Case, Tense and Clauses

Yen-Hui Audrey Li (李豔惠)
University of Southern California

The theory of Case has played an important role in deriving categorial selection (subcategorization) from the semantic properties of lexical items. Some of such analyses have been built on the claims that noun phrases require Case but non-gerundival clauses are not in Case-assigned positions. In Chinese, the issue is whether different types of clauses are distinguished and whether the notion of Case is relevant in Chinese, particularly to (different types of) clauses. This paper shows that the notion of abstract Case indeed is relevant in Chinese but clauses are not in Case-assigned positions. When a non-Case marked clause appears in a Case position, it is actually contained in a complex noun phrase and Case is assigned to the containing NP instead. This analysis of clauses captures many interesting semantic and syntactic properties of clauses in various contexts.

Key words: Case, clause, tense, c-selection, s-selection, conjunction

1. Introduction

Chinese does not have much inflectional morphology. It is not surprising that the literature frequently debated on whether Chinese makes some of the similar types of distinctions as those demonstrated by inflectional morphemes in other languages. For instance, the issue has been raised whether Chinese has number distinctions (plurality; see, among others, Ijic 1994, 2001, 2005, Li 1999). Much debate has also generated arguments for and against the distinction between finite (tensed) clauses and non-finite clauses in Chinese (see, for instance, Huang 1982[1998], Li 1985, 1990, C. Tang 1990, T. Tang 2000, Hu, Pan & Xu 2001, among many others). Recent works have considered the role of semantic and syntactic tense anchoring in "tensed" clauses (Lin 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Sybesma 2007, Tsai 2008).

Focusing on the question of whether different types of clauses need to be distinguished, we note that the issue is not only interesting in itself but also important in helping us understand the behavior of clauses in Chinese and the more general studies concerning order and constituency in Universal Grammar. Claims have been made in the literature that certain constructions allow only specific kinds of clauses. Take for instance Kayne’s anti-symmetric approach to word order and hierarchical structures in
Universal Grammar. In such an approach, relative constructions in all languages have the same base structure and head-final relative clauses — the modifying relative preceding the modified phrase — are, roughly speaking, derived by moving the relative clause across the modified phrase to a higher (left) position. Due to some well-formedness across the modified phrase and head-final relative clauses are possible only when conditions on the movement process, head-final relative clauses are possible only when such relatives are non-tensed (for details of the analysis, see Kayne 1994). That is, a such relative should not precede the modified phrase. In this regard, being able tense relative clause should not precede the modified phrase. In this regard, being able to define clearly the nature of clauses in Chinese and determine their distribution would be a good testing ground for the said approach to a universal relative construction.

The distinction of different types of clauses also bears on the characterization of

Empirically, whether or not clauses need Case has been controversial.\footnote{Following a widely adopted convention, we use the capitalized “Case” to refer to the notion of abstract Case in Case theory.} Pesetsky (1982) distinguishes between NPs and clauses categorically: only the former need Case. Accordingly, the subcategorization properties of heads can be determined by the s(emanic)-selection properties of a head, coupled with the Case assigning ability of the C(ategorical)-selection is derived from s-selection interacting with Case. Stowell (1982) argues that some clauses are inherently visible for theta-assignment, such as (1991) infinities and the tensed complements of heads expressing psychological states. Other

Case properties do not occur in the object positions of Ps.

Li (1985, 1990) was the first systematic attempt to define the role of Case in a language like modern Chinese, which does not have any overt Case markings. Regarding this language, the poverty of morphological inflections in Chinese makes it quite challenging to determine if different types of clausal structures can be clearly distinguished from this study needs to rely on indirect evidence. Appropriate interpretations of the language. The studies by Huang (1998), Li (1985, 1990), C. Tang relevant data are critical. The works by Huang (1998), Li (1985, 1990), C. Tang (2000), Tsai (1995), Hu, Pan & Xu (2001), among many others, represent (1990). P. Tsai (2000), Tsai (1995), Hu, Pan & Xu (2001), among many others, represent (1990). P. Tsai (2000), Tsai (1995), Hu, Pan & Xu (2001), among many others, represent

in postverbal and preverbal positions. It brings new empirical generalizations from the constructions involving null objects, conjunction, topicalization of clauses, and extraction from within complement clauses to properly define the nature of clauses in clearly Case-marked positions in Chinese. The study will help resolve the conflict between the claim that clauses in Chinese are always Case-marked when they are assigned thematic roles (Li 1985, 1990, Tsai 1995) and the modified claim that some of such clauses are not assigned Case (Li 2008). It will be shown that clauses in Case positions behave as if they are nominal expressions.\footnote{Nominal expressions in argument positions will be labeled as NPs in this work, with reference to the classic terms such as Complex NP constraint, the Case filter applying to NPs. The distinction between NPs and DPs is not relevant in this work.} This follows if Case is assigned to NPs, rather than clauses, as in Pesetsky (1982). Chinese is not much different from English in regard to the Case requirement on clauses and NPs (following Pesetsky’s analysis of English). The conclusion has significant consequences on how Case should be characterized in the grammar.

