

## CHAPTER THREE

### Syntactic Distribution and Semantic Interpretations of *gen*

This chapter examines the syntactic distribution and the semantic interpretations of *gen* as a verb, a preposition and a conjunction and we will also show the ambiguity of *gen* in the last section of this chapter.

At the syntactic level, the distribution of *gen* is investigated in section 3.1. The types of nouns occurring in the  $[N_1 \text{ IE}^{12} \text{ gen } N_2]^{13}$  and  $[N_1 \text{ gen } N_2]$  structures are further discussed in section 3.2.

At the semantic level, the various interpretations of *gen* are explored in section 3.3. The nature of the NPs preceding or following *gen* in terms of semantic features and thematic roles are examined in section 3.4.

Section 3.5 deals with ambiguous interpretations of *gen*.

#### 3.1 Distribution of *gen*

This section deals with the syntactic distribution of *gen*. Sections 3.1.1-3.1.3 are devoted to the distribution of *gen* which is unambiguously identified as a verb, as a preposition and as a conjunction respectively. A summary is given in section 3.1.4.

##### 3.1.1 Distribution of *gen* as a verb

When *gen* behaves as a verb, it forms the predicate of the sentence: it constitutes

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<sup>12</sup> IE stands for Inserted Element.

<sup>13</sup> The brackets here are used for the sake of a clear comparison between the two structures  $[N_1 \text{ IE } \text{gen } N_2]$  and  $[N_1 \text{ gen } N_2]$ , not as a means to show constituency.

part of a resultative construction as in (1), a potential construction as in (2), or takes an aspect marker such as *zhe* ‘Durative’, *guo* ‘Experiential’, *le* ‘Perfective’ as in (3a)-(3c).

- (1) wo        gen        shang        ta        le  
 我        跟        上        他        了  
 1SG        GEN        up        3SG        CRS  
 ‘I caught up with him.’
- (2) ta        gen        bu        shang        paizi  
 他        跟        不        上        拍子  
 3SG        GEN        NEG        up        tempo  
 ‘He couldn’t catch up with the tempo.’
- (3) a. wo        gen        zhe        ta  
 我        跟        著        他  
 1SG        GEN        DUR        3SG  
 ‘I am following him.’
- b. wo        gen        guo        ta  
 我        跟        過        他  
 1SG        GEN        EXP        3SG  
 ‘I once followed him.’
- c. wo        gen        le        ta  
 我        跟        了        他  
 1SG        GEN        PFV        3SG  
 ‘I have followed him.’

In the above examples, *gen* functions as a verb and forms the only predicate of the sentence. It is worth noting that an extended predicate can be added to *gen zhe* ‘to follow’ to form a complex sentence as illustrated in (4a)-(4b).

- (4) a. wo        changchang        gen        zhe        ta        qu        taibei  
 我        常常        跟        著        他        去        台北  
 1SG        often        GEN        DUR        3SG        go        Taipei  
 ‘I often follow him to go to Taipei.’

- b.    wo        changchang    gen        zhe        ta        chisu  
       我        常常        跟        著        他        吃素  
       1SG      often        GEN      DUR      3SG      eat-vegetable  
       ‘I often follow him in having a vegetarian diet.’

When *gen* is followed by the aspect marker *le* and *guo*, on the other hand, an extended predicate cannot be added, as shown by the ungrammaticality of sentences (5) and (6).

- (5) \*wo        gen        guo        ta        qu        taibei  
       我        跟        過        他        去        台北  
       1SG      GEN      EXP      3SG      go        Taipei  
 (6) \*wo        gen        le        ta        chisu  
       我        跟        了        他        吃素  
       1SG      GEN      PFV      3SG      eat-vegetable

In the resultative or potential construction, the addition of an extended predicate leads to the ungrammaticality of sentences (7) and (8).

- (7) \*wo        gen        shang    ta        qu        taibei  
       我        跟        上        他        去        台北  
       1SG      GEN      up        3SG      go        Taipei  
 (8) \*wo        gen        bu        shang    ta        qu        taibei  
       我        跟        不        上        他        去        台北  
       1SG      GEN      NEG      up        3SG      go        Taipei

### 3.1.2 Distribution of *gen* as a preposition

The distinction between *gen* as a preposition and as a conjunction has been the focus of many studies (Teng 1970, Tang 1979, and Paris 2005a-b). One solution proposed in most of the previous studies is to look at the syntactic position of a modifying element to determine whether *gen* functions as a preposition or as a conjunction. It has been pointed out that when a modifying element intervenes

between the two nouns and precedes *gen*, as exemplified in (9) below, *gen* should be treated as a preposition. The sequence is thus as follows: after the first noun comes the inserted element, which is, in turn, followed by *gen* and the second noun, i.e. [N<sub>1</sub> IE *gen* N<sub>2</sub>].

- (9) [Zhangsan    changchang        gen        Lisi]    yiqi    da        qiu  
       張三        常常                    跟        李四    一起    打        球  
       Zhangsan    often                    GEN        Lisi    together hit        ball  
       ‘Zhangsan often plays ball games with Lisi.’

In (9), the frequency adverbial *changchang* ‘often’ intervenes between *Zhangsan* and *Lisi* and *gen* is treated as a preposition marking comitativity. In the case whereby *gen* is a preposition, the second noun, i.e. N<sub>2</sub>, is an oblique argument but N<sub>1</sub> is the subject. That is to say, the contiguity of the coordinating construction is breached, and [N<sub>1</sub>] is separated from [*gen* N<sub>2</sub>]. As a consequence, N<sub>1</sub> and N<sub>2</sub> do not take the same case and do not perform the same syntactic function. As a corollary, the whole sequence [N<sub>1</sub> IE *gen* N<sub>2</sub>] cannot take a position which requires an identical status of N<sub>1</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>, such as object position, topic position and focus position, as illustrated in (10), (11) and (12) respectively.

(10) Object position

- |     |        |           |                   |     |       |
|-----|--------|-----------|-------------------|-----|-------|
| *ta | kandao | [Zhangsan | <u>changchang</u> | gen | Lisi] |
| 他   | 看到     | 張三        | 常常                | 跟   | 李四    |
| 3SG | see    | Zhangsan  | changchang        | GEN | Lisi  |

(11) Topic position

- |            |                   |            |       |        |       |        |
|------------|-------------------|------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| *[Zhangsan | <u>changchang</u> | gen Lisi], | tamen | xihuan | he    | jiu    |
| 張三         | 常常                | 跟 李四       | 他們    | 喜歡     | 喝     | 酒      |
| Zhangsan   | often             | GEN Lisi   | 3PL   | like   | drink | liquor |

(12) Focus position

|      |           |                   |     |       |        |       |        |
|------|-----------|-------------------|-----|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| *shi | [Zhangsan | <u>changchang</u> | gen | Lisi] | xihuan | he    | jiu    |
| 是    | 張三        | 常常                | 跟   | 李四    | 喜歡     | 喝     | 酒      |
| FOC  | Zhangsan  | changchang        | GEN | Lisi  | like   | drink | liquor |

### 3.1.3 Distribution of *gen* as a conjunction

When the modifying element does not intervene between the two coordinated nouns but occurs after them, *gen* is looked upon as a conjunction. Consider example

(13).

|      |           |     |       |                   |    |     |          |
|------|-----------|-----|-------|-------------------|----|-----|----------|
| (13) | [Zhangsan | gen | Lisi] | <u>changchang</u> | qu | kan | dianying |
|      | 張三        | 跟   | 李四    | 常常                | 去  | 看   | 電影       |
|      | Zhangsan  | GEN | Lisi  | often             | go | see | movie    |

‘Zhangsan and Lisi often go to see a movie.’

