

THE CHINESE NPI *RENHE* IN CONTEXTS WITH NEGATIVE VALUES

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by
Yu-Fang Flora Wang

Graduate Institute of English
National Taiwan Normal University

e-mail: YFWang@nlg.csie.ntu.edu.tw

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Yu -Fang Flora Wang

National Taiwan Normal University

Abstract

This paper investigates the Chinese negative polarity item (NPI) *renhe* not only in overt but also in nonovert negative contexts. There are some syntactic and semantic restrictions on the occurrence of *renhe*. A subject/object asymmetry is found in *renhe* licensed by a negative element within a clause. But the same does not hold true for superclauses, where exist no subject/object asymmetry in the NPI licensing. The account that *renhe* has to be licensed by a c-commanding negation can solve such contradiction. Aside from being c-commanded by its licensor, *renhe* occurs in a context where the truth value of a proposition is either negated or not asserted. Further, *renhe* is not always locally bound; long-distance licensing is permitted as long as a c-command relation between *renhe* and its licensor is satisfied.

0. Introduction

Chinese *renhe*, the item closely corresponding to English *any*, has two different types: one is negative polarity item (NPI) *renhe*, and the other, free choice (FC) *renhe*. According to Ladusaw (1980), the former is licensed in the scope of a downward-entailing trigger¹, such as:

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¹On Ladusaw's DE approach, a polarity item is licensed if and only if it is in the scope of a DE operator, for example, negation, as exemplified in (i):

(i) Some people never send any Christmas cards.

We may say that *any*, because it follows *never*, is within the scope of negation, while *some* is not. In the scope of a DE operator the direction of entailment is from supersets (e.g. animals) to subsets (dogs):

(ii) I don't like animals.

(iii) I don't like dogs.

(a) a negation, which typically conveys the contradiction of some or all of a sentence's meaning²:

(1a) Ta bu xihuan chi renhedongxi.
he not like eat anything
'He doesn't like to eat anything.'

(b) a yes/no question that expects a negative response or is neutral in expectation:

(1b) Ni xihuan renhedongxi ma?
you like anything Qu
'Do you like anything?'

(c) a conditional, where its truth value of proposition is not asserted:

(1c) Ruguo/Jiaru ta xihuan renheren, ni jiu gaosu wo.
if he like anyone, you then tell me
'If he likes anyone, then you tell me.'

(d) a comparative whose basic meaning is negative and nonassertive:

(1d) Wo xiang dianying shi be renhe shuji youqu.
I think movie is than any book interesting
'I think a movie is more entertaining than any book.'
(I think no book is so entertaining as a movie.)

Conversely, the latter, representing a choice between three or more, needs not be triggered (i.e. it has no inherent scope with regard to negation, as opposed to NPI *renhe*). The contexts where it can occur include:

(a) sentences with modals, e.g.:

(2a) Ni keyi zuo renhe ni xihuan de shi.
you can do any you like DE thing
'You can do anything you like.'

(b) restrictive relative clauses which receive a kind of non-event or generic reading, such

as:

(2b) Wo xihuan renhe youqu de shu.
I like any interesting DE book
'I like any book which is interesting.'

The following study will focus on the NPI *renhe*, especially in negative contexts.

²Some symbols used in the glosses are: ASP, the aspect marker; NEG, the negation marker; Qu, the question particle; BA, BEI, the prepositions marking a preverbal object; DE, the modifier marker; the LOC, the localizer.

One well-known property of the polarity *any* is that it must be in construction with a negative element that licenses it³ (for discussions, see Linebarger, 1987):

(3a) *John loves anyone.

(3b) John does not love anyone.

Larson and Ladusaw propose that there is a relevant locality for English polarity *any*⁴ (concerning the relevant locality for English, see Kim, 1990:40-45; Progovac, 1991: 517). Aoun also suggests that the negative polarity item (NPI) in a French dialect is an A'-anaphor (1985: 159). In this dialect, the distribution of *personne* is similar to that of reciprocals and reflexives. *Personne* is bound in its governing category by *ne*. For example, in (4a-b) (=his (27a,b)):

(4a) Jean requiert que Pierre **ne** voit **personne**.
 Jean requires that Pierre neg sees body
 'Jean requires Pierre to see nobody.'