Empirically, this work will focus on the clauses in the object positions of verbs and prepositions, leaving other possibilities to a separate work because of the limited space. I will first review the issues regarding Case and clauses in §1 and discuss the distribution of “tensed” clauses in §2. Section 3 brings a different perspective to the issues regarding the categorial status of “tensed clauses” — conjunction. An NP structure will be proposed for clauses in clearly Case-marked positions (§4). It will be concluded that NPs and clauses do not behave alike regarding Case theory (§5).

2. Case and clauses

Case theory was a major tool in the government and binding theory to capture the generalizations regarding order and constituency in natural languages (Chomsky 1980, 1981, 1986). For instance, NPs must be assigned Case — the Case filler (Chomsky 1981).

(1) the Case filter
    \[[NP e]\]
    where NP has phonetic content but not Case

The function of (1) is to ensure that noun phrases appear in the appropriate positions structurally, such as the object position of verbs and prepositions and the subject position positions.
of tensed clauses in English — right next to the Case assigners, V, P and Tense.\footnote{Not all Case markers are overt. For instance, Larson (1985) suggests that bare NP adverbs of time, location like tomorrow, now, here, someplace warm and sunny and a limited set of bare-time, like no become Case-marked. adverbs of manner are inherently Case marked. A common assumption is that only subcategorized complements are assigned thematic roles. However, a more inclusive view has also been proposed, such as the following condition on adverbial theta-role assignment (Larson 1985:606):}

(2) The Case-Resistance Principle (CRP)\footnote{A more inclusive view has also been proposed, such as the following condition on adverbial theta-role assignment (Larson 1985:606):}

Case may not be assigned to a category bearing a Case-assigning feature.

Tense is a Case assigner (assigning Case to the subject of the clause), making tensed clauses unable to stay in Case positions, according to the CRP. When assigned Case,

\textbf{Clauses} need to be moved away from the Case-marked position via extraposition or topicalization. This accounts for why the sentences in (3a-c), are not acceptable, where tensed clauses appear in Case-marked positions, in contrast to (3d-e), where the tensed clause has been vacuously moved away from the subject and object position:

(3) a. *He blamed it on [that Bill was too strict].
   b. *I consider [that John came home] to be fortunate.
   c. *John wondered [how [that Bill arrived late] to upset Mary].
   d. [That he is here] is important.
   e. I know [that he is the best].

In contrast to English clauses, Li (1985, 1990) notes that clauses in Chinese behave like nominal phrases and occur in Case-marked positions. Tsai (1995) further explored the similarity between clauses and nominal phrases with respect to their sensitivity to the Case requirement. The following examples are from Tsai (1995:282-283), illustrating the relevance of Case to clauses as well as to NPs.

(4) wo [* (dai) [Akiu weishenme bu lai]] hen guanxin.  
I about Akiu why not come very care  
'I care about why Akiu will not come.'

(5) wo [* (dai) [Akiu bu lai]] hen zaiyi.  
I about Akiu not come very mind  
'I do mind Akiu will not come.'

(6) wo [* (dai) zhe-jian shi] hen guanxin.  
I about this-CL matter very care  
'I care about this matter.'

(7) wo [* (dai) zhe-jian shi] hen zaiyi.  
I about this-CL matter very mind  
'I do mind this matter.'

\footnote{We will simply use "clauses" as abbreviation for "tensed clauses" in the rest of this work, because tensed clauses present most interesting complications regarding Case requirements: they cannot be in case-assigned positions in English. Tsai's (1995) translation includes the intensifier 	exttt{shen} 	exttt{I do care about...}. The 	exttt{hen} here need not be interpreted as a real intensifier, as the deletion of 	exttt{hen} makes the sentence unacceptable (see, for instance, Li & Thompson 1981 for 	exttt{hen} without its intensifier interpretation).}
These examples show that a complement clause and a complement NP in the preverbal position equally require a Case-marker dui (also see Paul 2002:699). Postverbally, either a clause or an NP complement is assigned Case by the verb; therefore, the Case-marking dui does not appear:

(8) wo ben guanxin [*dui] [Akuw weishenme bu lai] / zhe-jian shi.
   1 very care about Akuw why not come / this-CL matter
   'I care about why Akuw will not come to this matter.'

