Interclausal Anaphora in Chinese: The Case of Conditional and Causal Sentences

Shunting Chen[1] Chenjie Yuan[2] Yiming Liang[3]

Abstract

A compound sentence in Mandarin, as first observed by (Chao, 1968), can have different syntactic forms and semantic interpretations depending on (i) whether the subject of the first clause is fronted and (ii) whether the subject of the second clause is omitted. Compare the following examples:

(1) Wo ruguo zhidao, ∅ jiu hui gaosu ni.
    I if know then will tell you

(2) Ruguo wo zhidao, ∅ jiu hui gaosu ni.
    If I know then will tell you

(3) Wo ruguo zhidao, ta jiu hui gaosu ni.
    I if know he then will tell you

(4) Ruguo wo zhidao, ta jiu hui gaosu ni.
    If I know he then will tell you

Recent studies suggest that both (i) and (ii) are closely related to the (non-)coreferential relationship between the subjects in both clauses (Hypothesis 1), and are also highly sensitive to the type of conjunction(s) connecting both atomic clauses (Hypothesis 2), but neither has been empirically tested. The current experimental research tested the two hypotheses in Chinese conditional and causal sentences (3 patterns: Ruguo...Jiu... '*if...then...*', Yinwei...Suoyi... '*because...so...*', Jiran...Name... '*since...then...*') through a series of judgment tasks, differing with respect to (a) the relationship between the two subjects (2 levels: COREFERENTIAL or CONTRASTIVE), (b) subject fronting in the first clause (2 levels: FRONTED or NOT), (c) subject omission in the second clause (2 levels: OMITTED or NOT). The results provided support for Hypothesis 1, showing that a coreferential reading of the sentence favored both the subject fronting in the first clause and the subject omission in the second, whereas a contrastive reading suppressed both types of syntactic operation. Nevertheless, *pace* Hypothesis 2, no significant difference was found between these three sentence patterns.

Keywords: Chinese conditional and causal constructions, anaphora, coreferentiality, experimental data

---

[1]Shanghai International Studies University, China/LLF, France, shuntingchen@shisu.edu.cn

[2]Predoctoral researcher, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain, chenjie.yuan@upf.edu

[3]Master student, Université Paris Diderot, France, yiming.liang@etu.univ-paris-diderot.fr

References

Ariel, M. (1990). *Accessing noun-phrase antecedents*. London: Routledge.

Chao, Y. R. (1968). *A grammar of spoken chinese*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press.

Chen, Y. (2016). *The influence of information structure on pronoun resolution. M.A.thesis.* Shanghai International Studies University.

Huang, C.-T. J. (1982). *Logical relations in chinese and the theory of grammar. phd dissertation.* MIT.

Huang, C.-T. J. (1998). *Logical relations in chinese and the theory of grammar.* New York: Garland.

Huang, Y. (1991). A neo-gricean pragmatic theory of anaphora. *Journal of linguistics*, *27*(2), 301–335.

Tsao, F.-f., & Cao, F. (1990). *Sentence and clause structure in chinese: A functional perspective.* Student Book Co., Ltd.

Wang, C. (2010). The marker of chinese conditional sentences and its order. *Linguistic Sciences*, *9*(3), 265-278.

Xu, C. L., X.D., & Ni, C. (2013). The influence of topic structure and verb-based implicit causality on pronoun resolution in mandarin chinese: Evidence from sentence production and comprehension. *Modern Foreign Languages*(4), 331-339.

Xu, C. L., X.D., & Ni, C. (2017). How is pronoun resolution modulated by topic structures and verb-based implicit causality in mandarin chinese? an ERP investigation. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*(5), 323-334.

Xu, Y. (1995). *Resolving third-person anaphora in chinese texts: Towards a functional-pragmatic model* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Zhu, D. (1982). *Lecture notes on grammar.* Beijing: The Commercial Press.