

CHAPTER II

SEMANTIC RELATIONS AMONG SENTENCES IN STANDARD CHINESE

Paper presented to the 17th International
Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and
Linguistics
7-9 September, 1984, University of Oregon,
Eugene, Oregon, U. S. A.

SEMANTIC RELATIONS AMONG SENTENCE
IN STANDARD CHINESE

FUMIYOSHI MATSUMURA

Contents

0. Introduction
1. Shift of aspect
 - 1.1 Existential sentences
 2. Advance of judgement
 - 2.1 From "Supposition A" to "Supposition B"
 - 2.2 From "Supposition A" to "Cause B"
 - 2.3 From "Supposition A" to "Condition B"
 3. Abstraction of a grammatical meaning

0. Introduction

Semantic relations among sentences have rarely been discussed in Standard Chinese, although the transformational relations between active and passive sentences have been discussed many times. For example:

1. Zhangsan dale Lisi.
张三 打了 李四
(Zhangsan hit Lisi)
2. Lisi bei Zhangsan dale.
李四 被 张三 打了
(Lisi by Zhangsan hit)

Example 1 is an active sentence, 2 is a passive sentence. The transformational relations among the following sentences have also been discussed.

3. LaoLiu xia ku le XiaoTang.
老刘 吓 哭 了 小唐
(Old Liu frighten cry aspect marker Little Tang)
(perfect)
4. LaoLiu ba XiaoTang xia ku le.
老刘 把 小唐 吓 哭 了
(Old Liu preposition Little Tang frighten cry a.m.)
(action)

5. Lao Liu xia de Xiao tang ku le.
 老刘 吓 得 小唐 哭 了
 (Old Liu frighten particle Little tang cry a.m.)
 (complement marker)

As the transformational relations among the above sentences are very attractive, so many Chinese grammarians interpreted them syntactically.

Here the semantic relations among the following sentences will be discussed.

6. Wo you yi zhang xipiao.
 我 有 一 张 戏票
 (I have one piece opera ticket)
7. Wutaihang you san ge yanyuan.
 舞 台 上 有 三 个 演 员
 (stage on are three classifier performers)
8. Tamen zhen you jinbu.
 他 们 真 有 进 步
 (they trully have a progress)
9. Wo muqin you bing.
 我 母 亲 有 病
 (my mother have a disease)
10. Ta zhen you benshi.
 他 真 有 本 事
 (he trully have an ability)
11. Zhe chu xi hen you yisi.
 这 出 戏 很 有 意 思
 (this classifier drama very be interesting)

The verb "you" in 6 expresses "POSSESSION"; in 7, "EXISTENCE"; in 8, "MENTAL or PHYSICAL STATE"; in 9, "PHYSICAL STATE"; in 10, "EMPIRICAL STATE"; in 11, "INHERENT STATE". As we only observe the meaning of the verb "you有", we find a shift of meaning, namely "POSSESSION → EXISTENCE → STATE → NATURE (=INHERENT STATE)." We call this "SHIFT OF ASPECT."

1. SHIFT OF ASPECT

1.1 EXISTENTIAL SENTENCES

The following sentence patterns have always been discussed as the model examples of the existential sentences of Standard Chinese.

- A 1. Gongchangli you jinlaile yida pi gongren.
 工厂里又进来了大批工人
 (in the factory again came in many workers)
- A 2. Chuangshang zhi tangzhe yi ge bingren.
 床上只躺着一个病人
 (on the bed only lie-ing one classifier patient)
- A 3. Women ban zoule sange tongxue.
 我们班走了三个同学
 (our class went out three classmates)

A1 expresses "APPEARANCE", A2 expresses "ACTIVE EXISTENCE", and A3 expresses "DISAPPEARANCE". But the following B-group has not been discussed, except for B2.

