. The result shows that ‘ruci’ can only substitute for adjectives and common nouns, which is a subset of predicates, but not proper names. However, English ‘so’ substitutes for both predicates and proper names (see 1-4). The test shows that Mandarin measure phrases are predicates (see 5). Thus, there is a thematic assignment from the measure phrase to the nominal.

Constituency. A constituency test and a conjunction test show that both [Measure phrase + Noun] and [Noun + Measure phrase] are constituents (see 6-8), which indicates the transformation from one form to the other is DP internal, assuming the existence of transformation rather than two separate forms due to the same thematic assignment shared by the two forms. Structural Relationships. First, in [Noun + Measure phrase], the nominal and the measure phrase do not enter a classifier-noun relationship, in which the measure phrase defines the unit of the nominal (independent to the thematic assignment from the measure phrase to the nominal), while in [Measure phrase + Noun] they do. To see this: (1) A classifier has to follow a number in Mandarin. However, a measure phrase following the nominal can but does not need to follow a number (see 9). (2) A classifier can be preceded by a demonstrative in [Measure phrase + Noun], but not in [Noun + Measure phrase] (see 10). Second, 11 shows that the elements in [Noun + Measure phrase] are structurally local, so that the measure phrase can either predicate over the whole nominal conjunct or the adjacent nominal. On the other hand, in [Measure phrase + Noun], the measure phrase can merely predicate over the whole nominal conjunct, which indicate a more remote structural relationship compared to the former. Same point is shown in 12, in which a modifying element can intervene in [Measure phrase + Noun] but not in [Noun + Measure phrase]. Assuming transformation for the reason of shared thematic assignment, we assume that [Measure phrase + Noun] is derived from [Noun + Measure phrase].

Verb Reduplication. 13 needs an explanation since from the constituency test we know [Noun + Measure phrase] is a constituent. Here we adopt Yafei Li’s (1990) assumption which treats the first verb as a copy, and execute verb reduplication as follows (Vergnaud & Zubizarreta). The motivation is (1) to preserve the constituency of both forms in question (2) to preserve that [Noun + Measure phrase] is the form prior to movement.

(a) read book a bunch
(b) VP copying (the 1st VP is the copied form)
(c) Deletion of ‘a bunch’ from the copied VP (d) The lower VP is aspect-marked books a bunch
(e) read book a bunch
(f) read(le) a bunch

In (c), the verb copy is to be treated as a topicalized matrix VP (Tsao, 1987) for the parallelism between topic structure and verb copying (see 15, 16). If a topic sentence contains two elements which form a whole-part relationship, with one of them being the topic, the topic element should be the whole rather than the part. Step (d) is executed last due to the optionality of the aspect marker.
(1) (Adjective) John is tasteful, and so is his father. (1a) John hen you pinwei, ta baba ye ruci  
John very have taste his father also so
(2) (Common noun) John is a jerk, and so is his friend. (2a) John shi ge hunzhang, ta pengyou ye ruci  
John is CL jerk he friend also so
(3) (Proper name) John’s mother is Mary, and so is Tom’s mother.  
(3a)  *John de muqin (shi) Mali, Tom de Muqin yi ruci  
John DE mother is Mary Tom DE mother also so
(4) (Preposition) *John de jia zai Yidali, Tom de jia ye ruci  
John DE home at Yidali Tom DE home also so
‘John’s hometown is in Italy, and Tom’s is, too’
(5) (Measure phrase) zheli shu yi dui, nali zazhi ye ruci  
here book one bunch there magazine also so
‘Here are a bunch of books, and so are the magazines there’
(6) ta xianhou fenkai-le yi dui shu, san zhang baozhi  
he respectively separate-le one bunch three CL book newspaper
‘He separated a bunch of books and three pieces of newspapers respectively’
(7) yi dui shu gen baozhi shi fen shu yi dui gen baozhi shi fen  
one bunch book and newspaper ten share/ book one bunch and newspaper ten CL
‘A bunch of books and ten newspapers’
(9) a bunch of books
(i) yi dui shu (ii) *dui shu (iii) shu yi dui (iv) shu dui  
one bunch book book one bunch book one bunch
(10) that bunch of books
(i) na dui shu (ii) *shu na dui  
that bunch book book that bunch
(11) zazhi he shu yi dui yao hao-ji-bai quai.  
magazine and book one bunch want good-many-hundred dollar
‘Magazines and a bunch of books cost couple hundred dollars’
‘Books and magazines, total amount of a bunch, cost couple hundred dollars’
(11a) yi dui zazhi he shu yao hao-ji-bai quai.  
one bunch magazine and book want good-many-hundred dollar
‘*One bunch of magazines, and books cost couple hundred dollars’
‘Books and magazines, total amount of a bunch, cost couple hundred dollars’
(12a) yi dui die hen gao de shu ta dou kan-wan-le  
one bunch pile very high DE book he DOU read-finish-le
‘A bunch of books which are piled high up he finished reading’
(12b) *shu die hen gao de yi dui ta dou kan-wan-le  
book pile very high DE one bunch he DOU read-finish-le
‘A bunch of books which are piled high up he finished reading’
(13) (a) ta kan shu kan le yi dui (b) kan shu ta kan le yi dui  
he read book read LE one bunch read book he read LE one bunch
‘He read a bunch of books’
(16) (a) ta kan shu a/ne kan le yi dui (wenzhang jiu bu zemeyang le)  
he read book topic-marker read ASP one bunch article JIU not-very-good ASP
(b) kan shu a/ne ta kan le yi dui (wenzhang jiu bu zemeyang le)  
read book topic-marker he read ASP one bunch article JIU not-very-good ASP
‘He read a bunch of books (but cannot write good articles)’