(9) wo ben zaiyi [*dui] [Aku bu lai] / zhe-jian shi.
   1 very mind about Aku not come / this-CL matter
   'I do mind Aku will not come to this matter.'

Other prepositions behave like dui:

(10) a. cong [Aku jinlai zheli] dao [ta likai].
    from Aku enter here to he leave
    Lisi yi-ju hua dou mei shuo.
    Lisi one-CL word all have-not speak
    'From the moment Aku entered here to the moment he left, Lisi did not say a word.'

b. cong [Akuw shenmehibou qibang] dao [ta zai nali chifan],
    from Aku when get-up to he at where eat
    Lisi dou dating-de yiqingerchu.
    Lisi all investigate thorough
    'From the question of when Aku wakes up to the question of where he eats, Lisi made a thorough investigation.'

The following examples, with sentential subjects inside relative clauses, illustrate the possibility of a clause staying in subject positions.

(11) a. [henduo [Akuw neng huo-zhe hui-lai]]
    many Aku can live-Dur back-home
    shi tamen, jingyi de ren, dou mei lai.
    make them surprised de people all have-not come
    'Many people to whom it is surprising [that Aku can come back alive] did not come.'

b. [henduo [Akuw neng-bu-neng huo-zhe hui-lai]]
    many Aku can-not-can live-DUR back-home
    gen tamen, wuguan de ren, dou mei lai,
    to them irrelevant de people all have-not come
    'Many people to whom it is irrelevant [whether Aku can come back alive or not] did not come.'

The similarity in the positions where clauses and NPs are possible suggests that clauses are assigned Case and the Case filter can be appropriately reduced to the Visibility condition on theta-assignment.

Unfortunately, the data are more complicated. The parallelism in distribution between NPs and clauses fails in the following instances, where a clausal complement is acceptable postverbally but not an NP complement (Tai 1995:301-302, ex.(51)-(52)).

(12) *wo ben haqoi [zhe-jian shi de qiyin].
    I very curious this-CL matter de cause
    'I am curious about the cause of this matter.'

(13) wo ben haqoi [Akuw weishenme bu lai].
    I very curious Aku why not come
    'I am curious why Aku will not come.'
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Tsai suggests that the Visibility condition is obeyed consistently, i.e., both clausal and NP complements should be assigned Case in order to receive theta-roles. The difference in the above examples is simply that haoqi selects a clause, not an NP. In other words, the above examples is simply that haoqi selects a clause, not an NP.\(^5\) In other words, haoqi specifies a categorial selection requirement (c-selection): the complement following haoqi must be a clause (or a PP, see note 9). C-selection is arbitrary: the c-selection requirement for each lexical item must be listed. This contrasts with Pesetsky’s (1982) proposal that c-selection should follow from the semantic selection (s-selection) properties of lexical heads and the abilities of specific heads to assign Case. According to Pesetsky, the following contrasts show that the verb ask in English assigns Case to its complement, not wonder, even though they both require a question complement:

\[14\]

a. John asked the question.
b. John asked what the time was.

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a. *John wondered the question.
b. John wondered what the time was.

These pairs of sentences demonstrate that not all verbs in English assign Case and accept NPs as their complements. Clauses do not need Case; therefore, they can be complements of the verbs unable to assign Case.

If, according to Tsai, Chinese does not derive complement selection from s-selection and interacting with Case and must rely on c-selection, we seem to be missing a generalization: it generally is impossible to find the type of verbs opposite of the Chinese haoqi ‘curious’, labeled as HAOQI, which s-selects a proposition but only c-selects an NP. That is, we do not seem to have such a hypothetical HAOQI that can appear in (a), but not in (b).\(^6\)

\[16\]

a. wo hen HAOQI [zhe-jian shi / zhe-ge wen].
   I very curious this-cl. matter / this-cl. question
   ‘I am curious about this matter.’

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\(^5\) Tsai (1995) notes that haoqi can also select a PP, although he does not discuss further why PPs appear preverbally (see Li 1985, 1990 for the split between the Case directionality requirement and the head parameter, which would need to be recent in different terms in the current framework): (6) wo *(chui) [Akiu weishenme bu lai] / na-jian shi hen haoqi*.
   I about Akiu why not come that-cl. matter very curious
   ‘I am curious why Akiu will not come.’

\(^6\) If a verb s-selects an individual, only an NP is a possible complement.

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In this respect, it is interesting to point out that in English, even though argument NPs always require Case, it is not the same with complement clauses. In discussing the Case requirement of clauses in English, Stowell observes that some heads license their clausal complements without Case assignment.

(17)

a. Mary is happy that Charles is leaving home.
b. Kevin is certain that the test is in the car.
c. Neil is afraid that the computer will break down.
cf.

(18)

a. Kevin is [certain of Ray’s genius].
b. Neil is [afraid of Constable O’Malley].

