

DISTAL DEMONSTRATIVE DETERMINER *na* 'THAT' AS A FIRST-MENTION
DEFINITE MARKER IN CHINESE DISCOURSE

Yili Shi

Southwest Missouri State University

1. INTRODUCTION. Chinese does not have definite or indefinite articles. Demonstrative determiners are optionally used to signal definiteness of a noun phrase. Li and Thompson (1979, 1981) claim that the demonstrative determiner *na* is beginning to function like the English definite article *the*. However, their claim is based on inadequate empirical evidence, ignoring one of the functions of *na* as a first-mention definite marker in discourse. In Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski's (1989, 1993) studies, *na*¹ is included very briefly as an initial test for the universality of their proposed Givenness Hierarchy. They claim that 'uniquely identifiable' cognitive status is a necessary and sufficient condition for the appropriate use of *na*. However, due to a very small sample of data, Gundel et al. did not find any occurrence of *na* under 'uniquely identifiable' status. To account for this uncertainty, I have collected a larger database representing seven discourse genres including spontaneous conversation, news broadcast, formal speech, letters, fiction, journal articles and academic writing. The study shows that *na* as a first-mention definite marker (or 'uniquely identifiable' *na*) occurs mostly in natural conversation and fiction (see Table 1).

TEXT TYPE	NUMBER OF WORDS EXAMINED	NUMBER OF <i>na</i> NPs	NUMBER OF 'UNIQUELY IDENTIFIABLE' <i>na</i> NPs
CONVERSATION	10,000	143	47
NEWSCAST	8,000	0	0
FORMAL SPEECH	6,000	0	0
LETTER	10,000	8	4
FICTION	10,000	49	22
MAGAZINE (PEOPLE)	8,000	16	2
MAGAZINE (THINGS)	8,000	5	8
ACADEMIC WRITING	8,000	1	0
TOTAL	68,000	222	83

Table 1. Distribution of 'uniquely identifiable' *na* NPs in texts.

In this paper, I show *na* as a first-mention definite marker is used with general reference, with definite and specific reference, in topic-subject construction, and finally I show effects of inclusion vs. omission of *na* in first-mention definite NPs, thus arguing that the use of *na* is to increase NPs referential salience in discourse.

2. *na* WITH GENERAL REFERENCE. Hawkins (1978, 1991) has studied definiteness and first mention *the* NPs in English. He argues that 'the parameters of uniqueness may also be defined on the basis of a more general kind of knowledge of associative relationships between entities....' (1991:408). By 'associative relationships between entities', Hawkins means that the unique

¹ The same Chinese distal demonstrative is pronounced as *na* 'that' in isolation and as *nei* 'that' when it is used with other NPs. In this paper, I use *na* and *nei* alternatively according to their context.

referent of a first-mention definite NP exists and is located within a relevant set. Thus, the mention of, e.g., *a class* triggers a whole set of associations for the addressee and makes it perfectly legitimate to use a first-mention *the* NP, e.g., *the professor, the textbook, the final exam*, to refer to items in the 'association set'. Hawkins (1991:409) states that:

The membership of an entity within such an 'association set' is determined by general community knowledge involving predictable, or functionally acceptable, co-occurrences of entities, and uniqueness is definable relative to each set.

All these sets are referred to as P-sets. Since the definite reading of a *the* NP depends on its association with known entity in the previous discourse, Hawkins calls this 'associative anaphoric uses'.

The Chinese distal demonstrative determiner *na* is found to fall into this category of 'associative anaphoric uses'. *Na* NPs are used to instruct the addressee that the referent can be identified in a relevant set. Consider the example in 1, taken from a conversation:

1. A: *Wo kandao xianzai yixie chuzuche, (a) neige houshijing (b) neige*
 I see now some taxi that-CL rear-mirror that-CL
 'I saw some cabs, on the (lit. 'that') neck of the (lit. 'that')
 rear-view mirror'

ganshang tamen youdeshihou diao shenme yige Maozhuxi xiang,
 pole-on they sometimes hang what one-CL Chairman Mao photo
 '(they) sometimes hang a Chairman Mao's photo.'