(4b) Jean requiert que **personne ne** voit Pierre.
 Jean requires that body neg sees Pierre
 'Jean requires nobody to see Pierre.'

the relation between *ne* and *personne* demonstrates an instance of an A'-anaphoric relation: *ne* is the A'-antecedent of *personne*. Furthermore, Progovac (1991) presents data on Sebro-Croatian

³In English, *some* can be used in a negative, yes/no question, and conditional sentence, when the basic meaning is assertive ('positive orientation'). For instance, if *some*, *somebody*, etc., are used in yes/no questions, it means that we think the answer will be "yes". Compare,

(i) a. Is there **something** to eat! (I can smell food!)

(i) b. Is there **anything** to eat? (I'm hungry!)

Besides, consider the scope contrast between (iia) and (iib):

(ii) a. I didn't listen to **some** of the speakers.

|_____|

('There were some of the speakers that I didn't listen to.')

(ii) b. I didn't listen to **any** of the speakers.

|_____|

('There were not any speaker that I listened to.')

If *some* is used in the prepositional phrase, the PP must lie outside the scope (see Quirk et al., 1985: 787-88).

⁴As mentioned above, there are two types of *any* in English: one is Free-Choice *any* (usually stressed); and the other, polarity *any* (usually unstressed). FC-*any*, equivalent to 'no matter who/what', does not appear with negations, questions, and certain conditionals, e.g.:

(i) Anyone can do it.

(ii) *Can anyone do it?

Usually, on this reading, English *any* is akin to a universal quantifier:

(iii) $\forall x$ POSSIBLE (x do it)

For every x , it is possible for x to do it.

However, polarity *any* appears in so-called polarity contexts, such as negative sentences, yes/no questions and conditionals (for details, see Ladusaw (1980)).

polarity licensing to indicate that there is a need to impose locality on polarity sensitivity. Specifically, she claims that the Sebri-Croatian NI-NPIs (with the prefix *ni*) is an A'-anaphor, subject to Principle A of the binding theory, as manifested in the contrast below:

(5a) Milan **ne** voli **ni**-ko-ga.
Milan not loves no-who-ACC
'Milan does not love anyone.'

(5b) Mila **ne** tvrdi da Milan voli ***ni**-ko-ga.
Mila not claims that Milan loves no-who-ACC
'Mila does not claim that Milan loves anyone.'

The NI-NPI is allowed to appear in the scope of a clausemate negation, but not in the scope of a superordinate negation. That is, NI-NPI has to be bound by an A'-binder (e.g. negation) in its governing category.

Inspired by Aoun (1985) and Progovac (1991), the following study is an attempt to account for the negative polarity item *renhe* in Chinese by a binding approach. The discussion will concentrate on licensing by negation. Hence, this paper mainly consists of five sections. Section 1 argues that *renhe*, like English *any*, is treated as an indefinite NP, not a quantifier. Some data are presented to prove that *renhe*, lack of inherent quantificational force, is not permitted to stay alone in typical positive environments. It occurs in negative polarity contexts, for example, negation. However, a subject/object asymmetry in *renhe* occurring in clausemate negation is observed. Specifically, *renhe* in subject position of a simple negative clause is ill-formed, but that in object position is well-formed. Section 2 argues that the subject/object asymmetry can be accounted for by a relation between *renhe* and the negation marker in terms of c-command. Moreover, *renhe* can be licensed by a c-commanding negative marker in a superordinate clause. Contrary to the Sebri-Croatian NI-NPI and the NPI in the French dialect, which must occur in the same clause when licensed by a negative element, *renhe* can have non-local A'-binding as long as it is c-commanded by its licensor. In Section 3, I propose that the occurrence of *renhe* is subject to both the c-command requirement and the Specificity constraint. However, *renhe* can occur in **some** positive contexts. Section 4 discusses *renhe* in affirmative environments with negation implied. Crucially, the predicates in the positive contexts where *renhe* can appear have negative import. I suggest that

there is a covertly negative element which licenses the NPI. Along with the conditions on the NPI licensing the present tentative analysis provides a unified account of *renhe* licensed by either overt or covert negative markers. Finally conclusions are presented in Section 5.