As opposed to [N<sub>1</sub> IE *gen* N<sub>2</sub>] structure, the coordinating construction [N<sub>1</sub> *gen* N<sub>2</sub>] can occur in object position, topic position and focus position, as shown in (14a)-(14c) respectively, as each position requires the same status of N<sub>1</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>.

(14) a. Object position

|     |        |           |     |       |
|-----|--------|-----------|-----|-------|
| ta  | kandao | [Zhangsan | gen | Lisi] |
| 他   | 看到     | 張三        | 跟   | 李四    |
| 3SG | see    | Zhangsan  | GEN | Lisi  |

‘He saw Zhangsan and Lisi.’

b. Topic position

|           |     |        |       |        |       |        |
|-----------|-----|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| [Zhangsan | gen | Lisi], | tamen | xihuan | he    | jiu    |
| 張三        | 跟   | 李四     | 他們    | 喜歡     | 喝     | 酒      |
| Zhangsan  | GEN | Lisi   | 3PL   | like   | drink | liquor |

‘Zhangsan and Lisi, they both like drinking.’

c. Focus position

|     |           |     |       |        |       |        |
|-----|-----------|-----|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| shi | [Zhangsan | gen | Lisi] | xihuan | he    | jiu    |
| 是   | 張三        | 跟   | 李四    | 喜歡     | 喝     | 酒      |
| FOC | Zhangsan  | GEN | Lisi  | like   | drink | liquor |

‘It is Zhangsan and Lisi who like drinking.’

Unlike the English conjunction ‘and’, *gen* usually does not conjoin lexical

categories other than nouns, temporal adverbials, and locative prepositional phrases.

Thus, the coordination of two adjectival phrases as in (15), two verb phrases<sup>14</sup> as in (16), or two clauses as in (17) lead to the ungrammaticality of the following sentences.

- |      |           |               |               |            |            |                |               |               |
|------|-----------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| (15) | *Zhangsan | <u>hen</u>    | <u>kaixin</u> | gen        | <u>hen</u> | <u>xingfen</u> |               |               |
|      | 張三        | 很             | 開心            | 跟          | 很          | 興奮             |               |               |
|      | Zhangsan  | very          | happy         | GEN        | very       | excited        |               |               |
| (16) | *Zhangsan | <u>xihuan</u> | <u>da</u>     | <u>qiu</u> | gen        | <u>reai</u>    | <u>tiaowu</u> |               |
|      | 張三        | 喜歡            | 打             | 球          | 跟          | 熱愛             | 跳舞            |               |
|      | Zhangsan  | like          | hit           | ball       | GEN        | love           | dance         |               |
| (17) | *Zhangsan | <u>xihuan</u> | <u>da</u>     | <u>qiu</u> | gen        | <u>Lisi</u>    | <u>reai</u>   | <u>tiaowu</u> |
|      | 張三        | 喜歡            | 打             | 球          | 跟          | 李四             | 熱愛            | 跳舞            |
|      | Zhangsan  | like          | hit           | ball       | GEN        | Lisi           | love          | dance         |

### 3.1.4 Summary

In this section, we have examined the syntactic distribution of *gen* as a verb, as a preposition and as a conjunction. The distribution of *gen* as a verb can be summarized in Table 3.1.

<sup>14</sup> VP coordination is very rare; only one such example was found in our corpus.

|     |     |            |               |     |           |                |
|-----|-----|------------|---------------|-----|-----------|----------------|
| (i) | ta  | <u>zuo</u> | <u>jieyun</u> | gen | <u>da</u> | <u>gongche</u> |
|     | 他   | 坐          | 捷運            | 跟   | 搭         | 公車             |
|     | 3SG | sit        | MRT           | GEN | take      | bus            |

‘He takes the MRT and takes the bus.’

**Table 3.1 Distribution of *gen* as a verb**

|                          |   | Object required | Extended predicate |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|--------------------|
| Resultative construction | <i>gen shang</i><br>'catch up with'           | ±               | -                  |
| Potential construction   | <i>gen de shang</i><br>'can catch up with'    | ±               | -                  |
|                          | <i>gen bu shang</i><br>'cannot catch up with' |                 |                    |
| Aspect marker            | <i>gen zhe</i><br>'be following'              | +               | ±                  |
|                          | <i>gen le</i><br>'have followed'              | +               | -                  |
|                          | <i>gen guo</i><br>'once followed'             | +               | -                  |

When the modifying element intervenes between two nouns, *gen* serves as a preposition. The prepositional phrase headed by *gen* cannot occur in object, topic and focus position. In contrast, when the modifying element does not intervene between two nouns, *gen* serves as a nominal conjunction. It can occur in different positions of the sentence. The syntactic distribution of *gen* as a preposition and as a conjunction are compared in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Occurrence of *gen* as a preposition/conjunction in various syntactic positions**

| Position<br>Status | Subject position | Object position | Focus position | Topic position |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Prep               | +                | -               | -              | -              |
| Conj               | +                | +               | +              | +              |

### 3.2 Types of NPs in the [N<sub>1</sub> IE *gen* N<sub>2</sub>] and [N<sub>1</sub> *gen* N<sub>2</sub>] structures<sup>15</sup>

In this section, the types of NPs occurring in [N<sub>1</sub> IE *gen* N<sub>2</sub>] (section 3.2.1) and [N<sub>1</sub> *gen* N<sub>2</sub>] (section 3.2.2) structures are further discussed. A summary is given in section 3.2.3.

#### 3.2.1 Types of NPs in the [N<sub>1</sub> IE *gen* N<sub>2</sub>] structure

*Gen* as a preposition can introduce various types of nouns, i.e., bare nouns as in (18), noun phrases as in (19a)-(19b), or pronouns as in (20).

(18) *Gen* can introduce bare nouns

|     |    |     |     |        |     |            |      |
|-----|----|-----|-----|--------|-----|------------|------|
| [wo | de | gou | bu  | xihuan | gen | <u>mao</u> | wan  |
| 我   | 的  | 狗   | 不   | 喜歡     | 跟   | 貓          | 玩    |
| 1SG | DE | dog | NEG | like   | GEN | cat        | play |

‘My dog doesn’t like to play with cats.’