Mao Zedong xiaode huaxiang.
 Mao Zedong small-NOM portrait
 'a small portrait of Mao Zedong.'

- B: *Zhende? Guonei?*
 really? country-in
 'Really? In China? (Conversation SJL)

In example 1, NP (a) *neige houshijing* 'the rear-view mirror' is a first-mention definite referent. The definite interpretation is based on a relevant P-set containing a car and its rear-view mirror. NP (b) *neige ganshang* refers to an item in the same P-set. There is a part-whole relationship between the neck and the rear view mirror; the rear-view mirror has a small pipe attached to it and the pipe is a part of the rear-view mirror equipment. This association makes a definite and unique reading of the *nei* NP possible.

Consider the example in 2.

2. *yibainian qian renjia jiu jiepou jiugui me.*
 One-hundred-year ago people then do-autopsy alcoholic MAUX
 'One hundred years ago, people started to do postmortem examinations on
 alcoholics.'

nei dongmai guangliuliu de me.
 that artery smooth NOM MAUX
 'Their (lit. 'that') arteries are very smooth.' (Conversation ZS)

In this example, the mention of *jiugui* 'alcoholics' triggers a first-mention definite referent *nei dongmai* 'the arteries'. It is understood that the NP *the arteries* refers to alcoholics' arteries. Consider a similar example in 3, taken from another dialogue.

3. A: *Shanghai ren jiao youbaoxia, [youbaoxia, jiu daizhe pi.*
 Shanghai-people call fry-shrimp fry-shrimp should have-with skin
 'People in Shanghai call (this dish) fried shrimp. Fried shrimp. The
 shell should be left on.

B: [*Mn youbaoxia.*
 fry-shrimp
 'Right. Fried shrimp.'

Erqie daizhe tou du you, daizhe tou. neige xuxu
 also have-with head even have have-with head that-CL feeler
 'But (they) also leave the head on.. the head on. Their (lit. 'that')
 feelers'

henchang henchang de.
 very-long very-long AUX
 'are really very, very long.' (Conversation SJL)

The NP *youbaoxia* 'fried shrimp' in 3 is introduced into the discourse for the first time. After it is introduced, the first mention of the feelers may be made with the determiner *nei* because of a possessive relationship between a shrimp and its feelers, with feelers forming a body part of a shrimp. In 2 and 3, we note that the motivation for the use of *nei* for a first-mention definite referent is to introduce a salient referent. The salience of *neidongmai* 'the arteries' in 2 lies in the fact that this referent is what the speaker wants the addressees to focus their attention on because the smooth condition of these particular arteries supports his statement that 'alcohol can lower cholesterol'. In 3, the NP *neige xuxu* 'the feelers' stands out as a very interesting characteristic of a shrimp, which the speaker wants to convey to the addressee. In both cases, *nei* is used to make a particular referent salient.

Thus far I have discussed the use of *na* as referring to a first-mention definite entity based on Hawkins's (1978, 1991) P-set. The examples I have given, however, are not strictly the type Hawkins discusses in his articles. Hawkins uses P-sets to account for nouns with unique reference only. For example, 'I went to my friend's wedding yesterday. The cake was beautiful.' In this example, the NP *the cake* is a first-mention unique referent. In contrast, the *na* NPs I have discussed have generic reference. We find similar examples in English as well, as in 4.

4. *Without an aggressive program to monitor natural and historical assets, it's hard to detect problems early enough. By the time conditions reach*

true crisis—dry rot in ancient timbers, the invasion of fragile ecosystems by exotic plants or critters—the remedy is often too expensive or comes too late. (U.S. News & World Report July 21, 1997, p.28)

In 4, the NP *the remedy* is a first-mention definite referent. Words like *problems* and *by the time conditions reach true crisis* trigger an associative relationship, thus suggesting an associative set like *problem* and *solution*, and *crisis* and *remedy*. The reader is expected to identify a first-mention entity *remedy* as specifically referring to the remedy for the critical conditions of *dry rot in ancient timbers*, and *the invasion of fragile ecosystems by exotic plants or critters*. The definite NP *the remedy* is also a generic reference, referring to solutions in general and thus no specific or individual remedy is identified. Consider another example in 5:

5. ...*Once a doctor is convicted of a crime, the courts should notify that state's medical-licensing board, which can follow up with its own investigation and punishment. The results are sent to a national database...* (Reader's Digest 10/1996:112)

The NP *The results* in 5 is a first-mention definite referent, which is possible through an association between investigations and results. The addressee may be expected to identify the referent in this relevant set. Again, the reference is to results in general. Thus it is different from an identified individual referent as in, for example, '*The state's medical-licensing board has investigated the issue and the result is shocking.*' In this example, *the result* refers to a definite, individuated and specific result.

I have shown that *na* NPs are used to introduce first-mention generic referents in discourse. I have also discussed the relevance of Hawkins's P-set to the study of generic reference encoded by *na* and *the*, showing that Hawkins's P-sets are applicable to generic nouns as well and can be used to explain how a relatively less general referent can be identified in an associative context.

3. *NA WITH DEFINITE AND SPECIFIC REFERENCE.* *Na* is also used to encode a definite and specific referent based on P-sets. Consider the example in 6. The situational context is that the main character was thinking about the days during the Cultural Revolution between the mid 1960's to mid 1970's when it was financially very tight for the family.

6. *Shiya, neishi meifeng ma fagongzi, zonghui wangji qu Wanxing*
right that-time whenever Mom get-paid never forget go Wanxing
'(That's) right. At that time, whenever Mom got paid, (she) would never forget to go to Wanxing'

Shipin Gongsi, mai yiliang kafei. Jiujiaoliufeng yiliang kafei. shi
Food Market buy one-CL coffee ninety-six-cents one-CL coffee is
'Food Market to buy one liang (=50 grams) of coffee. The coffee, ninety-six cents a liang,'

dangchang cong kafeidouzhong mochulai de, neigu nongxiang,
 on-the-spot from coffee-bean-among grind NOM that-CL strong-scent
 'was ground from coffee beans right on the spot. The (lit. 'that') aroma'

ma hai zai menkou taoyaoshi, tamen zai wuli yi
 mom still at door-way search-for-key they in room-inside already
 'was so strong that they could smell it inside the room while Mom was
 still outside the door, fumbling for her keys.'

wendao le.

smell CRS

(Xiaoshuo Yuebao, Vol. 12, 1994, p.64)

In 6, the NP *neigu nongxiang* 'the strong aroma' encoded by *nei* is a first-mention definite entity. The definite interpretation is made possible because of an associative relationship between *kafei* 'coffee' and *nongxiang* 'the aroma'. Furthermore, *nei* is used to emphasize the salience of the referent, as is supported by its syntactic position as a subject/topic through topicalization. Originally, the NP *neigu nongxiang* 'the strong aroma' is a direct object of the verb *smell*, normally placed after a verb. However, the writer deliberately puts it in a topic position to bring it into focus.

Consider the next example in 7, taken from the same short story in which the main character's life has undergone a change. Ten years earlier, she was eager to leave her homeland, Shanghai, for Hong Kong. Ten years later, her feelings changed.

7. *Rujin, laiGang shinian le, xinxiangan yiguo,*
 now come-to-Hong-Kong ten-year PFV feeling-of-newness once-passed
 'Now (she) has been in Hong Kong for ten years. With the freshness
 gone,'

dui ta laishuo, shenghuo wufei ye jiushi yiri sancan...,
 to her speaking life no-more-than only just every-day three-meals
 'life to her is no more than three meals a day.'

nei manmu de gaoloudasha yu ta you shime
 that everywhere-eye NOM tall-building-big-building to her have what
 'Why would she be interested in the tall buildings around her?'

xianggan ne?

relevance MAUX

(Xiaoshuo Yuebao, Vol. 12, 1994, p.74)

In 7, the mention of the city, Hong Kong, triggers a whole set of associations, including the tall buildings in the city. Thus *nei manmu de gaoloudasha* 'the tall buildings everywhere' constitutes a first mention definite referent that the reader can identify in a relevant set.