1. The Distribution of *Renhe* in Simplex Sentences

NPIs are, as the name indicates, not permitted in the contexts of affirmation⁵. *Renhe*, one of the NPI representatives in Chinese, cannot occur independently in a positive declarative sentence, as illustrated below.

A. Positive Contexts

Object

- (6) *Ta xihuan renheren⁶.
 he likes anyone
 'He likes anyone.'

Indirect or Second Object

- (7) *Wo song renheren shu.
 I send anyone book
 *'I send anyone a book.'
- (8) *Wo gei renheren bi.
 I give anyone pen
 *'I give anyone a pen.'

⁵Like the indefinite *wh*, *renhe* can have a universal reading if it is licensed by *dou* 'all' or *ye* 'also' (see Li and Thompson, 1981) via specifier-head agreement:

- (i) Ta renheren/shei dou/ye bu xihuan.
 he anyone/who all/also NEG like
 'He does not like anyone.'

Besides, licensed by *dou*, *renhe* can occur in an affirmative sentence:

- (ii) Renheren/shei dou xihuan ta.
 anyone/who all like him
 'Everyone likes him.'

The varying scopal properties are due to the lack of inherent quantificational force. Since this paper is mainly concerned with *renhe* in existential quantification expression, we will not go into it here.

⁶*Renhe* in (6) can be preposed before the verb, eliciting a FC construal:

- (i) Renheren ta dou xihuan.
 anyone he all like
 'He likes everyone.'

The adverb *dou* 'all' occurs only in preverbal position. Since *dou* indicates only the noun phrase preceding it in its scope, *renheren* is mandatory to appear preverbally too (Li and Thompson, 1981).

Prepositional Object

- (9) *Wo ba renhedongxi diudiao guo.
I BA anything throw away ASP
'I have ever thrown away anything.'
- (10) *Wo hui gen renheren woshou.
I will with anyone shake hands
'I will shake hands with anyone.'
- (11) *Wo bei renheren zou guo.
I BEI anyone beaten ASP
'I was beaten by anyone.'
- (12) *Ta wei renheren zuo shi.
he for anyone do things
'He does things for anyone.'
- (13) *Wo zai renhedifang douliu guo.
I at any place stay ASP
'I had ever stayed in any place.'

Subject⁷

- (14) *Renheren hui lai.
anyone will come
'Anyone will come.'
- (15) *Renheren renshi ta.
anyone know him
'Anyone knows him.'

The NPI is unacceptable in these positive sentences. But we can salvage these sentences by negating the predicates⁸, (6)-(13) become possible:

B. Negative Contexts

- (6') Ta bu xihuan renheren.
he NEG like anyone
'He does not like anyone.'

⁷In English the modal *will* can license FC-*any* via specifier-head agreement, while its Chinese counterpart *hui* cannot (cf. (10), (14) and their English translations). On the other hand, *can* in both English and Chinese can license FC-*any* (see (i)).

(i) Ta keyi wei guojia zuo renhe xisheng.
he can for country do any sacrifice
'He can make any sacrifice for his country.'

⁸There are two general negative markers in Chinese: *bu* and *mei*. The two negation markers differ in the aspectual meaning that they denote: *bu* indicates a non-completive aspect and *mei*, a completive one (Li and Thompson, 1981: 421).

- (7') Wo **bu** song **renheren** shu.
I NEG send anyone book
'I will not send anyone a book.'
- (8') Wo **mei** gei **renheren** bi.
I NEG give anyone pen
'I did not give anyone a pen.'
- (9') Wo **mei** ba **renhedongxi** diudiao guo
I NEG BA anything throw away ASP
'I have not ever thrown away anything.'
- (10') Wo **bu** hui gen **renheren** woshou.
I NEG will with anyone shake hands
'I will not shake hands with anyone.'
- (11') Wo **mei** bei **renheren** zou guo.
I NEG BEI anyone beaten ASP
'I have not been beaten by anyone.'
- (12') Ta **bu** wei **renheren** zuo shi.
he NEG for anyone do things
'He does not do things for anyone.'
- (13') Wo **mei** zai **renhedifang** douliu guo.
I NEG at any place stay ASP
'I had not ever stayed in any place.'

