

## On the Complex Sentences in Chinese: What is clause-linking?

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### Abstract

Complex sentences are typically defined as sentences formed by linking of smaller clauses. The mechanism of clause linking is clearly influenced by the typological characteristics of the language. In this regard, it is a question whether clause linking that forms complex sentences in Chinese is semantic or formal in nature. Wang (1944) suggests that Chinese complex sentences are formed via parataxis, rather than hypotaxis, which is typical of the complex sentence formation in European languages. However, We propose that Chinese, as an isolating language, in fact requires formal linking to form complex sentences, i.e. the linking is not semantic. Specifically, complex sentences in Chinese are formed by the following four means: (1) In the absence of an overt linking element between the two clauses, C1 and C2 are just separated by a small clause-pause, rather than a longer sentence-pause (Wang 1944, Chao 1968). This also accounts for the fact that clause succession in Chinese appears to be more contracted than that in European languages. In such cases, the semantic bond between C1 and C2 is determined by the context; (2) Chinese has some enclitics that mark the antecedent clauses, e.g. *-dehua*, *-deshihou*, *-ne*, *-ma*, and so on. They mark C1 and as a result force the appearance of C2, though they do not denote the logical relation between the two clauses; (3) Chinese also has a set of adverbs that occur in the initial position or between the subject and the predicate of C1, such as *ruguo* ‘if’, *budan* ‘not only’, *chufei* ‘unless’, *jishi* ‘even if’, *jiran* ‘since’, *yinwei* ‘because’, *suiran* ‘although’, *wulun* ‘no matter whether’, etc. They represent the semantic bonds between the two clauses, and also force the appearance of C2; (4) In addition, Chinese has a set of elements that occur between C1 and C2, e.g. *danshi* ‘but’, *suoyi* ‘so’, and *binqie* ‘moreover’. They only denote the logical relation between C1 and C2, but do not formally link the two clauses. Thus the appearance of such an element doesn’t entail complex sentence formation. They have to occur with other formal linking elements to form complex sentences.