(19) *Gen* can introduce noun phrases

a. Noun phrases preceded by a demonstrative

|           |            |     |              |            |      |
|-----------|------------|-----|--------------|------------|------|
| [Zhangsan | changchang | gen | <u>nazhi</u> | <u>gou</u> | wan  |
| 張三        | 常常         | 跟   | 那隻           | 狗          | 玩    |
| Zhangsan  | often      | GEN | that-CL      | dog        | play |

‘Zhangsan often plays with that dog.’

b. Noun phrases preceded by a relative clause

|           |            |     |           |            |               |           |              |            |      |
|-----------|------------|-----|-----------|------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|------------|------|
| [Zhangsan | changchang | gen | <u>ni</u> | <u>hen</u> | <u>xihuan</u> | <u>de</u> | <u>nazhi</u> | <u>gou</u> | wan  |
| 張三        | 常常         | 跟   | 你         | 很          | 喜歡            | 的         | 那隻           | 狗          | 玩    |
| Zhangsan  | often      | GEN | 2SG       | very       | like          | DE        | that-CL      | dog        | play |

‘Zhangsan often plays with the dog which you like very much.’

(20) *Gen* can introduce pronouns

|     |        |     |     |           |    |     |          |
|-----|--------|-----|-----|-----------|----|-----|----------|
| [wo | youshi | hui | gen | <u>ta</u> | qu | kan | dianying |
| 我   | 有時     | 會   | 跟   | 她         | 去  | 看   | 電影       |

<sup>15</sup> The comparative construction encoded by *gen*, as exemplified by the following sentence, will not be discussed in this thesis.

|     |          |            |      |           |             |     |
|-----|----------|------------|------|-----------|-------------|-----|
| (i) | Zhangsan | <u>gen</u> | Lisi | <u>yi</u> | <u>yang</u> | gao |
|     | 張三       | 跟          | 李四   | 一         | 樣           | 高   |
|     | Zhangsan | GEN        | Lisi | identical | tall        |     |

‘Zhangsan is as tall as Lisi.’



1SG sometimes MOD GEN 3SG go see movie  
 ‘I sometimes will go to see movies with her.’

### 3.2.2 Types of NPs in the [N<sub>1</sub> *gen* N<sub>2</sub>] structure

*Gen* as a conjunction can conjoin various types of nouns. *Gen* can conjoin:

(i) Two bare nouns as in (21a)-(21d).

(21) Bare nouns

a. Subject position

|            |     |          |     |      |        |
|------------|-----|----------|-----|------|--------|
| [xiangjiao | gen | pingguo] | dou | hen  | pianyi |
| 香蕉         | 跟   | 蘋果       | 都   | 很    | 便宜     |
| banana     | GEN | apple    | all | very | cheap  |

‘Both bananas and apples are very cheap.’

b. Object position

|     |        |     |            |     |          |
|-----|--------|-----|------------|-----|----------|
| wo  | xihuan | chi | [xiangjiao | gen | pingguo] |
| 我   | 喜歡     | 吃   | 香蕉         | 跟   | 蘋果       |
| 1SG | like   | eat | banana     | GEN | apple    |

‘I like to eat bananas and apples.’

c. Topic position

|            |     |           |     |      |        |     |
|------------|-----|-----------|-----|------|--------|-----|
| [xiangjiao | gen | pingguo], | wo  | hen  | xihuan | chi |
| 香蕉         | 跟   | 蘋果        | 我   | 很    | 喜歡     | 吃   |
| banana     | GEN | apple     | 1SG | very | like   | eat |

‘Bananas and apples, I like to eat very much.’

d. Focus position

|     |      |        |     |    |     |            |     |          |
|-----|------|--------|-----|----|-----|------------|-----|----------|
| wo  | zui  | xihuan | chi | de | shi | [xiangjiao | gen | pingguo] |
| 我   | 最    | 喜歡     | 吃   | 的  | 是   | 香蕉         | 跟   | 蘋果       |
| 1SG | most | like   | eat | DE | FOC | banana     | GEN | apple    |

‘What I like to eat most are bananas and apples.’

(ii) Two noun phrases as in (22a)-(22d) and (23a)-(23d)

(22) Noun phrases preceded by a demonstrative

a. Subject position

|         |     |     |         |      |     |      |      |
|---------|-----|-----|---------|------|-----|------|------|
| [natio  | gou | gen | nazhi   | mao] | dou | hen  | guai |
| 那條      | 狗   | 跟   | 那隻      | 貓    | 都   | 很    | 乖    |
| that-CL | dog | GEN | that-CL | cat  | all | very | tame |

‘That dog and that cat are both very tame.’

b. Object position

ta taoyan [natiao gou gen nazhi mao]  
他 討厭 那條 狗 跟 那隻 貓  
3SG dislike that-CL dog GEN that-CL cat

‘He dislikes that dog and that cat.’

c. Topic position

[natiao gou gen nazhi mao], tamen dou hen guai  
那條 狗 跟 那隻 貓 他們 都 很 乖  
that-CL dog GEN that-CL cat 3PL all very tame

‘That dog and that cat, they are very tame.’

d. Focus position

ta zui taoyan de shi [natiao gou gen nazhi mao]  
他 最 討厭 的 是 那條 狗 跟 那隻 貓  
3SG most dislike DE FOC that-CL dog GEN that-CL cat

‘What he dislikes most are the dog and the cat.’

(23) Noun phrases preceded by a relative clause

a. Subject position

[wo gei ta de yifu gen ni songgei ta de liwu]  
我 給 他 的 衣服 跟 你 送給 他 的 禮物  
1SG give 3SG DE clothes GEN 2SG give 3SG DE gift

dou hen bang

都 很 棒

all very excellent

‘The clothes that I gave him and the gift that you gave him are very good.’

b. Object position

ta hen xihuan [wo gei ta de yifu gen ni  
他 很 喜歡 我 給 他 的 衣服 跟 你  
3SG very like 1SG give 3SG DE clothes GEN 2SG

songgei ta de liwu]  
送給 他 的 禮物

give 3SG DE gift

‘He likes very much the clothes that I gave him and the gift that you gave him’

c. Topic position

[wo gei ta de yifu gen ni songgei ta de liwu],  
 我 給 他 的 衣服 跟 你 送給 他 的 禮物  
 1SG give 3SG DE clothes GEN 2SG give 3SG DE gift  
 ta hen xihuan  
 他 很 喜歡  
 3SG very like

‘The clothes that I gave him and the gift that you gave him, he likes very much.’

d. Focus position

ta zui xihuan de shi [wo gei ta de yifu gen ni  
 他 最 喜歡 的 是 我 給 他 的 衣服 跟 你  
 3SG most like DE FOC 1SG give 3SG DE clothes GEN 2SG  
 songgei ta de liwu]  
 送給 他 的 禮物  
 give 3SG DE gift

‘What he likes very much are the clothes that I gave him and the gift that you gave him.’

