

Syntactic Evidence for Tense Heads in Mandarin Chinese (Beijing Dialect)
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Cinque (1999) uses cross-linguistic adverb ordering facts to suggest a universal functional hierarchy. Along the same line of argument, the present paper argues for the existence of a T node in **Mandarin** Chinese (Beijing Dialect, henceforth BJD).

Huang H. (1990) classifies 151 Chinese adverbs and finds out when these adverbs occurs in preverbal positions, they generally obey a sequence (modified in Yuan 2004) that matches Cinque's first approximation of a universal hierarchy (Italian and English internal ones, as in Cinque 1999: 34). However, leaving the problem of negation (Ernst 1995) aside, there still isn't any satisfactory account of Tense heads.

Cinque (1999: 87) doesn't use temporal adverbs *ieri* 'yesterday' etc to test the T(Past) and T(Future) position, for they 'cannot appear within the IP functional "space"' in Italy. In BJD, temporal words/adverbs don't have to be purely deictic to occur in the IP span (also see Tang 2001 on her Chinese). Words denoting tempo-point (Zhu, 1982; henceforth TpNP): *Zuo-tian*, 'yester-day'; *jin-tian*, 'to-day', *ming-tian*, 'tomorrow', *san-dian*, 'three o'clock', *ji-tian-qian* 'several days ago' etc **don't have to occur in sentence initial or sentence final position** (1).

(1) a. *shuoshihua, benlai Nana zuotian jiu yijing xie-wan-le nei pian-r zuowen, keshi...*

Frankly, originally Nana yesterday just already write-finish-_{PERF} that CL paper, but ...

'To tell the truth, in fact Nana had already finished writing the paper yesterday, but...'

b. *shuoshihua, benlai Nana ming-tian jiu yao xie-wan nei pian-r zuowen le, keshi...*

Frankly, originally Nana tomorrow just will write-finish that CL paper LE, but ...

'To tell the truth, in fact Nana was planning to finish writing the paper tomorrow, but...'

In fact, when they occur in sentence final position (2), the fronted AspP gets a focus reading; and a pause, indicated by the comma, is a must.

(2) ?*shuoshihua, benlai Nana (zao jiu) yijing xie-wan-le nei pian-r zuowen, zuo-tian. (keshi...)*

... (early just) already ... -_{PERF} ... , yesterday. (but...)

'To tell the truth, in fact Nana had (already) finished writing the paper, I mean yesterday, but...'

This stranding of TpNP is not possible in sentences like (3)

(3) *Nana zuo yu ne zheng (*xianzai).*

Nana make fish _{PARTICLE} -ing now

'Nana is making fish.'

Correlating with the absence of a rich Tense affix, temporal point denoting words in BJD must have a much more rigid position than their Italian counterparts. TpNP in BJD can therefore be used as a test for the position of spec-TP.

Secondary predicate LocP (i.e. pre-verbal LocP) can precede or follow **yijing 'already' and jiu 'soon'**, but **TpNP must precede the T(Anterior) or Asp adverbs**. Check through Cinque's hierarchy, there isn't any head between T(Past) / T(Future) and T(Anterior) that is semantically suitable to host TpNP. Therefore, TpNP must be in spec-T(Past)/T(Future), this serves as the first argument for the existence of T in Mandarin Chinese BJD.

Secondly, the AspP fronting will not be licensed if there is a temporal adverb *cai* 'just'

(4). *Cai* 'just' must precede the main predicate, and the **TpNP must precede Temporal Adverbs (TAdv) cai**. This is again different from Locative PP. When being used as secondary predicate, LocP must precede the main verb, but can follow *cai* 'just' (4).

(4) a. *Nana cai zai xuexiao chi guo fan.* b. *Nana zai xuexiao cai chi guo fan.*

Nana just be school.at eat-_{PAST} food Nana be school.at just eat-_{PAST} food

'Nana has just had lunch at school.'

Thirdly, with the presence of *jiu* 'just', a TAdv *zao* 'early' is required (bold-faced in 2) in past tense; an optional *ma-shang* 'immediately' can occur in a similar position in future tense (5). A TpNP precedes them and/or the TAdv-s (Lu and Ma, 1999) that are sensitive to Utterance time. (5) *shuoshihua, benlai Nana (mashang) jiu yao xie-wan nei pian-r zuowen le, ming-tian, keshi...*

... , ... (soon) just will ... LE, tomorrow, but...
 ‘To tell the truth, in fact Nana will soon finish writing the paper, just by tomorrow; but...’
 Rigid position(s) of TpNPs and their preceding T(Anterior), Asp adverbs, or TAdv-s (*cai* (6, 7), *jiu* ‘just’, *zao* ‘early’/*mashang* ‘immediately’), constitute arguments for the existence of T in BJD.

(6) a. Xingkui Nana de feiji ming-tian/jin-tian cai neng dao Niuyue, buran...
 Luckily Nana’s flight tomorrow/today only can arrive New York, otherwise...
 ‘Luckily, Nana’s flight won’t arrive in New York until tomorrow/today, otherwise...’

b. * Xingkui Nana de feiji **cai** (ming-tian/jintian) neng dao Niuyue \$, buran...
 ... only (tomorrow/today) can arrive New York \$, otherwise...

c. Xingkui Nana de feiji (ming-tian/jin-tian) neng dao Niuyue \$, buran...
 ... (to-morrow/to-day) can arrive New York \$, otherwise...
 ‘Luckily, Nana’s flight can arrive in New York tomorrow/today; otherwise...’

(\$ dollar sign indicates the possible position for the moved temporal adverb without *cai*.)

(7) a. Xingkui Nana de feiji zuo-tian/jin-tian cai dao Niuyue, buran...
 ... yesterday/to-day just arrive New York, otherwise ...

‘Luckily, my flight has just arrived in New York yesterday/today, otherwise...’

b. * Xingkui Nana de feiji **cai** (zuo-tian/jin-tian) dao Niuyue \$, buran ...
 ... only (yesterday/today) arrive New York \$, otherwise ...

Not only do T-heads exist in BJD, we can also see **Past is higher than Future** from the TAdv.s. First, TAdv-s used in past tense are more restrictive. Xu (1996) points out some minimal pairs, e.g. in *yizhi*, *shi-zhong* ‘always’; *cai*, *gang* ‘only just’; the first can occur in both past and future tense, but the second can only be used in past tense. When adverb stacking is possible, past-tense-only TAdv.s can precede the more generally used TAdv, but not the other way round, e.g. *gang-cai* ‘just now’ (used when the end point of the Event time is prior to the Utterance time).

The absence of rich overt Tense morphology (c.f. Zhang 2001 for final *-qu/-lai* in Directional PP as heads in the I-system) correlates with the more rigid positions of TpNP. The distribution of TAdv.s also shows asymmetry between past events and non-past events. The movement constraints in present tense (3) suggests the asymmetry between the tense that does not referring to Utterance time and other tenses. I argue that TpNP sits in the spec-T, like other languages, BJD has syntactically visible Tense-Heads.

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