(19)

a. *Kevin is certain Ray’s genius.
b. *Neil is afraid Constable O’Malley.

The English translations for (12)-(13) also show that the clausal complement in the English sentence corresponding to (13) is not assigned Case. Stowell (1981:204) suggests that “these psychological-state-denoting adjectives have a special property that excludes them from the general requirement that theta-roles can only be assigned to A-’ chains headed by PRO or Case ... the adjectival phrases [in these cases] instantiate a special case of theta-role assignment, which is limited to relations of awareness or recognition of the propositional content of a complement clause.” It is proposed that theta-roles can be assigned to clauses when the head has a lexical feature [+R]. Nonetheless, the postulation of [+R] has the same effect as saying that clauses are not assigned Case in these instances.\(^11\)

With respect to Chinese, the following generalization has been put forward in Li (2005, 2007) on empty categories: in Chinese, when a verb allows a nominal object, it also accepts a null object; when a verb only allows a clausal object, it does not accept a null object.

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\(^11\) Stowell notes that these clauses cannot be topicalized, leaving variables, which require Case.

(20)

a. *[That Charles is leaving], I believe that Mary is [happy ___].
b. *[That the computer will break down], I know that Neil is [afraid __].
(20) a. If a verb is subcategorized for a nominal object, the object can be empty.
b. If a verb is subcategorized for a clausal object only, the object cannot be empty.

Verbs allowing a nominal object and a null object:

(21) a. \text{wo} \hspace{0.5em} \text{tingdao-le} \hspace{0.5em} \text{na-jian} \hspace{0.5em} \text{shi}
\text{I hear-le that-CL matter}
'\text{I heard that matter.}'
b. \text{wo} \hspace{0.5em} \text{tingdao} \hspace{0.5em} \text{ta de-le} \hspace{0.5em} \text{da} \hspace{0.5em} \text{jiang} \hspace{0.5em} \text{le} \text{; ta ye tingdao-le}
\text{I heard he get-le big prize \text{he also hear-le}
'\text{I heard that he got a big prize; he also heard.'}

Verbs disallowing a nominal object and a null object. \text{Zheme(yang)} 'so' must appear:

(22) a. *\text{wo} \hspace{0.5em} \text{renweiyiwei} \hspace{0.5em} \text{na-jian} \hspace{0.5em} \text{shi}
\text{I think/think that-CL matter}
'\text{I thought/thought that matter.'}
b. \text{wo} \hspace{0.5em} \text{renweiyiwei} \hspace{0.5em} \text{ta} \hspace{0.5em} \text{ben congming; tamen ye *\text{zheme(yang)}
\text{I think/think he very smart they also so
\text{renweiyiwei.}
\text{think/think}
'\text{I thought that he was smart; they also thought.'}

(23) a. *\text{wo} \hspace{0.5em} \text{cai} \hspace{0.5em} \text{na-jian} \hspace{0.5em} \text{shi}
\text{I guess that-CL matter}
'\text{I guess that matter.'}
b. \text{wo} \hspace{0.5em} \text{cai} \hspace{0.5em} \text{ta} \hspace{0.5em} \text{ben congming; tamen ye *\text{zheme(yang)} cai}
\text{I guess he very smart they also so guess}
'\text{I guess that he is smart; they also guess.'}

(24) a. *\text{wo} \hspace{0.5em} \text{dassuan} \hspace{0.5em} \text{na-jian} \hspace{0.5em} \text{shi}
\text{I plan that-CL matter}
'\text{I planned that matter.'}

b. \text{wo} \hspace{0.5em} \text{dassuan} \hspace{0.5em} \text{mingtian} \hspace{0.5em} \text{qu; tamen ye *\text{zheme(yang)} dassuan,}
\text{I plan tomorrow go they also so plan}
'\text{I planned to go tomorrow; they also planned.'}

This correlation can be subsumed under the following condition.

(25) The Visibility Condition on empty categories:
Empty categories in argument positions should be assigned Case or be in a chain containing Case.

This condition means that a null object is possible only if Case is assigned to the position and it may capture the different possibilities of a null object between English and Chinese. As is well-known, Chinese, not English, allows its object to be null:

b. I like him. *She doesn’t like.

(27) a. John \text{kanjian-le} ta; Mary ye \text{kanjian-le}
John see-le him Mary also see-le
'John saw him; Mary also saw.'
b. \text{wo} \hspace{0.5em} \text{xihuans} \hspace{0.5em} \text{ta; tu bu xihuans}
\text{I like him he not like
'\text{I like him; he doesn’t like.'}

This contrast can be captured by an adapted inverse Case filter in Bošković (1997: 34-142).

(28) English, not Chinese, requires Case to be realized on a lexical item.