Hawkins (1978, 1991) uses ‘inclusiveness’ to describe all definite NPs, claiming that ‘a definite NP involves reference to the totality of entities or mass that satisfy the description of the NP within a given P-set’ (1991:409). With regard to uniqueness, he further claims that:

More formally, we can unify singular and plural NPs under an extended uniqueness generalization by saying, following Klein (1980:151-152) and Kadmon (1990), that there is some unique maximal set of entities within a P-set to which expressions such as *the bridesmaids* refer. (1991:410)

In other words, uniqueness not only refers to a singular definite NP, but can be extended to refer to plural entities that the definite descriptions fit. When uniqueness applies to mass nouns, it refers to ‘a unique maximal amount of mass within a P-set to which mass nouns with the definite article refer’ (410). For example, *neigu nongxiang* ‘the strong aroma’ in 9 includes all of the aroma coming from the coffee at that particular moment.

To return to the discussion of example 7, the definite NP *nei manmu de gaoloudasha* ‘the tall buildings everywhere’ supports Hawkins’s claim, referring uniquely to all the buildings in Hong Kong.²

Consider the example in 8. The situational context is that the speaker is telling his wife about what happened in a meter parking lot in Chicago.

8. *Zai nar dai le yi ge xiaoshi me. Dai le yi ge xiaoshi chulai*
 at there stay PFV one CL hour MAUX stay PFV one CL hour come-out
 ‘(We) stayed there for an hour. After (we) stayed there for an hour (we)’

yihou ne, ganghao dao, ganghao dao, women gang chuqu nei ge
 after MAUX just in-time just in-time we just go-out that CL
 ‘got out. (The time) was up. (The time) was up. The minute we got
 outside, the (lit. ‘that’)’

fadan de ren lai le.
 impose-a-fine NOM person come CRS
 meter man came. (Conversation PC)

The NP *nei ge fadan de ren* ‘the meter man’ in 8 is a first-mention definite and specific referent, referring to a single unique individual person. The definite interpretation is possible based on a general kind of knowledge of a relevant set, i.e., the meter parking lot has a meter man who imposes a fine on those who park overtime. Thus the mention of a parking lot in the previous discourse makes it perfectly possible to refer to *neige fadan de ren* ‘the meter man’ as a definite entity.

Consider the following example in English in 9, taken from an article about Halloween in Reader’s Digest. Note the similarity of the associative use of *na* in Chinese and *the* in English.

² *Nei* is used to refer to a plural definite entity in this example. In Chinese the determiner *zhe* and *nei* can refer to both singular and plural nouns while *zhexie* ‘these’ and *naxie* ‘those’ only refer to plural nouns.

9. *We'd been down the "scary" route the previous year, one of those rare times when Mom had bought us costumes. Mine was a devil's outfit made of cheesecloth. The tail was too long, and I stepped on it as I ran to look in the mirror. The tail had torn partially away, showing my underwear. The material was too flimsy for Mom to sew shut, so she closed it with tape.* (Reader's Digest, Vol. 10, 1996, p.38)

In 9, the mention of a *devil's outfit* has made two first-mention definite entities possible based on an associative relationship. Thus *the tail* is one part of the outfit and *the material* is what the outfit is made of.

I have shown in the above discussion that *na* as an associative anaphor functions to indicate a first-mention definite and specific noun. The determiner *nei* is used with all NPs in associative contexts, encoding a unique entity as in *neige fadan de ren* 'the meter man', a unique maximal set of entities as in *nei manmu de gaoloudasha* 'the tall buildings everywhere', and a unique mass entity as in *neigu nongxiang* 'the strong aroma'. I have also shown that besides *nei*'s function as an associative anaphor, it also functions to make the referent salient. Referential salience is demonstrated through the important roles the referent plays in the discourse, which make it 'figure' in Hopper and Thompson's (1985) terms. One of their roles is to be a discourse topic and to continue to be a discourse topic.