(iii) Two pronouns as in (24a)-(24d)

(24) Pronouns

a. Subject position

[wo gen ta] dou shi xuesheng  
 我 跟 他 都 是 學生  
 1SG GEN 3SG all COP student

‘Both he and I are students.’

b. Object position

Zhangsan bu xiang zai kandao [ni gen ta] le  
 張三 不 想 再 看到 你 跟 他 了  
 Zhangsan NEG want again see 2SG GEN 3SG CRS

‘Zhangsan doesn’t want to see you and him again.’

c. Topic position

[ni gen ta], Zhangsan bu xiang zai kandao  
 你 跟 他 張三 不 想 再 看到  
 2SG GEN 3SG Zhangsan NEG want again see

‘You and he, Zhangsan doesn’t want to see anymore.’

d. Focus position

|          |      |     |       |       |        |    |     |
|----------|------|-----|-------|-------|--------|----|-----|
| Zhangsan | zui  | bu  | xiang | zai   | kandao | de | shi |
| 張三       | 最    | 不   | 想     | 再     | 看到     | 的  | 是   |
| Zhangsan | most | NEG | want  | again | see    | DE | FOC |
| [ni      | gen  | ta] |       |       |        |    |     |
| 你        | 跟    | 他   |       |       |        |    |     |
| 2SG      | GEN  | 3SG |       |       |        |    |     |

‘The people who Zhangsan doesn’t want to see again are you and him.’

(iv) Two nominalized verb phrases as in (25a)-(25d)

(25) Nominalized verb phrases

a. Subject position

|       |        |      |         |         |     |     |
|-------|--------|------|---------|---------|-----|-----|
| [xue  | shuxue | gen  | xue     | wuli]   | dou | dui |
| 學     | 數學     | 跟    | 學       | 物理      | 都   | 對   |
| learn | math   | GEN  | learn   | physics | all | to  |
| luoji | tuili  | you  | bangzhu |         |     |     |
| 邏輯    | 推理     | 有    | 幫助      |         |     |     |
| logic | reason | have | help    |         |     |     |

‘Learning math and learning physics are both helpful to logic and reasoning.’

b. Object position

|     |        |            |     |          |
|-----|--------|------------|-----|----------|
| ta  | xihuan | [tiaosheng | gen | youyong] |
| 他   | 喜歡     | 跳繩         | 跟   | 游泳       |
| 3SG | like   | jump-rope  | GEN | swim     |

‘He likes rope-jumping and swimming.’

c. Topic position

|            |        |           |      |      |        |     |
|------------|--------|-----------|------|------|--------|-----|
| [tiaosheng | gen    | youyong], | hen  | duo  | ren    | dou |
| 跳繩         | 跟      | 游泳        | 很    | 多    | 人      | 都   |
| jump-rope  | GEN    | swim      | very | many | person | all |
| hen        | xihuan |           |      |      |        |     |
| 很          | 喜歡     |           |      |      |        |     |
| very       | like   |           |      |      |        |     |

‘Rope-jumping and swimming, many people like.’

d. Focus position

|     |      |        |    |     |            |     |          |
|-----|------|--------|----|-----|------------|-----|----------|
| ta  | zui  | xihuan | de | shi | [tiaosheng | gen | youyong] |
| 他   | 最    | 喜歡     | 的  | 是   | 跳繩         | 跟   | 游泳       |
| 3SG | most | like   | DE | FOC | jump-rope  | GEN | swim     |

‘What he likes most are rope-jumping and swimming.’

*Gen* can also conjoin two temporal adverbials in preverbal position as in (26), or two

locative phrases either in preverbal position as in (27a) or in postverbal position as in (27b).

(26) Temporal adverbials

ni [jintian gen zuotian] dou chi le shuijiao  
 你 今天 跟 昨天 都 吃 了 水餃  
 2SG today GEN yesterday all eat PFV dumpling  
 ‘You ate dumplings today and yesterday.’

(27) Locative phrases

a. Preverbal position

ta [zai xuexiao gen zai jiaohui] dou hen jing  
 她 在 學校 跟 在 教會 都 很 靜  
 3SG LOC school GEN LOC church all very quiet  
 ‘She is quiet both at school and at church.’

b. Postverbal position

ta ba qian cang zai [chouti li gen zhuozi xia]  
 他 把 錢 藏 在 抽屜 裡 跟 桌子 下  
 3SG BA money hide LOC drawer inside GEN desk down  
 ‘He hid money in the drawer and under the desk.’

### 3.2.3 Summary

In this section, we have examined the types of phrases co-occurring with *gen* as a preposition and as a conjunction as summarized in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3 Types of phrases co-occurring with *gen* as a preposition /conjunction**

| Types of phrases<br>Status of <i>gen</i> | Noun phrases |           |           |     |                  | Other types of phrases |                  |
|--|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----|------------------|------------------------|------------------|
|  | Bare nouns   | Dem nouns | Rel nouns | Pro | Nom verb phrases | Temp adverbs           | Loc prep phrases |
| Prep                                     | +            | +         | +         | +   | NA <sup>16</sup> |                        |                  |
| Conj                                     | +            | +         | +         | +   | +                | +                      | +                |

<sup>16</sup> We find that when *gen* as a preposition can only introduce prototypical noun phrases. Thus, nominalized verb phrases and other types of phrases are non-applicable here.

### 3.3 Semantic interpretations of *gen*

In this section, the various semantic interpretations of *gen* as a verb, as a preposition and as a conjunction are further explored.

#### 3.3.1 Semantic interpretations of *gen* as a verb

*Gen* as a verb literally means ‘to follow’ and involves in its prototypical sense “spatial sequence”, whereby the extended predicate is associated with “spatial movement”, as illustrated by sentence (28).

- (28) wo        gen        zhe        ta        qu xuexiao  
我        跟        著        他        去 學校  
1SG        GEN        DUR        3SG        go school  
‘I followed him to the school.’

In addition to “spatial sequence”, “temporal sequence” can be encoded as well, as shown by sentence (29).

- (29) ta        gen        bu        shang    paizi  
他        跟        不        上        拍子  
3SG        GEN        NEG        up        tempo  
‘He couldn’t catch up with the tempo.’

However, when the extended predicate is not associated with the “spatial” or “temporal” dimension, only the “sequential” dimension will be left highlighted, as shown by sentence (30) and (31).

- (30) wo        gen        zhe        ta        chisu  
我        跟        著        他        吃素  
1SG        GEN        DUR        3SG        eat-vegetable  
‘I followed him in having a vegetarian diet.’