- B 1. Gongchangli you duole yida pi gongren.
 工厂里又多了大批工人
 (in the factory again increased many workers)
- B 2. Chuangshang zhi you yige bingren.
 床上只有一个病人
 (on the bed only exists one patient)
- B 3. Women ban shaole sange tongxue.
 我们班少了三个同学
 (our class decreased three classmates)

B1 expresses "INCREASE", B2 expresses "STATIC EXISTENCE", and B3 expresses "DECREASE". From a semantic point of view, we can observe some inherent relations between A1 and B1, A2 and B2, and A3 and B3.

A1 APPEARANCE → B1 INCREASE
 A2 ACTIVE EXISTENCE → B2 STATIC EXISTENCE
 A3 DISAPPEARANCE → B3 DECREASE

We find a deletion of the semantic feature [+MOTION] in the transition from A-group to B-group. This B-group also has inherent relations with the following C-group.

- C 1. zheige juzi duole yige ci.
 这个句子多了 一个词
 (this sentence too many one word)

C 2. Ta muqin you bing.
 他 母亲 有 病
 (his mother has a disease)

C 3. Women hai shao liang ba yizi.
 我们 还 少 两 把 椅子
 (we still be short two classifier chairs)

C1 expresses "EXCESS", C2 expresses "PHYSICAL STATE", and C3 expresses "LACK".

B1 INCREASE → C1 EXCESS
 B2 STATIC EXISTENCE → C2 PHYSICAL STATE
 B3 DECREASE → C3 LACK

We find a deletion of the semantic feature [+CHANGE] in a transition from B group to C-group. So we can summarize as in Figure I.

Meaning of the sentence	Quantitative information		
	+	±	-
EXISTENCE (ACTIVE)	A 1	A 2	A 3
EXISTENCE (STATIC)	B 1	B 2	B 3
STATE	C 1	C 2	C 3

Figure I: "SHIFT OF ASPECT" in
 Existential Sentences

From the discussions above, we can also conclude as follows:

A - [+MOTION] = B
 B - [+CHANGE] = C

As we observe the meanings of the sentences A, B, and C, we find a shift of

meaning, namely "EXISTENCE (ACTIVE)" → "EXISTENCE (STATIC)" → "STATE". We can also call this a "SHIFT OF ASPECT".

2. ADVANCE OF JUDGEMENT

Complex sentences have also been discussed by many Chinese grammarians. But they concentrate their attention on the individual cases of each complex sentence. I pay attention to the semantic relations among complex sentences.

2.1 From "Supposition A" to "Supposition B"

1. Ruguo bu jiao shui, zhongzi jiu bu hui faya.
如果 不 浇 水 种子 就 不 会 发芽
(if not to water the seeds then not can sprout)
2. Suiran meiyou jiao shui, danshi zhongzi faya le.
虽然 没有 浇 水 但是 种子 发芽 了
(though didn't to water but the seeds sprouted)
3. Jishi bu jiao shui, zhongzi ye hui faya.
即使 不 浇 水 种子 也 会 发芽
(even though not to water the seeds also can sprout)

In sentence 1, the subordinate clause (=adverbial clause) expresses "Supposition" and the main clause expresses its "Consequence". So we call the logical relation between these clauses "Supposition A".

In sentence 2, the subordinate clause expresses "Realization", and the main clause expresses its "Contrary consequence". We call the logical relation between these clauses "Contrary" as do other Chinese grammarians.

In sentence 3, the subordinate clause expresses "Supposition", and the main clause expresses its "Consequence". But the logical relation between these two clauses is not the same as that of sentence 1. In fact the logical relation between the two clauses in sentence 3 is based on the assertion made and information given in sentence 1 and sentence 2. In 1, the supposition and consequence expressed by the subordinate and the main clause are not realized. But in 2, the action and the consequence expressed in the two clauses are realized. So the logical relations between the two clauses in 3 is decided after the hypothetical proposition given in 1 is examined in light of the fact expressed in 2. If we call this logical relation "Supposition B", "Supposition B" has presupposed judgements "Supposition A" and "Contrary". So we can observe an "ADVANCE OF JUDGEMENT" in the transition from "Supposition A" to "Supposition B". We can summarize as follows:

"Supposition A" → "Contrary" → "Supposition B"

2.2 From "Supposition A" to "Cause B"

Look at the following examples

4. Ruguo xia yichang yu, zhuangjia jiu hui zhang de
如果 下 一场 雨 庄稼 就会 长得
(if down once rain crops then can grow complement marker
hen kuai.
很 快
very fast)
5. Yinwei xia le yichang yu, suoyi zhuangjia zhang de
因为 下 了 一场 雨 所以 庄稼 长得
(because down aspect marker once rain so crops grow c.m.
hen kuai.
很 快
very fast)
6. Jiran xia le yichang yu, zhuangjia jiu hui zhang de hen kuai.
既然 下 了 一场 雨 庄稼 就会 长得 很快
(since down a.m. once rain crops then can grow c.m. very fast)

Sentence 4 is a complex sentence expressing the supposition/consequence unit "Supposition A". In sentence 5, the subordinate clause expresses "Cause (or Reason)", and the main clause expresses its "Effect". We call the logical relation between these clauses "Cause A". In 4, the supposition and the consequence expressed by the two clauses are not realized. In 5, the cause and the effect expressed by the two clauses are realized. In 6, the cause expressed by the subordinate clause is realized, but the effect expressed by the main clause is not realized. Here, the main clause expresses "Suppositional assertion". So the logical relation between the two clauses in 6 is decided after the hypothetical proposition given in 4 is examined by the fact given in 5. If we call this logical relation "Cause B", "Cause B" proceeds from "Supposition A" and "Cause A". So we can also observe an "ADVANCE OF JUDGEMENT" from "Supposition A" to "Cause B". We can summarize as follows:

"Supposition A" → "Cause A" → "Cause B"

2.3 From "Supposition A" to "Condition B"

Look at the following examples:

7. Ruguo ni nachu zhengju lai, wo jiu xiangxin.
 如果你 拿出 证据 来 我就 相信
 (if you produce evidence I then believe)
8. Zhiyao ni nachu zhengju lai, wo jiu xiangxin.
 只要 你 拿出 证据 来 我就 相信
 (so long as you produce evidence I then believe)
9. Zhiyou ni nachu zhengju lai, wo jiu xiangxin.
 只有 你 拿出 证据 来 我就 相信
 (if and only if you produce evidence I then believe)

Sentence 7 is a complex sentence expressing the supposition/consequence unit "Supposition A". In sentence 8, the subordinate clause expresses "one of the necessary conditions", and the main clause expresses its "Result". We call the logical relation between these two clauses "Condition A".

In sentence 9, the subordinate clause expresses "Only one condition", and the main clause expresses its "Result". We call the logical relation between these clauses "Condition B".

When we reconsider the logical relation between the two clauses in 7 (Supposition A), we can find that the subordinate clause also expresses "General condition" as well as "Supposition". So the sentence 7, 8, and 9 equally express the logical relation "Condition". The differences are found in the intensity of the condition. As for the intensity of the condition, sentence 8 is stronger than 7, and sentence 9 is the strongest. So we can observe an "ADVANCE OF JUDGEMENT" in the transition from "Supposition A" to "Condition B". We can summarize as follows:

"Supposition A" → "Condition A" → "Condition B"

From the above discussions, we can conclude that the complex sentences are semantically related each other. These relations are expressed in Figure II:

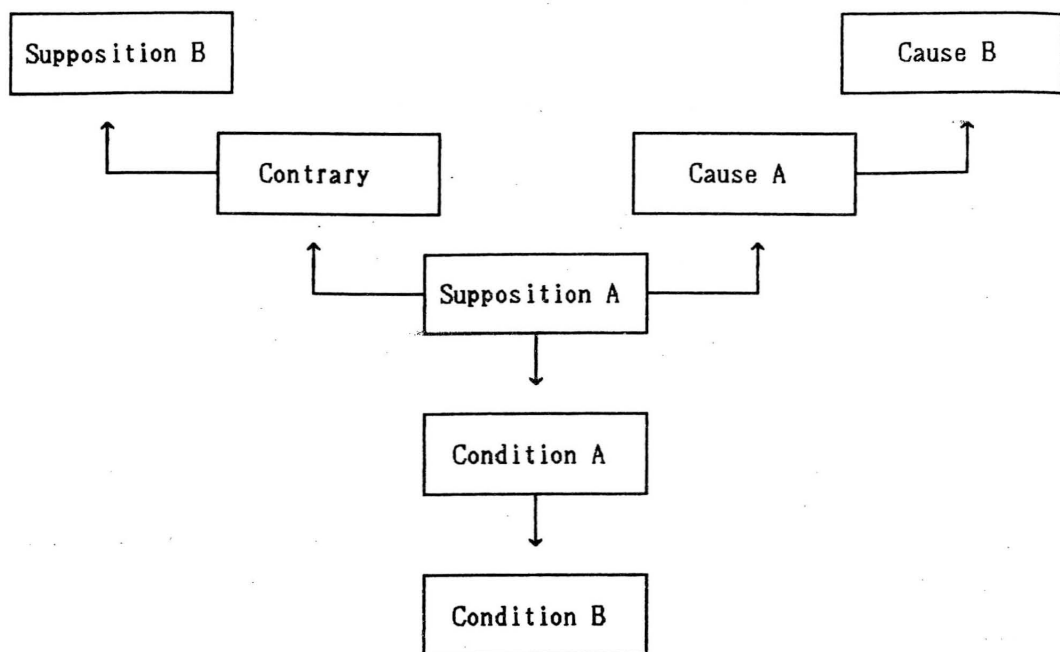


Figure II: "ADVANCE OF JUDGEMENT" in
Complex Sentences

3. Abstraction of a grammatical meaning

Pivotal constructions have been discussed many times, but the semantic relations among the sentences which contain a pivotal construction have rarely been discussed. Look at the following examples:

- A 1. Women pai ta zuo daibiao. (V1: pai V2: zuo)
 我们 派 他 做 代表
 (we send him become a delegate)
- A 2. Nimen yinggai xuan ta dang banzhang. (V1: xuan V2: dang)
 你们 应该 选 她 当 班长
 (you must elect her become a class monitor)
- A 3. Shui gudong ni gan zhexie huai shi? (V1: gudong V2: gan)
 谁 鼓动 你 干 这些 坏 事
 (who incite you do these bad thing)

Sentence A1, A2, and A3 are pivotal constructions. V1 expresses "Cause", V2 expresses its "Effect". In A-group, we can delete the V2 of each sentence without affecting the acceptability of the V1 portion as follows:

- A 1'. Women pai ta.
我们 派 他
(we send him)
- A 2'. Nimen yinggai xuan ta.
你们 应该 选 她
(you must elect her)
- A 3'. Shui gudong ni?
谁 鼓动 你
(who incite you)

Therefore the informations given in V1 portion and V2 portion are semantically interrelated, but they can be independent.

The following three sentences are also pivotal constructions.

- B 1. Women qing zonggongchengshi jiang ke. (V1: qing V2: jiang)
我们 请 总工程师 讲 课
(we ask a chief engineer to lecture)
- B 2. Tamen quan wo xiuxi yihuir. (V1: quan V2: xiuxi)
他们 劝 我 休息 一会儿
(they advise me to rest for a while)
- B 3. Diren bi ta zhaogong. (V1: bi V2: zhaogong)
敌人 逼 他 招供
(enemy force him to confess)

In B1, V1 "qing请" not only expresses the lexical meaning "to ask" but also contains a derived meaning "Courtesy". In B2, V1 "quan劝" not only expresses the lexical meaning "to advise" but also contains a derived meaning "Kindness". In B3, V1 "bi逼" not only expresses "to force" but also contains a derived meaning "Compulsion". These derived meanings occur from the causative relations between V1 and V2. So if we delete the V2 portion of each sentence, we will get some queer sentences as follows:

- B 1'. ??Women qing zonggongchengshi.
我们 请 总工程师
(we to ask a chief engineer)
- B 2'. ??Tamen quan wo.
他们 劝 我
(they to advise me)

B 3'. ??Diren bi ta.
敌人 逼 他
(enemy to force him)

If we put aside the lexical meanings and the derived meanings of V1 in B-group, and only abstract the meaning "Causative", we get the following examples.