4. *NA* IN THE TOPIC-SUBJECT CONSTRUCTION. The demonstrative determiner *na* is found in the topic-subject construction. I label this topic-subject construction (see Li and Thompson 1981: 92-94 for what they called a double-subject construction), in which one sentence contains both a topic and a subject, as in 10:

10. *Zheke shu yezi hen da.*
 this-CL tree leaf very big
 'This tree, (its) leaves are very big.'

The NP *zheke shu* 'this tree' is the topic and *yezi* 'leaves' is the subject. When a semantic relationship between the topic and the subject is analyzed in 10, we note that there is an associative relationship between them established by Hawkins's P-set. The topic triggers off an associative set and the subject is one of its associates. The demonstrative determiner *na* is often found in the subject NP and with the topic NP, functioning to establish an associative relationship and making it possible for *na* to be coded as a first-mention definite referent.

In some instances, a pronoun is used as a topic NP, as in 11, taken from a dialogue. The speaker was driving on Road 28 and a big truck was following him closely, so he was thinking about stopping his car at the side of the road to let the big truck pass.

11. *Danshi wo you pa ta.. ta neige dache neime chang yige*
 but I also afraid it it that-CL big-truck that long one-CL
 'But I was afraid that it, that big truck, had such a long'

cheshen, ta gei ni wang pangbian kao, ta wanyi neiweiiba ba
 truck-body it give you toward side approach it in-case that-tail BA
 ‘body. What would we do if it passed us too closely and in case the
 (lit. ‘its that’) tail hit us?’

women ceng yixia zenmeban?
 us strike once what-can-we-do (Conversation PC)

The topic NP *ta* ‘it’ referring to the truck and the subject NP *nei weiiba* ‘the tail’ occur together in a topic-subject construction. The NP *ta* ‘it’ refers to a previously mentioned truck. The definite reading of *nei weiiba* ‘the tail’ is based on its relationship with the truck. Note that I have translated the topic NP and the subject NP *ta nei weiiba* as *its tail* in 11. The topic NP and the subject NP in this topic-subject construction share a possessive relationship or a part-whole relationship. It is understood based on general knowledge that a truck has a ‘tail’, meaning the back part, and this association makes the first-mention definite referent *nei weiiba* ‘the tail’ possible.

Consider the next example in 12, taken from a dialogue. The participants were talking about pollution in rivers and lakes.

12. [Speaker B has said a lot of good things about the Dongting Lake area where she was from. The next topic is about whether the river is polluted.]

A: *Na wuran ne? shibushi wuran?*
 that pollution MAUX is-not-is polluted
 ‘Then how about pollution? Is (it) polluted or not?’
 [They were comparing the Dongting Lake in Changsha with the Huangpu River in Shanghai.]

B: *Mei quguo Shanghai wo. yinggai keneng hao yidian.*
 not go-EXP Shanghai I should may good a-little
 ‘I haven’t been to Shanghai, myself. (The Dongting Lake) should and may be a little better.’

yingwei (a) *Dongtinghu de liang an zhuyao shi*
 because Dongting-lake ASSOC two bank mainly is
 ‘Because there are mainly paper-making factories on the banks of the Dongting Lake.’

zhaozhichang,
 make-paper-factory

(b) *ta neige luwei ba, you neime yizhong jinghua zuoyong*
 it that-CL reed MAUX has that one-kind purifying function
 ‘The (lit. ‘its that’) reeds have a purifying function.’ (Conversation SJL)

In 12 (b), the first NP *ta* 'it' is the topic, referring to the previously mentioned NP *Dongtinghu de liang an* 'the banks of the Dongting Lake'. The second NP *neige luwei* 'the reed' is the subject, a first-mention definite and specific NP. An appropriate P-set exists; that is, along the banks of the lake reeds grow.

As we see, the semantic relationship between the topic NP and the subject NP in the above examples is that of possession. The topic in the topic-subject construction is interpreted as a possessor and the subject as the possessed. In some sentences, the possessor is encoded by a possessive pronoun and the definite interpretation of the possessed NP is based on the appropriate P-set inferable from the information provided by the possessor. Consider the example in 13.