However, negating the predicates in (14) and (15) still fails to rescue the ill-formedness of them:

- (14') ***Renheren bu** hui lai⁹.
anyone NEG will come
'Anyone will not come.'
- (15') ***Renheren bu** renshi ta.
anyone NEG knows him
'*Anyone does not know him.'

It is obvious that the subject/object asymmetry holds in the licensing of *renhe* by clausemate negations.

⁹In order to get rid of the extra factor--the definiteness constraint on subject in Chinese (viz. an NP in subject must be definite; for discussions, see Li and Thompson, 1981), the existential expression *you* is added in front of the subject in (14):

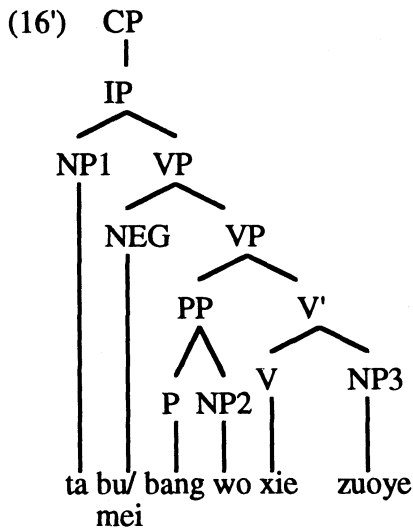
- (i) *You renheren bu hui lai.
have anyone NEG will come
'Nobody will come.'

The sentence is still bad. Obviously, (i) is in favor of our argument that a subject/object asymmetry in the NPI licensing holds in simplex sentences.

2. C-Command Domain at SS

The impossibility of (14-15) is captured by a 'c-command'¹⁰ relation between *renhe* and a negative element at S-Structure. Following Huang's phrase structure rules for Chinese (Huang, 1982), a sentence like (16) will have the structure in (16')¹¹:

- (16) Ta bu/mei bang wo xie zuoye.
 he will not/has not for me write assignment
 'He will not do/has not done assignments for me.'



In this structure, the negation c-commands the object of the preposition (NP2) and the object of the verb (NP3) but does not c-command the subject (NP1). In a simplex sentence, *renhe* therefore is possible in an object of a preposition or a verb but not in a subject position. The S-Structure c-command correctly accounts for (6)-(13) as grammatical, and the following sentences as ungrammatical:

- (12'') *Ta wei **renheren** bu zuo shi.
 he for anyone NEG do things
 'He does not do things for anyone.'

¹⁰A c-commands B iff

- (i) A does not dominate B and B does not dominate A.
 (ii) The first branching node dominating A dominates B (See Reinhart, 1983).

¹¹Currently, I presuppose that the negation marker *bu* is base-generated as a sister of the higher VP in (16'). And *mei* (you) has the same status of *bu*. Here, we do not commit to any particular theory about the structural position of negation. Whether the negation is a head or a specifier is not a core issue here.

- (13") *Wo zai renhedifang mei douliu guo.
 I at any place NEG live ASP
 'I had not ever stayed in any place.'

This account also correctly rules out (17), where *renheren* is not affected by the c-command scope of negation:

- (17) *Ta bu lai dui renheren zui hao.
 he NEG come to anyone most good
 *'That he does not come is good for anyone.'

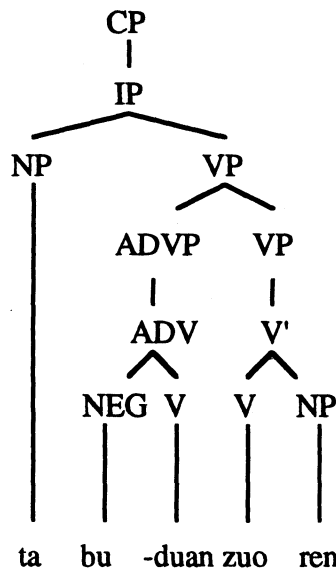
And it successfully accounts for the difference in grammaticality between (18) and (19).