(31) women    gen    zhe    ta    xin    fojiao  
 我們    跟    著    他    信    佛教  
 1PL    GEN    DUR    3SG    believe    Buddhism  
 ‘We followed him in becoming Buddhists.’

The above two sentences show that the first referent follows the second referent in doing the denoted event. In other words, the second referent is usually “in the lead”: he is a vegetarian in (30) and a Buddhist in (31) and the first referent becomes a vegetarian and a Buddhist later.

### 3.2.2 Semantic interpretations of *gen* as a preposition

As shown by Teng (1970), when *gen* is analyzed as a preposition marking comitativity, the sentence renders a one-event reading, as in (32).

(32) Zhangsan    zuotian    gen    Mali    yiqi    chi    hanbao  
 張三    昨天    跟    瑪莉    一起    吃    漢堡  
 Zhangsan    yesterday    GEN    Mali    together    eat    hamburger  
 ‘Zhangsan ate hamburgers yesterday with Mali.’

Sentence (32) means that *Zhangsan* and *Mali* participate in the same event together.

Thus, the event is collective in nature.

Besides marking comitativity, *gen* as a preposition is said to embody other functions. Gu (2000) discusses the prepositional interpretations of *gen* at great length (*cf.* Chapter 2). He points out that *gen* as a preposition displays three types of semantic orientations between the two referents in the sentence.

- (i) The first type marks a *reciprocal* relationship between the two referents as shown in (33).

- (33) Zhangsan changchang gen Lisi dajia  
 張三 常常 跟 李四 吵架  
 Zhangsan often GEN Lisi fight  
 ‘Zhangsan and Lisi often fight with each other.’

In this type of relationship, *Zhangsan* and *Lisi* both initiate the event ‘fight’ and share equal participation in the event: *Zhangsan* hits *Lisi* and *Lisi* hits *Zhangsan*.

- (ii) The second type introduces the goal towards which the action is directed, as illustrated in (34).

- (34) wo zuotian gen ni shuo guo najian shi  
 我 昨天 跟 你 說 過 那件 事  
 1SG yesterday GEN 2SG say EXP that-CL matter  
 ‘I talked to you about that matter yesterday.’

In this type of relationship, *gen* ushers in the *recipient* of the denoted event and the whole action is unidirectional in nature: the first referent is the initiator of the action which proceeds in the way from the first participant to the second.

- (iii) The third type highlights the source of the action, as example (35) shows.

- (35) ta zuotian gen wo jie le yiben shu  
 他 昨天 跟 我 借 了 一本 書  
 3SG yesterday GEN 1SG borrow PFV one-CL book  
 ‘He borrowed one book from me yesterday.’

Like the goal orientation illustrated by type (ii), the whole action is unidirectional and the first referent initiates the event but unlike type (ii), *gen* in this function introduces the *source* of the denoted event.

### 3.3.3 Semantic interpretations of *gen* as a conjunction

When two coordinands are conjoined in the *subject* position of a sentence, the



conjoining can take place at two levels (Teng 1970:318). One takes place at the phrasal level and the other at the sentential level. For example, example (36) can be given two meanings.

- (36) [Zhangsan    gen    Mali]    zuotian    qu    kan    dianying  
張三            跟            瑪莉        昨天        去        看        電影  
Zhangsan    GEN    Mali    yesterday    go    look    movie  
a. ‘Zhangsan and Mali went to see the movie together yesterday.’  
b. ‘Both Zhangsan and Mali went to see the movie yesterday.’

*Zhangsan* and *Mali* can be treated as one single unit as illustrated in (36a), so that the depicted event is interpreted as a collective event—*Zhangsan* and *Mali* went to see the movie together and there is only one event involved. On the other hand, the conjoining can take place at the sentential level as shown in (36b). In this case, the depicted event is associated with *Zhangsan* and *Mali* respectively, which suggests that the event ‘go to the movie’ is repeated and there are two events involved, i.e. (i) *Zhangsan* went to see the movie and (ii) *Mali* went to see the movie.

To disambiguate the meaning of sentence (36), such elements as *yiqi* ‘together’ and *dou* ‘all’ can be employed to help explicate the semantic content, as demonstrated in (37) and (38).

- (37) [Zhangsan    gen    Mali]    zuotian    yiqi    qu    kan    dianying  
張三            跟            瑪莉        昨天        一起        去        看        電影  
Zhangsan    GEN    Mali    yesterday    together    go    look    movie  
‘Zhangsan and Mali went to see the movie together yesterday.’  
(38) [Zhangsan    gen    Mali]    zuotian    dou    qu    kan    dianying  
張三            跟            瑪莉        昨天        都        去        看        電影  
Zhangsan    GEN    Mali    yesterday    all        go    look    movie

‘Both Zhangsan and Mali went to see the movie yesterday.’

On the other hand, when two coordinands appear in the object position, *gen* is in most cases treated as a sentential conjunction, as illustrated by the following sentences (39) and (40).

(39) wo xihuan chi [hanbao gen qiaokeli]  
我 喜歡 吃 漢堡 跟 巧克力  
1SG like eat hamburger GEN chocolate  
‘I like to eat hamburgers and chocolate.’

(40) wo qu le [taibei gen hualian]  
我 去 了 台北 跟 花蓮  
1SG go PFV Taipei GEN Hualien  
‘I went to Taipei and Hualien.’

As pointed out in Teng (1970:321), the logical constraint will yield a phrasal conjunction of *gen*. Consider the following sentence (41).

(41) ta ba dangao dou gei le [Xiaoming gen Xiaohua]  
他 把 蛋糕 都 給 了 小明 跟 小華  
3SG BA cake all give PFV Xiaoming GEN Xiaohua  
‘He gave all the cake to Xiaoming and Xiaohua.’

Teng (1970:321)

If *gen* is a sentential conjunction in (41), we can derive two sentences, *cf.* (42) and

(43).

(42) ta ba dangao dou gei le Xiaoming  
他 把 蛋糕 都 給 了 小明  
3SG BA cake all give PFV Xiaoming  
‘He gave all the cake to Xiaoming.’

(43) ta ba dangao dou gei le Xiaohua  
他 把 蛋糕 都 給 了 小華  
3SG BA cake all give PFV Xiaohua  
‘He gave all the cake to Xiaohua.’

Teng (1970:321)

However, Teng points out that when (42) is true, (43) will be false and vice versa.

Thus, these two sentences are mutually exclusive. Accordingly, it is impossible to establish *gen* in (41) as a sentential conjunction.

### **3.3.4 Summary**

In this section, we have discussed the functions of *gen* as a verb, as a preposition and as a conjunction.

*Gen* as a verb originally involves “spatial sequence” but it can also involve “temporal sequence”. Besides, when both the “spatial” and “temporal” dimensions are left implicit, the “sequence” meaning is what is left highlighted.