13. *Wo shuo wode xinyongka you yao fu le, zhemeiban? Xinyouka*
 I say my credit-card again need pay CRS what-can-I-do credit-card
 'I said to myself that my credit card needed to be paid again. So what can I do?'

shangmian neige.. tade neige lixi ba, you bai fen zhi shiba...
 on-it that-CL its that-CL interest MAUX has percent eighteen
 'The credit card, the (lit. 'that')... its (lit. 'its that') interest is as high as eighteen percent.' (Conversation SJL)

In 13, *tade neige lixi* 'its interest' refers to the interest on the credit card debt. The referent of *tade* 'its' is activated in the previous discourse so that a possessive pronoun *tade* 'its' is possible. The referent of *neige lixi* 'the interest' is a first-mention definite and specific entity. The definite interpretation of the referent *neige lixi* 'the interest' is based on the knowledge that a credit card bill calculates interest if the total amount is not paid on the due date. Note also that my translation of *tade neige lixi* into English is *not its that interest*, but *its interest* because English does not have a structure in which a possessive pronoun and a demonstrative determiner co-occur in a noun phrase.

5. INCLUSION VS. OMISSION OF *na* IN FIRST-MENTION DEFINITE NPS. As mentioned earlier, the use of *na* is not obligatory. Many uniquely identifiable NPs are encoded by bare NPs with explanatory modifiers. By comparing *na* with bare NPs, we find that an overall function of the uniquely identifiable *na* is to make an entity referentially salient, thus drawing the addressee's attention to the important referent. Consider 14.

14. *Shuimianshang bujian hangchuan. dayude renmen cishi*
 water-surface-on not-see boat go-fishing people right-now
 'There were no boats on the water. People who were going fishing had now already'

ye zao du yinrudao luweicong houmian nei geng kuankuode
 also already all enter-up-to reed-clump behind that even wide-NOM
 'all gone into the (lit. that) even wider waters behind a clump of reeds.'

shuiyu zhong qu le.
waters among go CRS (Xing 1991:74)

In 14, the lake is mentioned in the previous discourse. As part of the big lake, the underlined NP is interpreted as a first-mention definite entity. The NP *luweicong houmian nei geng kuankuode shuiyu* 'the even wider waters behind a clump of reeds' gives directions to the location of *nei shuiyu* 'the waters' through literary description, directing the addressee's attention to the referent as if by pointing at it. By using *nei*, the writer points to a particular entity within that descriptive physical scene. Without *nei*, as in 15, no particular individual attention is given to the referent; no gesture of pointing serves to particularize the referent of the noun. The bare NP with modifiers functions to present a background picture of referents without zooming in on an individual entity and providing a close-up view. The following excerpt describes what was seen on the lake at sunset.

15. (a) *Tianshang, shuizhong de guangcai zai yindun,*
on-the-sky in-the-water NOM brightness gradually going-away
'The brightness in the sky and in the water was going away and'

zai xiaoshi. (b) *Luweichongzhong zuanchu yizhizhi*
gradually disappear reed-clump-among break-through one-CL-CL
'disappearing. From the inside of the clump of reeds one boat and another broke through.'

chuaner. jianjiande, (c) *jizhichuande lunkuo qingxikejian*
boat gradually several-CL-boat-NOM frame distinctly-can-see
'Gradually, the outlines of several boats could be seen and'

le... (d) *ren ye ke jian le.*
CRS people also can see CRS
'the people could be seen, too.' (Xing 1991:75)

In 15, NP (a) *tianshang, shuizhong de guangcai* 'the brightness in the sky and in the water' is a first-mention definite entity, inferable from the previous mention of the sun. However, the writer has no intention of making it referentially important and therefore a bare NP is used to present a neutral picture of what is there. NP (b) *luweichongzhong* 'from the inside of the clump of reeds' is also a first-mention definite entity. The definite interpretation is based on the descriptive content of the nominal itself. It is an objective description of what is there. NP (c) *jizhichuandelunkuo* 'the outlines of several boats' is a first-mention definite entity, inferable from the fact that boats have shapes which can be seen at a distance. It is a piece of objective information as well. NP (d) *ren* 'people' is a first-mention definite entity which is inferable from the fact that there must be people inside the boats. The motivation of the whole excerpt is to provide background information about what was seen on the lake at sunset, with no intention to point to any individual entity for special attention. Uniquely identifiable bare NPs thus function to describe scenery in fiction, as in 15. Consider another example in 16.