- (18) *Ta bu-duan zuo renheshi.
 he not-break do anything
 'He continually does anything.'

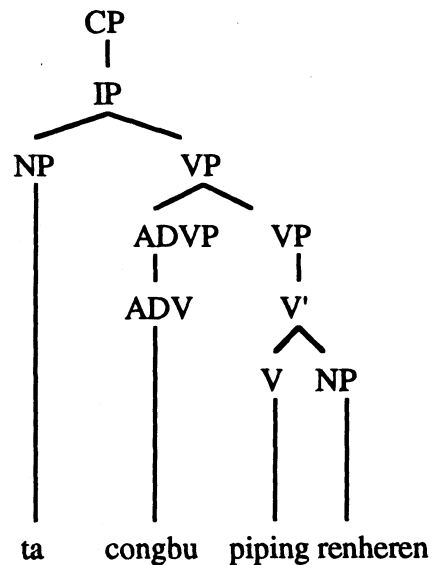
- (19) Ta congbu piping renheren.
 he never criticize anyone
 'He never criticizes anyone.'

The structures of (18-19) can be schematically shown in (20a) and (20b) respectively:

(20a)



(20b)



For (18), the affix *bu* 'not' is attached before the stem *duan* 'break' to negate it, forming the adverb *buduan* 'continually'. The negative morpheme itself, consequently, does not modify the VP *zuo renheshi* in (18). In contrast, the negative marker alongside the adverb *cong* in (19) modifies the whole VP *piping reheren* 'criticize anyone'. For this reason, *renhe* in (18) is not contained in the scope of the adverb but that in (19) is, as evidenced in (20).

3. Distance of Licensing

Although there is a subject/object asymmetry in the distribution of *renhe* in simplex sentences, this cannot be the case in complex sentences. *Renhe* in the subject position of an embedded clause is possible¹²(see the (a) sentences):

- (21a) ?Wo **bu** xiangxin [_{cp} **renheren** xihuan Zhangsan].
I NEG believe anyone like Zhangsan
'I do not believe that anyone likes Zhangsan.'
- (21b) Wo **bu** xiangxin [_{cp} Zhangsan xihuan **renheren**].
I NEG believe Zhangsan like anyone
'I do not believe that Zhangsan likes anyone.'
- (22a) ?Wo **bu** zhidao [_{cp} **renheren** da le Zhang].
I NEG know anyone beat ASP Zhang
'I do not know that anyone beat Zhang.'
- (22b) Ta **bu** zhidao [_{cp} zhe jian shi gen **renheren** you guanxi].
he NEG know this CL matter with anyone have relation
'He does not know this matter has to do with anyone.'
- (23a) ?Ta **mei** kanjian [_{cp} **renheren** da Lisi].
He NEG see anyone beat Lisi
'He has not seen that anyone beat Lisi.'
- (23b) Ni **mei** kanjian [_{cp} ta zebei **renheren**].
you NEG see he blame anyone
'You have not seen that he blamed anyone.'
- (24a) ?Wo **bu** xiwang [_{cp} **renheren** kaojin ta].
I NEG hope anyone approach him
'I do not hope that anyone approaches him.'
- (24b) Wo **bu** xiwang [_{cp} ni qu **renhedifang**].
I NEG hope you go anywhere
'I do not hope that you go anywhere.'

The above data exhibit that *renhe* is not always clause-bound by its licensor; i. e., the NPI and the negative element can appear in different clauses. In addition to licensing *renhe* in

¹²Due to the definiteness constraint on subject in Chinese (Li and Thompson, 1981), most of the native speakers will judge the (a) counterparts in (21)-(24) as odd but well-formed. Y.-H. Audrey Li (personal communication) points it to me that these sentences improve when the existential expression *you* 'have' occurs before the subject *renheren*, e.g.:

- (i) Wo **bu** xiangxin you renheren xihuan Zhangsan. (analogous to (21a))
I NEG believe have anyone likes Zhangsan
'I don't believe that anyone will like Zhangsan.'

embedded clauses, a negation marker can also license the NPI in relative clauses ((25)-(26)) or complex NPs ((27)-(28))¹³, as long as the c-command requirement is obeyed:

(25) Wo bu xihuan [np[cp renheren xie e_i] de shu].
I NEG like anyone write DE book
'I do not like books that anyone writes.'