The obligatoriness of overtly realizing Case features and the requirement on null arguments to be Case marked conspire to rule out any null objects in English. In this language, if a Case feature is available, it must be overtly realized on a lexical item; if such a feature is not available, a null argument is not licensed. These considerations also capture the fact that the object CPs in the following instances cannot be "deleted” (cf. Lobeck 1999, Merchant 2001 for the impossibility of CP deletion in English). The

\text{\textsuperscript{12} If dassuan is only subcategorized for an infinitival clause, it would not affect the discussion on the Case status of clauses in this work, as infinitivals are not assigned Case, as in Siewert (1981).}
relevant object positions are not assigned Case.

(29)  a. *Mary was afraid that the idea wouldn’t work and Bill was [AE [happy [CP e]].
    b. *I suppose that he will come and they suppose [CP e], too.

The facts presented so far reveal two conflicting generalizations: those in (4)-(11) show that clauses are like NPs and are Case-marked in Chinese. In contrast, other facts, such as those related to the generalization in (20), suggest that clauses in Chinese, as in English (14)-(19), are not like NPs and are not Case-marked. How can this conflict be resolved? Three logical options suggest themselves:

(30)  a. Clauses must always be assigned Case in Chinese but not in English.
(20) should not be accommodated by Case.
    b. Different types of clauses must be recognized in Chinese. That is, we need to recognize finer peripheral structures for clauses (Cinque 1999,
Rizzi 1997, 2004). A clause may have some or all of the following
projections at the left periphery: Force Phrase, Topic Phrase, Operator
Phrase, etc. Case is required with certain projections but not the others.
    c. Clauses in Chinese are not in Case positions, just as in English. The
occurrence of clauses in Case-marked positions is only apparent.

In the following discussions, let us, for the sake of convenience, refer to
the complement positions of the verbs in (22)-(24) as non-Case positions and those in (21),
together with the objects of prepositions and subjects, as Case positions. It will be shown
that the option in (30c) is more adequate than the other two, contra the observations and
analyses in Li (1985, 1990) and Tsai (1995).

3. Different types of clauses?

As noted, the lack of inflectional morphology in Chinese makes it more difficult to
distinguish different cases. For instance, the ten verbs in (31a-b) and
(33a-c) can all be translated as clauses in Chinese (32), (34) respectively, even though
only the verbs in (31) and (32) can assign Case to the complements.

(31)  a. I know [that he does his work]it.
    b. I like his/him doing this work/it.

    I know he do this work / this-cl
    'I know that he does this work/this matter.'
    b. wo xihuan [ta zuo zhe gongzuo] / zhe-jian shi.
    I like he do this work / this-cl
    'I like his/him doing this work/this matter.'

(33)  a. He is curious (about) who is doing this work.13
    b. He is happy that he is doing this work.
    c. He prefers for him to do this work.

(34)  a. ta hen haoqi shei zuo zhe gongzuo.
    he very curious who do this work
    'He is curious who is doing this work.'
    b. ta hen gaoxing ta zuo zhe gongzuo.
    he very happy he do this work
    'He is happy that he is doing this work.'
    c. ta tingyuan ta zuo zhe gongzuo.
    he prefer he do this work
    'He prefers for him to do this work.'

13 An important difference between tensed clauses headed by wh-words and other tensed clauses
is that the former seem to optionally appear in Case-marked positions, but the latter generally do
not (except some limited cases such as except that: "It would be funny except that it's not").

(i) a. It's the question of whether God Himself operates outside His own law.
    b. The question whether Abrams' STAR TREK is truly canon has been answered.

(ii) a. The question whether Obama is black enough should end.
    b. On the question whether temperature determines the distribution of marine
    species of animals in depth.

Chinese also
allows questions in both contexts:

(iii) a. ni renwei ta weishernme mei lai/ta lai bu-lai?
    you think he why not come/he come-not-come
    'Why do you think he didn't come/Do you think he will come or not?'
    b. wo hen haoqi shei mei lai.
    I very curious who not come
    'I am curious who did not come.'

(iv) a. wo [dui [ta yuan-bu-yuyan yi lai]] hen haoqi.
    I to he willing-not-willing come very curious
    'I am curious about whether he is willing to come.'
    b. wo juede [shei yinggai lai] bu shi zhongyao de wenti.
    I feel who should come not be important de question
    'I feel who should come is not an important question.'
Even without overt morphological markings, the question can still be asked: does Chinese distinguish different types of clauses in the relevant contexts? Might different types of clauses be responsible for the seemingly contradictory patterns: some clauses appear in Case-marked positions and some others do not? The data for the clauses in Case and non-Case positions seem to suggest that both allow the same type(s) of clauses. They can be wh-questions, as demonstrated earlier. In addition, topic and focus (indicated by the focus marker shì ‘be’ or dōu ‘on earth’) elements are also allowed in both contexts.