*Gen* as a preposition can mark comitativity, introducing another participant of the denoted event. It can also feature a reciprocal relationship between two referents. Besides, it can highlight the directionality of the event between two referents, with the directionality being goal-oriented or source-oriented.

*Gen* as a conjunction can conjoin two referents at the phrasal level and at the sentential level. Phrasal conjunction gives the denoted event a collective reading while sentential conjunction yields the distributivity of the denoted event.

### **3.4 Nature of referents adjacent to *gen***

In this section, an investigation is conducted on the nature of referents adjacent to *gen* in terms of semantic features and thematic roles. Section 3.4.1 explores the nature of referents co-occurring with *gen* as a verb. Section 3.4.2 addresses the nature

of the two referents co-occurring with *gen* as a preposition. Section 3.4.3 deals with the nature of the two referents coordinated by *gen*.

### 3.4.1 Nature of referents co-occurring with *gen* as a verb

When *gen* involves “spatial sequence”, the two referents preceding and following *gen* basically need to be animate because only animate entities can move.<sup>17</sup>

This can be illustrated by sentences (44)-(46).

(44) women gen zhe ta zou dao xuexiao  
 我們 跟 著 他 走 到 學校  
 1PL GEN DUR 3SG walk reach school  
 ‘We followed him to walk to the school.’

(45) \*women gen zhe yizi zou dao xuexiao  
 我們 跟 著 椅子 走 到 學校  
 1PL GEN DUR chair walk reach school

(46) \*yizi gen zhe ta zou dao xuexiao  
 椅子 跟 著 他 走 到 學校  
 chair GEN DUR 3SG walk reach school

When “temporal sequence” is involved, the second referent is usually non-human and inanimate. Consider the following sentence (47).

(47) ta gen bu shang paizi  
 他 跟 不 上 拍子  
 3SG GEN NEG up tempo  
 ‘He couldn’t catch up with the tempo.’

However, when only “sequence” is emphasized, the nature of the two referents is unrestricted. Consider sentences (48) and (49).

<sup>17</sup> Prof. L. Huang pointed out that in some cases, the second referent could be inanimate, as shown by the following sentence.

(i) ta gen zhe xieji zou dao xuexiao  
 3SG GEN DUR bloodstain walk arrive school  
 他 跟 著 血跡 走 到 學校  
 ‘He followed the bloodstains to the school.’

(48) wo      dou      gen      zhe      ganjue      zou  
 我      都      跟      著      感覺      走  
 1SG      all      GEN      DUR      feeling      walk

‘I always follow my feelings.’

(49) Xin dang      gen      zhe      Minjin dang      de      zhengce      zuo      tiaozheng  
 新      黨      跟      著      民進      黨      的      政策      做      調整  
 new      party      GEN      DUR      Minjin      party      DE      policy      do      adapt  
 ‘The New Party always adjusted to the policies of the Democratic Progressive Party.’

In (48) and (49), there is neither “spatial” nor “temporal” movement involved, and the two referents are not necessarily animate.

**Table 3.4 Semantic features of the two referents co-occurring with *gen* as a verb**

|             | First Referent | Second Referent |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Spatial Seq | +Animate       | +Animate        |
| Temp Seq    | +Animate       | - Animate       |
| Seq Only    | ±Animate       | ±Animate        |

### 3.4.2 Nature of referents preceding and following *gen* as a preposition

*Gen* as a preposition indicates four types of relationships, i.e. comitative, reciprocal, goal-oriented and source-oriented<sup>18</sup>. The nature of the two referents in each relationship is discussed below.

#### 3.4.2.1 Comitative relationship

*Gen* as a comitative marker serves to introduce another participant of the denoted event. Consider sentence (50).

<sup>18</sup> As mentioned earlier, goal-oriented and source-oriented relationship are subsumed under “unidirectional” relationship.

(50) Zhangsan      zuotian      *gen*      Lisi      yiqi      da      lanqiu  
張三              昨天              跟              李四              一起              打              籃球  
Zhangsan      yesterday      GEN      Lisi      together      hit      basketball  
‘Zhangsan played basketball with Lisi yesterday.’

The two participants, *Zhangsan* and *Lisi*, are both agents and humans; namely, they share the same thematic role and semantic features. Thus, violation of these properties leads to the ungrammaticality of sentences (51) and (52).

(51) Different semantic features

\*Xiaoming      zuotian      *gen*      gou      yiqi      sanbu  
小明              昨天              跟              狗              一起              散步  
Xiaoming      yesterday      GEN      dog      together      stroll

(52) Different thematic roles

\*Zhangsan      zuotian      *gen*      yaoshi      yiqi      kai      men  
張三              昨天              跟              鑰匙              一起              開              門  
Zhangsan      yesterday      GEN      key      together      open      door

### 3.4.2.2 Reciprocal relationship

When *gen* introduces another participant in a reciprocal event, the two referents share equal participation in the denoted event. Consider sentence (53).

(53) Zhangsan      zuotian      *gen*      Lisi      dajia  
張三              昨天              跟              李四              打架  
Zhangsan      yesterday      GEN      Lisi      fight  
‘Zhangsan fought with Lisi yesterday.’

In this example, both referents are agents and patients (Frajzyngier 1999)<sup>19</sup>. Besides, given the reciprocal nature, the two referents have to share the same semantic features.

Thus, the following sentence (54) is ungrammatical because of the mismatch between the two referents in terms of semantic features.

<sup>19</sup> Frajzyngier (1999) points out that in a reciprocal situation, the two participants “share more than one semantic relation to the verb”. In other words, each referent in a reciprocal event takes double thematic roles.

(54) One human entity and one non-human entity

|                   |           |     |            |       |
|-------------------|-----------|-----|------------|-------|
| * <u>Zhangsan</u> | zuotian   | gen | <u>gou</u> | dajia |
| 張三                | 昨天        | 跟   | 狗          | 打架    |
| Zhangsan          | yesterday | GEN | dog        | fight |

### 3.4.2.3 Source orientation

*Gen* in this type of relationship serves to introduce the referent which is the *source* of the denoted event. In contrast, the first referent is the initiator of the denoted event and takes on an *agent* role. Accordingly, these two referents do not share the same thematic role. Consider the following two sentences (55)-(56).

|                      |     |     |             |       |         |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-------------|-------|---------|
| (55) <u>Zhangsan</u> | shi | gen | <u>Lisi</u> | xue   | yingwen |
| 張三                   | 是   | 跟   | 李四          | 學     | 英文      |
| Zhangsan             | FOC | GEN | Lisi        | learn | English |

‘Zhangsan learned English from LISI.’

|                      |          |     |                |        |       |
|----------------------|----------|-----|----------------|--------|-------|
| (56) <u>Zhangsan</u> | kaolu    | gen | <u>yinhang</u> | jie    | qian  |
| 張三                   | 考慮       | 跟   | 銀行             | 借      | 錢     |
| Zhangsan             | consider | GEN | bank           | borrow | money |

‘Zhangsan considered borrowing money from the bank.’