16.*dixia jiushi canlanguli de denghai.*
 below is bright-beautiful NOM light-sea
 ‘... There was a bright and beautiful sea of lights below.’

tebie nei you chuanliu buxi de qiche weideng
 especially that with flow non-stop NOM automobile rear-light
 ‘Especially, the (lit. ‘that’) flowing river of lights that was formed by
 the never-ending flowing of automobiles’ tail lights’

liancheng de liudong de denghe, shi jiushi zhe zuo
 link-finish NOM on-the-move NOM light-river appear is this CL
 ‘appeared to be this’

chengshi de maibo.
 city NOM pulse
 ‘city’s pulse.’ (Xiaoshuo Yuebao, Vol. 12, 1994, p.61)

In 16, *nei you chuanliu buxi de qiche weideng liancheng de liudong de denghe* ‘the flowing river of lights that was formed by the never-ending flowing of automobiles’ tail lights’ is a first-mention definite entity, inferrable from the previous mention of the beautiful sea of lights. Seen from an airplane, the flowing river of lights formed by the automobiles’ tail lights is supposed to be eye-catching and *nei* is used to give this individual characteristic special attention. With *nei*, the writer creates a picture of the physical setting and then directs the addressee’s attention to an aspect of this scenery by directly pointing at it. Let’s compare 16 with the example in 17, taken from a novel. This is from the very beginning of a novel called *Snow*. The excerpt mainly describes the weather in a northern city.

17. *Chunjie yijing guoqu xuduo tian le, beifang zhezuo*
 Spring-Festival already pass many day PFV north this-CL
 ‘Spring Festival was many days past. This northern,’

huimengmeng de gucheng que haimeiyou yidian chun gui dadi
 dusky NOM old-city but yet-not-have a-little spring return earth
 ‘dusky old city did not show any sign of spring returning to the earth.’

de jixiang.
 NOM sign

(a) *Ganzao, jianli de lengfeng zai yitiaotiao dajixiaoxiang*
 dry severe NOM cold-wind DUR one-CL-CL big-street-small-lane
 ‘The dry and severely cold wind whistled and blew along the streets.’

zhong huxiaochongdang, (b) lubian de baiyangshu,
 among whistle-blow road-side NOM white-poplar-tree
 ‘The dry branches of the white poplar trees and’

yanghuaishu _____ *de* *kuzhi* *zai* *fengzhong* *sesede* *douchan*.
 Chinese-scholar-tree NOM dry-branch DUR wind-in (sound) shiver
 'the Chinese scholar trees along the roadside were shivering in the wind
 with an 's' sound.' (Xing 1991:3)

As the beginning paragraphs of a novel usually provide information about the setting, NPs (a) and (b) in 17 serve this purpose. NP (a) talks about the cold wind and NP (b) is about the dry branches of the trees that are affected by the cold weather. At this point no mention is made of any particular entity; thus bare NPs serve to provide the addressee with background information.

6. CONCLUSION. The study shows *na* NPs mostly occur in fiction and conversation. Based on data from these two genres, I have provided empirical evidence in support of Gundel et al.'s claim that the distal demonstrative determiner *na* in Chinese only requires the referent to be uniquely identifiable, and thus it can be used as a first-mention definite marker in discourse. I have shown similarities between the use of uniquely identifiable *na* in Chinese and uniquely identifiable *the* in English. Both of these NP types require that the referent be uniquely identifiable, a condition that appears to be necessary for encoding a definite entity. Moreover, I have argued that unlike a first-mention *the* NP in English, the use of *na* in Chinese is not obligatory, as bare NPs can be used as first-mention definite entities as well. An overall motivation for including *na* is to increase NPs' referential salience in discourse.

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