(35) a. wo zhídào nà-jian shì.
I know that-cl. matter
’I know that matter.’

b. wǒ dào nà-jian shì hén hǎoqí.
I to that-cl. matter very curious
’I am curious about that matter.’

c. *wǒ yìwèi nà-jian shì.
I thought that-cl. matter

(36) a. wǒ zhídào shì tài ná-le nà-bèn shū.
I know be he take-le that-cl. book
’I know that he took that book.’

b. wǒ dào tài dàdǐ bù yuán yì zuò shènme hǎi méi gāo qǐngzhǔ.
I to he to-end not willing do what still not make clear
’I am still not clear what on earth he is not willing to do.’

c. wǒ yìwèi shì tài ná-le nà-bèn shū.
I thought be he take-le that-cl. book
’I thought that he took that book.’

(37) a. wǒ zhídào nà-bèn shū, tái ná-le.
I know that-cl. book he take-le
’I know that book, he took.’

b. wǒ dào nà-jian shì shèi yuán yì zuò hén hǎoqí.
I to that-cl. matter who willing do very curious
’I am curious about, that matter, who will do (it).’

c. wǒ yìwèi nà-bèn shū tái ná-le.
I thought that-cl. book he take-le
’I thought that book, he took.’

This suggests that the typical left-peripheral elements such as question operators, topic and focus elements are allowed in the complement positions of Ps and verbs assigning Case and the non-Case-assigning verbs. What is left is the option of tense: could it be that Chinese does distinguish tensed clauses from non-tensed ones and that verbs like rěnwèi ‘think’, can ‘guess’ require tensed clausal complements but Case-marked positions are occupied by non-tensed clauses?

The answer to this question is dependent on the availability of a syntactic representation of tense in Chinese. Tsang (1981), Huang (1982[1998]), Li (1985, 1990), among others, argue that Chinese distinguishes infinitival clauses from tensed clauses and modal-like words such as hún can serve as a tense marker. In contrast, Hu, Pan & Xu (2001) argue that Chinese does not make such a distinction. Lately, Lin (2003a, 2003b, 2006), Sybesma (2007) and Tsai (2008) revisited the issue of whether Chinese has a tense projection syntactically. In the following paragraphs, we show that even if we follow the claim by Sybesma and Tsai that Chinese does express tense syntactically and accept all their arguments for the claim, such tensed clauses seem to still appear in the typical Case-marked positions.

Let us illustrate this point with the most recent work, Tsai (2008). According to Tsai, there is some “incompleteness” effect observed in Chinese for sentences like the following:

(38) a. "Aiku pào-zhē.
Aiku run-DUR
Aiku watch-DUR TV
(39) "Aiku ná-le shū.
Aiku take-PRF book
"Aiku took books."

Tsai claims that these cases sound incomplete because of their failure in tense anchoring, i.e., to guarantee a proper temporal reference of a given sentence through syntactic measures. He analyzes tense anchoring as a process of spelling out an underlying event argument by a variety of morpho-syntactic means. This process may involve event coordination, event subordination, event modification, event quantification, or verb raising to v/T.

(40) a. Aiku yízhí pào-zhē.
Aiku continuously run-DUR
"Aiku is running continuously."
Regardless of the mechanisms to encode the notion of tense, what is pertinent to our discussion is that even if we follow Tsui’s arguments and agree that Chinese expresses tense syntactically (tense anchoring), these “tensed clauses” seem to comfortably appear in typical Case positions, including the object of Case-assigning verbs and the object of prepositions:

(41) a. wo zhida [Akiu yizhi pao-zhe].
    I know Akiu continuously run-DUR
    ‘I know that Akiu is running continuously.’  

b. wo zhida [Akiu na-le shu jiu pao].
    I know Akiu take-PRF book then run away
    ‘I know that Akiu ran away immediately after taking the book.’

c. wo zhida [Akiu name kui jiu na-le shu le].
    I know Akiu that fast then take-PRF book PRT
    ‘I know that Akiu has taken the book that fast.’