In addition, we can also clearly see that the two referents do not have to share the same semantic features. In (55), both two referents are human while in (56) the first referent is human but the second is non-human.

### 3.4.2.4 Goal orientation

*Gen* in this type of relationship serves to introduce the referent which is the *recipient* of the denoted action. This referent usually takes the thematic role of *theme*. In contrast, the first referent is the doer of the denoted action and thus takes on an *agent* role. Consequently, like in source orientation, the two referents have different

thematic roles. Consider the following two sentences (57)-(58).

- (57) ta      yiqian      gen      wo      ti      guo      zhejian      shi  
 他      以前      跟      我      提      過      這件      事  
 3SG      before      GEN      1SG      mention      EXP      this-CL      matter  
 ‘He mentioned this matter to me before.’
- (58) Xiaoming      xiangyao      gen      ni      jieshi      zhejian      shi  
 小明      想要      跟      你      解釋      這件      事  
 Xiaoming      want      GEN      2SG      explain      this-CL      matter  
 ‘Xiaoming wants to explain this matter to you.’

As shown in the two examples, the *recipient* is usually a human referent. Thus, though the two referents do not share the same thematic role, both of them are usually human referents, and thus share the same semantic features “human”.

### 3.4.3 Nature of referents conjoined by *gen*

As a conjunction, *gen* can conjoin either two animate referents (human or non-human), or two inanimate referents, as shown in sentences (59a)-(59c).

(59) *Gen* can conjoin two animate or inanimate referents.

- a. coordination of two animate referents (human)
- wo      baba      hen      xihuan      [Zhangsan      gen      Mali]  
 我      爸爸      很      喜歡      張三      跟      瑪莉  
 1SG      father      very      like      Zhangsan      GEN      Mali  
 ‘My father likes Zhangsan and Mali very much.’
- b. coordination of two animate referents (non-human)
- wo      bu      tai      xihuan      [mao      gen      gou]  
 我      不      太      喜歡      貓      跟      狗  
 1SG      NEG      too      like      cat      GEN      dog  
 ‘I do not like cats and dogs very much.’
- c. coordination of two inanimate referents
- ta      xihuan      [qiaokeli      gen      bingqilin]  
 他      喜歡      巧克力      跟      冰淇淋  
 3SG      like      chocolate      GEN      ice-cream



‘He likes chocolate and ice cream.’

Given that the two coordinands must share the same features, coordination of one animate referent and one inanimate referent as in (60a) or one human referent and one non-human referent as in (60b) gives rise to the ungrammaticality of sentences in question.

(60) Different semantic features

- a. \*ta xihuan [Zhangsan gen qiaokeli]  
 他 喜歡 張三 跟 巧克力  
 3SG like Zhangsan GEN chocolate
- b. \*ta xihuan [Zhangsan gen gou]  
 他 喜歡 張三 跟 狗  
 3SG like Zhangsan GEN dog

Besides, two coordinated nouns must exhibit the same categorial status (Paris 2005b).

(61) Identical categorial status

a. Two nominalized verb phrases

[zuo zhe gen zhan zhe] dou hen shufu  
 坐 著 跟 站 著 都 很 舒服  
 sit DUR GEN stand DUR all very comfortable  
 ‘Sitting and standing are comfortable.’

b. Two noun phrases

[yizi gen shafa] dou hen pianyi  
 椅子 跟 沙發 都 很 便宜  
 chair GEN sofa all very cheap  
 ‘Chairs and sofas are both very cheap.’

c. One nominalized verb phrase and one noun phrase

\*[zuo zhe gen shafa] dou hen shufu  
 坐 著 跟 沙發 都 很 舒服  
 sit DUR GEN sofa all very comfortable

In (61a), the two items conjoined by *gen* are nominalized verbal phrases; in (61b), the two coordinated items are noun phrases. The two coordinands in these two sentences exhibit the same categorial status. In contrast, sentence (61c) is

ungrammatical because the coordinated entities include one nominalized verb phrase and one noun phrase.

In addition, the two coordinated referents must bear the same thematic role (Tang 1975). Consider sentences (62) and (63).

- (62) xiaotou yong [qizi gen banshou] ba men qiaokai  
 小偷 用 起子 跟 扳手 把 門 撬開  
 thief use screwdriver GEN spanner BA door pry-open  
 ‘The thief pried the door open with a screwdriver and a spanner.’
- (63) \*chuanghu bei [xiaotou gen shitou] dapo le  
 窗戶 被 小偷 跟 石頭 打破 了  
 window BEI thief GEN stone break CRS

In (62), the two coordinands *qizi* ‘screwdriver’ and *banshou* ‘spanner’ share the same thematic role *instrument*. In (63), the two conjoined elements have different thematic roles: *xiaotou* ‘thief’ is an *agent* but *shitou* ‘stone’ is an *instrument*. The mismatch between the thematic roles explains the ungrammaticality of sentence (63).

To sum up, the two coordinands must share the same semantic features, exhibit the same categorial status, and bear the same thematic role.

### 3.4.4 Summary

In section 3.4, we have examined the nature of referents with respect to *gen* as a verb, as a preposition and as a conjunction.

As a verb, when *gen* involves “spatial sequence”, the two referents share the same semantic features “human”; when *gen* is associated with “temporal sequence”, the second referent is usually non-human and non-animate, so the two referents do not

share similar semantic features. When only “sequence” is highlighted, the two referents can be either animate or inanimate and do not need to share the same semantic features.

As a preposition, the nature of the two referents depend on the type of relationship *gen* marks. In the comitative and reciprocal relationship, *gen* serves to introduce another participant of the denoted event, so the two referents need to share the same semantic features and thematic role(s)<sup>20</sup>. When the relationship is unidirectional, whether source- or goal-oriented, the two referents share different thematic roles. However, the two referents do not necessarily share the same semantic features in source-oriented relationship but share the same semantic features in goal-oriented relationship.

As a conjunction, the two referents share the same semantic features, categorial status and thematic roles. Table 3.5 summarizes the nature of the two referents with respect to *gen* as a verb, as a preposition and as a conjunction.

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<sup>20</sup> The two referents share one thematic role in a comitative relationship while in a reciprocal relationship, the two referents are both agents and patients.