(26) Tamen bu zhidao [np[cp ziji zou e_i] de renheshi].
they NEG know self do DE anything
'They do not know anything which they did.'

(27) ?Lisi mei ba [np[cp renheren piping Zhang] de xiaoxi]] gaosu Wang.
Lisi NEG BA anyone criticize Zhang DE news tell Wang
'Lisi has not told Wang the news that anyone criticizes Zhang.'

(28) Lisi mei tingshuo [np[cp Zhang ma le renheren] de xiaoxi]].
Lisi NEG hear Zhang scold ASP anyone DE news
'Lisi has not heard the news that Zhang scolded anyone.'

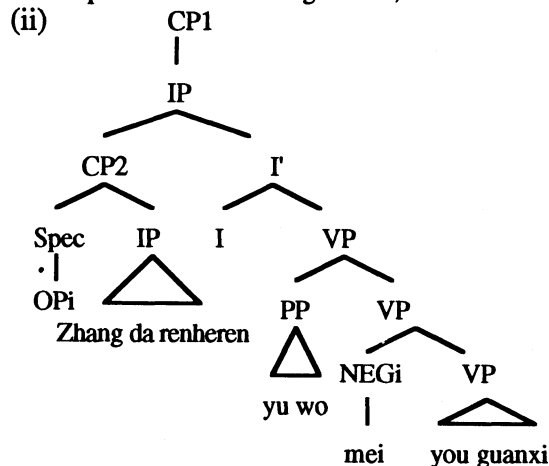
The following grammatical contrast demonstrates that the c-command relation must be respected in complex sentences, too:

(29) Ta bu yinwei Zhang ma le renheren er shengqi.
he NEG because Zhang scold ASP anyone and angry
'He will not get angry because Zhang scolds anyone.'

¹³Surprisingly, licensing *renhe* in a sentential subject is acceptable but violates the c-command requirement, which we has proposed:

- (i) Zhang da renheren yu wo mei you guanxi.
Zhang beat anyone with me NEG have relation
'That Zhang beats anyone has nothing to do with me.'

C. -Y. Doris Chen (p. c.) suggests me to buy the proposal (Rissi, 1990; Progovac, 1992) that there is a covert operator in the Spec of CP2 in the logic form, which is coindexed with the negative marker, as shown in (ii):



Since the OP c-commands *renheren*, this c-command account still works. However, more evidences are required to verify this proposal. Because space does not permit me to address this issue in full, it deserves further study.

- (30) *Ta bu lai yinwei renheren hui piping ta.
 he NEG come because anyone will criticize him
 *'He will not come because anyone will criticize him.'

Renhe in the former sentence is in the c-command scope of negation, but that in the latter is not, on a par with the contrast of acceptability between (18) and (19), which we have discussed in the previous section.

In addition to the c-command structural requirement, *renhe* obeys the Specificity constraint (see Li, 1992). *Renhe* in a specific NP is illegitimate. For instance, in (31):

- (31) *Ta bu xihuan na/zhe-ben renheren de shu?
 he NEG like that/this-CL anyone DE book
 *'He does not like that/this book of any person?'

the NP *reheren de shu* 'anyone's book' with a feature [+indefinite] is marked [+definite] due to the presence of a definite (or deictic) determiner in the Spec position, the entire NP is assigned the two referentially incompatible features. The Specificity effect exhibited in this sentence confirms the proposal that *renhe* should be treated as an indefinite NP. According to Heim (see Pesetsky, 1984), indefinite NPs are not equipped with any quantificational force by themselves, and essentially serve as variables in the logical form. In our study of *renhe* we find that the quantificational force of the indefinite NP is determined by an expression that c-commands it in a larger domain, such as negations¹⁴.