(42) a. wo [dui Akiu yizhi pao-zhe] hen bu gaoxing.
    I to Akiu continuously run-DUR very not happy
    ‘I am not happy that Akiu is running continuously.’

b. wo [dui Akiu yizhi kan-zhe dianshi, yibian]
    I to Akiu on.the.one.hand watch-DUR TV on.the.other
    xie-zhe biagao.
    write-DUR report
    ‘Akiu is watching TV and writing the report at the same time.’

c. wo [dui Akiu na-le san-ben shu].
    I to Akiu take-PRF three-CL book
    ‘Akiu took three books.’

d. wo [dui Akiu yinggai/mei na shu].
    I to Akiu should/have not take book
    ‘Akiu should take/have not taken books.’

e. wo [dui Akiu na-le shu jiu pao].
    I to Akiu take-PRF book then run
    ‘Akiu ran away immediately after taking the book.’

f. wo [dui Akiu name kui jiu na-le shu le] hen bu gaoxing.
    I to Akiu that fast then take-PRF book PRT very not happy
    ‘I am not happy that Akiu has taken the book that fast.’

The range of possibilities shown above is similar to that for the patterns with verbs not allowing NP complements, such as renweiyi/weici ‘think/guess’.

(43) a. wo yiwei [Akiu yizhi pao-zhe].
    I think Akiu continuously run-DUR
    ‘I thought that Akiu was running continuously.’

b. wo yiwei [Akiu yizhi kan-zhe dianshi, yibian]
    I think Akiu on.the.one.hand watch-DUR TV on.the.other
    xie-zhe biagao.
    write-DUR report
    ‘I thought that Akiu was watching TV and writing the report at the same time.’

c. wo yiwei [Akiu na-le san-ben shu].
    I think Akiu take-PRF three-CL book
    ‘I thought that Akiu took three books.’

d. wo yiwei [Akiu yinggai/mei na shu].
    I think Akiu should/have not take book
    ‘I thought that Akiu should take/have not taken books.’
The lack of contrast in acceptability between (41)-(42) and (43) shows that, if indeed there is tense anchoring, distinguishing tensed clauses from non-tensed ones, the types of clauses grouped under the tensed ones can appear in those positions allowing NPs (Case-marked positions), as well as the positions not allowing NPs.

A cautionary remark should be made concerning cases like (41), those with verbs allowing both a postverbal nominal and clausal complement. Although we recast this pattern in terms of Case marking — the verbs in this pattern can assign Case, it should be noted that the complement clause might not always be in Case positions, as such a clause might be extraposed (Stowell 1981). Therefore, we will focus on the patterns in (42) and (43).

Even though (42) and (43) show that the same types of clauses can appear in clearly Case marked positions (prepositional object) and non-Case marked positions (those disallowing NPs), the two patterns do not share the entire range of possibilities. For instance, the focus marker shi is quite natural in the clausal complements of the verbs disallowing NP complements (44); whereas the sentences in (45) show that the focus marker shi is much less acceptable in clearly Case-marked positions:

(44) wo yiwel [Akiu shi yizhi pao-zhe].
I think Akiu be continuously run-DUR and
'Ve thought that Akiu indeed was running continuously.'

(45) a. wo [dwi [Akiu (*shi) yizhi pao-zhe]] hen bu gaoxing.
I to Akiu be continuously run-DUR very not happy
'I am not happy that Akiu indeed was running continuously.'

b. wo [ba [Akiu (*shi) yizhi pao-zhe]] dangzuo shi hen
I ba Akiu be continuously run-DUR regard be very
zhongyao de shi.
important de matter
'I took it as important that Akiu indeed was running continuously.'

c. wo [bei [Akiu (*shi) yizhi pao-zhe]] fansi le.
I bei Akiu be continuously run-DUR annoyed
'I was annoyed by Akiu's indeed running continuously.'
(49) wo xiang-zhidao Zhangsan zuole shenme he/gen/erqie Lisi (ye) I want know Zhangsan did what and Lisi also zuole shenme.
did what
'I want to know what Zhangsan did and what Lisi (also) did.'

(50) a. Zhangsan neng-bu-neng lai he/gen Lisi neng-bu-neng lai Zhangsan can-not-can come and Lisi can-not-come come
dou bu shi wenti.15 all not be question
'Whether Zhangsan can come and whether Lisi can come are not questions.'

b. Zhangsan de da jiang be/erqie Lisi ye de da jiang shi hen Zhangsan get big prize and Lisi also get big prize be very
zhongyao de.
important de
'That Zhangsan gets a big prize and Lisi also gets a big prize are very
important.'

(51) wo dui Zhangsan keyi lai erqie/he/gen Lisi ye keyi lai mei yijian. I to Zhangsan can come and Lisi also can come not opinion
'I have no opinion on (the fact) that Zhangsan can come and Lisi can come too.'

---

15 If erqie conjoins clauses, dou is not possible.

(i) Zhangsan bu lai erqie Lisi ye bu lai (*dou) shi wenti. 
Zhangsan not come and Lisi also not come all be problem
'Zhangsan cannot come and Lisi also cannot come is a problem.'

Erqie conjoins two CPs to make one CP. The entire CP can still be a clause followed by a
singular noun.