**Table 3.5 Nature of the two referents with respect to the status of *gen* as a verb/ preposition/ conjunction**

|                                    | Verb             |             |             | Prep |     |        |   | Conj |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|------|-----|--------|---|------|
|                                    | Spatial<br>Seq   | Temp<br>Seq | Seq<br>only | Com  | Rec | Unidir |   |      |
|                                    |                  |             |             |      |     | S      | G |      |
| Identical semantic feature (human) | +                | -           | ±           | +    | +   | ±      | + | +    |
| Identical thematic role            | NA <sup>21</sup> |             |             | +    | +   | -      | - | +    |

### 3.5 Ambiguous behaviors of *gen*

It has been pointed out that *gen* does not always assume a clear-cut grammatical function (Teng 1970, Tang 1979, Paris 2005a-b among others). This section is devoted to the ambiguous behaviors of *gen*. Section 3.5.1 deals with *gen* vacillating between verb and preposition. Section 3.5.2 addresses the ambiguous functions of *gen* as a preposition or as a phrasal conjunction. Section 3.5.3 revisits the dual levels of conjunction. Section 3.5.4 offers a summary.

#### 3.5.1 *Gen* between verb and preposition

When Teng (1970:333) deals with *gen* as a preposition marking comitativity, he proposes the notion of “principality” to account for the imbalance of status between the two referents preceding and following *gen*. Consider the following sentence (64).

(64) Li taitai yao gen Li xiansheng dao Riben qu  
李太太要跟李先生到日本去

<sup>21</sup> The thematic role of the second referent is a little complicated because it seems to be a *patient* (someone who is followed) and an *agent* (someone who carries out the denoted event if there is an extended predicate). Thus, a comparison between the first referent and the second referent in terms of thematic roles is not applicable in Table 3.5.

- Li Mrs. want GEN Li Mr. reach Japan go  
 a. Mrs. Li wants to follow Mr. Li to Japan.  
 b. 'Mrs. Li wants to go to Japan with Mr. Li.'

Teng (1970) proposes that the second referent in (64), *Li xiansheng* 'Mr. Li', is the "principal" participant because he initiates the denoted event and Mrs. Li is the follower. Teng attributes this imbalance to the verbal meaning of *gen* 'to follow'<sup>22</sup>. He further points out that when the first referent follows the second referent to do the denoted event, the second referent is readily perceived as the leading role of the event. However, we find that in other cases whereby *gen* is also treated as a comitative marker, no such disequilibrium exists, as in examples (65) and (66).

- (65) wo        zuotian        gen        ta        yiqi        jie        shu  
 我        昨天        跟        他        一起        借        書  
 1SG        yesterday        GEN        3SG        together        borrow        book  
 'I borrowed books with him yesterday.'
- (66) wo        zuotian        gen        ta        chifan  
 我        昨天        跟        他        吃飯  
 1SG        yesterday        GEN        3SG        eat-rice  
 'I had a meal with him yesterday.'

In the above two sentences, *gen* is a preposition and serves to introduce another participant but no such inference arises whereby the second referent initiates the event and the first referent is a follower. Accordingly, we will show in Chapter 5 that when *gen* is followed by a motion verb like *qu* 'to go', the meaning of *gen* is ambiguous between verb and preposition, as illustrated in sentence (64). In this context, *gen* can

<sup>22</sup> Prof. L. Huang suggested that the notion of "principality" is most obvious when *gen* is preceded by a modal verb like *yao* 'to want'. When the focus particle *shi* or adverbials precede *gen*, the "principality" notion is not as obvious.

be perceived to behave like a verb and the proposed disequilibrium between the two referents comes within reach. However, note that when *yiqi* is added to the sentence

(64), the “disequilibrium” is not as strongly felt. Consider the following sentence (67).

(67) Li taitai yao gen Li xiansheng yiqi dao Riben qu  
 李 太太 要 跟 李 先生 一起 到 日本 去  
 Li Mrs. want GEN Li Mr. together reach Japan go  
 ‘Mrs. Li wants to go to Japan with Mr. Li.’

### 3.5.2 *Gen* between preposition and phrasal conjunction

Paris (2005a) points out the ambiguous functions of *gen* in sentence (68).

(68) wo gen ta chaojia  
 我 跟 他 吵架  
 1SG GEN 3SG quarrel  
 a. ‘He and I quarreled.’  
 b. ‘I quarreled with him.’

*Gen* is viewed as a phrasal conjunction as demonstrated by (68a) but as a preposition as illustrated in (68b). When a modifying element is added, its syntactic

position will help elucidate the function of *gen*. Consider sentences (69) and (70).

(69) [wo gen ta] zuotian chaojia  
 我 跟 他 昨天 吵架  
 1SG GEN 3SG yesterday quarrel  
 ‘He and I quarreled yesterday.’  
 (70) wo zuotian gen ta chaojia  
 我 昨天 跟 他 吵架  
 1SG yesterday GEN 3SG quarrel  
 ‘I quarreled with him yesterday.’

When *zuotian* ‘yesterday’ is inserted after the two referents, *gen* is a phrasal conjunction. When *zuotian* ‘yesterday’ is inserted between the two referents, *gen* is a preposition.

### 3.5.3 *Gen* between phrasal and sentential conjunction

Teng (1970) points out that *gen* as a conjunction can conjoin two nouns either at the phrasal level or at the sentential level, as shown in sentence (71).

(71) [wo gen ta] zuotian jie le sanben shu  
我 跟 他 昨天 借 了 三本 书  
1SG GEN 3SG yesterday borrow PFV three-CL book  
'He and I borrowed three books yesterday.'

Sentence (71) does not clearly indicate the number of books borrowed in total. If the conjoining takes place at the sentential level, then there are six books borrowed, i.e., I borrowed three and he borrowed three. If the conjoining takes place at the phrasal level, then there are three books borrowed in total; i.e., he and I borrowed three books together. Elements such as *yiqi* 'together' and *dou* 'all' can help to disambiguate the interpretation of sentence (71). Consider sentences (72) and (73).

(72) [wo gen ta] zuotian dou jie le sanben shu  
我 跟 他 昨天 都 借 了 三本 书  
1SG GEN 3SG yesterday all borrow PFV three-CL book  
'Both he and I borrowed three books yesterday.'

(*Gen* is a sentential conjunction: there are six books borrowed in total.)

(73) [wo gen ta] zuotian yiqi jie le sanben shu  
我 跟 他 昨天 一起 借 了 三本 书  
1SG GEN 3SG yesterday together borrow PFV three-CL book  
'He and I borrowed three books together yesterday.'

(*Gen* is a phrasal conjunction: there are three books borrowed in total.)

### 3.5.4 Summary

In this section, we have shown that *gen* can be ambiguously interpreted as (i) verb and preposition, (ii) preposition and phrasal conjunction, and (iii) phrasal

conjunction and sentential conjunction. When *gen* co-occurs with motion verbs, *gen* is likely to be analyzed as a verb or as a preposition. In the cases where the function of *gen* falls between preposition and phrasal conjunction, the syntactic position of an inserted element can help to eliminate the ambiguity of *gen*. In the ambiguous interpretations of *gen* between phrasal conjunction and sentential conjunction, the elements *yiqi* ‘together’ and *dou* ‘all’ help to disambiguate the vague meaning.