- C 1. Women jiao zonggongchengshi jiang ke.
我们 叫 总工程师 讲 课
(we let a chief engineer to lecture)
- C 2. Tamen jiao wo xiuxi yihuir.
他们 叫 我 休息 一会儿
(they let me to rest for a while)
- C 3. Diren jiao ta zhaogong.
敌人 叫 他 招供
(enemy let him to confess)

In C-group, V1 "jiao叫" is generally considered to be a preposition (a causative marker). So we can not delete the V2 portions.

- C 1'. *Women jiao zonggongchengshi.
我们 叫 总工程师
(we let a chief engineer)
- C 2'. *Tamen jiao wo.
他们 叫 我
(they let me)
- C 3'. *Diren jiao ta.
敌人 叫 他
(enemy let him)

Let us consider the semantic roles of V1 in A-, B-, and C-groups. In A-group, V1 alone can make complete sentences as shown in A1', A2', and A3'. In B-group, V1 alone produce semantically incomplete sentences as shown in B1', B2', and B3'. In C-group, V1 alone can not produce syntactically complete sentences as shown in C1', C2', and C3'. Therefore A-, B-, and C-groups show the process of the deletion of the lexical meaning of V1. We can call this process "ABSTRACTION OF GRAMMATICAL MEANING".

REFERENCES

- Chao, Yuen-ren. 1968. A Grammar of Spoken Chinese. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Comrie, Bernard. 1976. Aspect. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fan, Fang-lian. 1963. 'Cunzaiju存在句(Existential sentences)', Zhongguo Yuwen中国语文, 1963, No. 5, pp. 386-395
- Li, Lin-ding. 1963. 'Dai "de"-zi de buyuju带"得"字的补语句(Sentences containing "de"-complement)', Zhongguo Yuwen中国语文, 1963, No. 5, pp. 396-410
- Li, Lin-ding. 1980. 'Dongbugu jushi动补格句式(Sentences containing verb-complement constructions)', Zhongguo Yuwen中国语文, 1980, No. 2, pp. 93-101
- . 1980. '"Bei"-ziju被字句(Passive sentences)', Zhongguo Yuwen, 1980, No. 6, pp. 401-412
- Lyons, John. 1977. Semantics 1, 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Matsumura, Fumiyoshi. 1983a. '假定關係を表す複文(Complex sentences expressing "Supposition")', 中国語(Chinese), 1983, No. 6
- . 1983b. '因果關係を表す複文(Complex sentences expressing "Cause")', 中国語(Chinese), 1983, No. 7
- . 1983c. '条件關係を表す複文(Complex sentences expressing "Condition")', 中国語(Chinese), 1983, No. 8
- . 1983d. '出現・存在・消失を表す文(Sentences expressing "appearance, existence, and disappearance")', 中国語(Chinese), 1983, No. 9
- . 1983e. '増加・存在・減少を表す文(Sentences expressing "increase, existence, and decrease")', 中国語(Chinese), 1983, No. 10
- . 1984a. '"有"を持つ文(Sentences containing the verb "you")', 中国語(Chinese), 1984, No. 2
- . 1984b. '兼語式動詞文(Pivotal constructions)', 中国語(Chinese), 1984, No. 3
- Tang, Ting-chi. 1972. A Case Grammar of Spoken Chinese. Taipei: Haiguo book Co.
- . 1977. Guoyu bianxing yufa yanjiu国語變形語法研究(Studies in Transformational Grammar of Chinese). Taipei: Xuesheng Book Co.