

Peripheral Functional Projection encoded Finiteness in Mandarin Chinese

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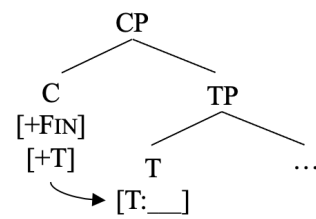
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BACKGROUND: Contrary to Indo-European languages, which encode finiteness through the morphological system, Mandarin Chinese instantiates languages lacking temporal and person/number inflections on T but still equipping finite/non-finite distinction (Grano 2017, Zhang 2019, Rouveret 2023, a.o.), requiring an alternative account. In a broad sense, finiteness can be regarded as a property, which enables a clause to stand alone as a syntactically unembedded assertion (Grano 2017). Traditional Chinese grammar refers to non-finite clauses as “incomplete sentences” given that clauses of this type sound “incomplete” to native speakers, and that they cannot be used as independent sentences. Many grammatical elements can help “complete” non-finite clauses in Chinese, such as certain types of modal verbs and adverbs occurring inside TP. The present study only focuses on how categories in the CP layer can provide TP with finiteness.

PREVIOUS APPROACH: In Mandarin, different types of Sentence-Final Particles (SFP) head independent functional projections in the left-periphery, and they are organized in a strict hierarchical order (Paul & Pan 2016, 2017; Pan 2015, 2019): TP < S.AsP (sentential aspect, e.g., *lázhe, le, ne*) < OnlyP (sentential exclusive focus, e.g., *éryī*) < iForceP (illocutionary force, e.g., *ma, ba*) < SQP (special questions, e.g., negative *wh*-word *shénme* ‘what’) < AttitudeP (speaker’s attitude, e.g., *a, bei*). Importantly, Zhang (2019) argues that certain low SFPs (S.AsP) head a FinP in the sense of Rizzi (1997); however, the properties of higher SFPs (e.g., iForceP, AttP) and their roles for finiteness have not been discussed.

MAIN PROPOSAL: We will argue that FINITENESS and TENSE are in fact two obligatory but independent factors which make a clause independent in Chinese. In other words, a finite clause in Chinese should contain a valued T head; a category with [+FIN] can provide a clause with finiteness, and this category can be a functional projection in the CP layer. We will show that all the functional heads in the CP-layer possess [+FIN] feature (not only low SFPs), among other discourse-related features, such as [+INTERROGATIVE], and that some of these heads (not all of them) also possess a valued T feature: C [+FIN; ±T]. When a TP merges with a C head, if T is valued, C can provide the TP with finiteness, and the derivation converges. If T is unvalued, we have to examine whether this C head possesses a valued T feature: if yes, C can pass the value of its T-feature to T; otherwise, the derivation crashes due to the lacking a valid value on T. Different scenarios are illustrated in the following table and the tree.

CP	TP	DERIVATION	EXAMPLE
[+FIN] [+T]	[T: VAL]	✓	(1b)
[+FIN] [+T]	[T:]	✓	(3b); (4); (8b)
[+FIN] [-T]	[T: VAL]	✓	(6b)
[+FIN] [-T]	[T:]	✗	(5)



ARGUMENT 1: Despite the claim that finiteness in Chinese is achieved through the valuation of T head (Tsai 2008, a.o.), (cf. 1a), which has, *inter alia*, a deictic temporal expression, cannot make a clause stand alone, suggesting that even if a T head is valued, it does not bring out finiteness. (1a) with a valued T but lacking category with [+FIN] is judged as an “incomplete sentence ☹️” by our informants. The grammaticality of (1b) suggests that finiteness is separated from TP and can be encoded by the *yes-no* question particle *ma*, which possesses [+FIN].

(1) a. ☹️ Zhāngsān *gāngcái* zuò-zhe. (judged as an incomplete sentence by our informants)
Zhangsan just.now sit-DUR (‘Zhangsan was sitting just now.’)

b. ☺️ [_{iForceP=CP} [_{TP} Zhāngsān *gāngcái* zuò-zhe] *ma*? (✓ [C [+FIN, -T]...T [T: VAL]])
Zhangsan just.now sit-DUR Q_{yes-no} ‘Was Zhangsan sitting just now?’

ARGUMENT 2: Apart from sentential aspects, i.e., *lázhe, le, and ne*, which have been argued by Zhang (2019) to carry the finiteness property, any functional head regardless of its hierarchical position in the left-periphery is capable of giving finiteness to a TP if the T is valued (✓[C [+FIN, ±T]...T [T: VAL]]): *yes-no* question *ma* at iForceP (1b, 2c), the negative question word *shénme* at