4. *Renhe* in Nonnegative Contexts

Apart from being licensed by negation, the NPI *renhe* is also licit in certain nonnegative contexts, evidenced as follows¹⁵:

¹⁴In addition to negations, yes/no questions and conditionals can license NPIs, and still the c-command requirement must be met (for discussions, see Li, 1992; Wang, 1993).

¹⁵The judgements of grammaticality in simplex sentences with adversative predicates tend to be uncertain:

- (i) ??Ta taoyan renheren.
 he dislike anyone
 *'He dislikes anyone.'
 (ii) ??Ta bishi renheren.
 he despise anyone
 *'He despises anyone.'
 (iii) ??Ta zenghen renheren.
 he hate anyone

- (32) Huowu zai yunsong zhong qing jinliang fangzhi renhe sunshi (fasheng)
 goods in carrying during please as possible prevent any loss happen
 'Please try to prevent any loss (to happen) while the goods are one the way.'
- (33) Ta zuzhi wo chi renhedongxi.
 he stop me eat anything
 'He stops me eating anything.'
- (34) Ta de fuqin jinzhi ta qu renhedifang.
 he DE father forbid him go anywhere
 'His father forbids him going to anywhere.'
- (35) Ta jujue bang ni zuo renheshi.
 he refuse for you do anything
 'He refused to do anything for me.'
- (36) Wo fandui ta zuo renheshiqing.
 I disapprove him do anything
 'I disapprove his doing anything.'

At the first sight, the validity of the c-command requirement, seemingly, is challenged by the fact that (32)-(36), which do not involve any overt negative licenser, are grammatical by intuition. Note that the predicates in these sentences have one thing in common: none of them has its truth value fixed positively (Progovac, 1992)¹⁶. As we know, negation is used to indicate the absence, opposite or negative of something. For instance,

(37a) John sees her.

(37b) John does not see her.

the negation element *not* changes the phrase *sees her* in (37a) to one with the opposite meaning *does not see her* in (37b). Similarly, the truth of the propositions in (32-36) is not asserted, it is not surprising that adversative predicates allow *renhe* to appear as well. Nevertheless, the c-command requirement still must hold in the covertly negative contexts, e.g.:

*'He hates anyone.'

Progovac (1992) claims that licensing of NPIs in these covertly negative contexts is a property of clauses, rather than phrases. The phenomenon observed here cannot be accounted for by Ladusaw's downward-entailing (DE) approach (1980). According to his argument, the adversative predicates in (i)-(iii) will be NPI licensers (as in (32)-(36)), since they are DE operators. However, established as DE operators, the adversative predicates in (i)-(iii) do not license the NPI in their object position, even though this position is in the scope of these verbs. The Chinese data presented here appear to support Progovac's claim.

¹⁶Assume that covertly negative elements are those that do not involve a separate negative morpheme or a word, for example, *jinzhi* 'forbid' (as opposed to *bu yunxu* 'not permit') *fandui* 'disapprove' (as opposed to *bu zancheng* 'not approve').

(38) *Wo quan renheren zuzhi ta zuo huai shi.
I persuade anyone stop him do bad thing
'I persuade anyone to stop him to do wrong.'

(39) *Wo yaoqiu renheren jinzhi ta qu Meigou.
I ask anyone forbid him go U.S.
'I ask anyone to forbid his going to U.S..'

Summarizing, the NPI happens in a negative context or context where negation is implied, and its licensor, overt or nonovert, must c-command it.

5. Concluding Remarks

The aim of this discussion has been provided an analysis of Chinese NPI *renhe*, and in particular to explore its distribution in contexts with negative values. Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, in light of syntactic structure, the NPI requires a c-command licensor at S-Structure. Second, semantically the set of elements which license it are defined in terms of the effect on the truth value of a proposition. Third, the relation between the NPI and its licensor is a binder-bindee relation. Such relation displays the c-command requirement and the Specificity effect. Finally, more research is needed specifically in the licensing of *renhe* in other contexts (see Section 1) in order to unveil the true relation of licensor-licensee and to achieve a complete understanding of NPI *renhe*.

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