(ii) wo dui Zhangsan bu lai erqie Lisi ye bu lai zhe-ge wenti I to Zhangsan not come and Lisi also not come this-CL problem
hen daxin.
very worried
'I am worried about the problem that Zhangsan cannot come and Lisi cannot come either.'

Indeed, a noun phrase expressing plural entities seems impossible:

(iii) * wo dui Zhangsan bu lai erqie Lisi ye bu lai zhe-liang-ge wenti hen daxin.
1 to Zhangsan not come and Lisi also not come this-two-CL
problem very worried
'I am worried about the two problems that Zhangsan cannot come and Lisi cannot come either.'

---

(52) wo bu Zhangsan keyi lai he/gen Lisi ye keyi lai dangzuo shi I ba Zhangsan can come and Lisi also can come regard be
hen zhongyao de shi.
very important de matter
'I take the fact as important that Zhangsan can come and Lisi can come too.'

(53) wo bei Zhangsan keyi lai he/gen Lisi ye keyi lai xiadao le. I bei Zhangsan can come and Lisi also can come shocked
'I was shocked by the fact that Zhangsan can come and Lisi can come too.'

(54) [cong \{[Zhangsan jinlai] he/gen [Lisi jinlai]] dao [xianzai]],
from Zhangsan enter and Lisi enter to now
wo dou mei shuo hua.
I all have-not speak word
'From the time Zhangsan entered and Lisi entered till now, I did not say a word.'

Why is it that the nominal conjunction is possible with (49)-(54) but not (46)-(48)?
The translation of (54) provides a clue: it requires the use of nominal expressions like
time, moment. The obligatory use of time expressions in the translation for (54) makes
sens because the object for the preposition cong 'from' and dao 'to' should not be a
proposition. Rather, the relevant objects should express temporal points. (54) is
synonymous with the one below, which contains nominal temporal expressions even
though the repetition of na shihou 'that time' sounds somewhat redundant:

(55) [cong \{Zhangsan jinlai] (na shihou) he/gen [Lisi jinlai] na shihou
from Zhangsan enter that time and Lisi enter that time
dao [xianzai]], wo dou mei shuo hua.
to now I all have-not speak word
'From the time Zhangsan entered and (the time) Lisi entered till now, I did
not say a word.'

Indeed, the instances possible with he/gen as the conjunction word can all have
the addition of a noun phrase: [Clause + Noun Phrase].

(56) wo xiang-zhidao Zhangsan zuole shenme he/gen Lisi (ye) zuole I want-know Zhangsan did what and Lisi also did
shenme zhe liang-jian shi.
what these two-CL matter
'I want to know the two questions of what Zhangsan did and what Lisi (also)
did.'
(57) Zhangsan neng-bu-neng lai he/gen Lisi neng-bu-neng lai
Zhangsan can-not-can come and Lisi can-not-can come
zhe liang-ge wenti dou bu zhongyao. 16
these two-Ct. questions all not important
'The questions of whether Zhangsan can come and whether Lisi can come are not important.'

(58) wo bei Zhangsan keyi lai he/gen Lisi ye keyi lai
1 to Zhangsan can come and Lisi also can come
zhe liang-jian shi mei yijian.
these two-Ct. matter not opinion
'I have no opinion on the two matters that Zhangsan can come and Lisi can also come.'

(59) wo ba Zhangsan keyi lai he/gen Lisi ye keyi lai zhe liang-jian
1 ba Zhangsan can come and Lisi also can come these two-Ct.
shi dangzuo shi hen zhongyao de shi.
matter regard be very important de matter
'I take the two matters as important that Zhangsan can come and Lisi can also come.'

(60) wo bei Zhangsan keyi lai he/gen Lisi ye keyi lai zhe
1 bei Zhangsan can come and Lisi also can come these
liang-jian shi xiadaole.
two-Ct. matter shocked
'I was shocked by the two matters that Zhangsan can come and Lisi can come too.'

In contrast, those clauses not allowing he/gen as conjunction words do not accept
an accompanying noun phrase:

These contrasts suggest that what appears as a clause in a Case position might actually be a more complex nominal structure containing a clause and a covert noun (phrase), equivalent of the overt expression '(the) question', '(the) matter', 'the time', etc. The relation between the clause and the noun (phrase) might be an apposition or a noun complement structure. We will not pursue in this work the precise characterization of the nature of the covert noun (phrase) and its relation with the clause but simply refer to the nominal clausal structure as a complex NP structure. What is important is that recognizing a clause in Case positions as having a more complex structure provides a better understanding of the facts discussed so far in this work and other related phenomena.

5. Complex NP structures

Adopting a complex NP structure for the clauses in Case positions accommodates the facts described so far. First, because what are conjoined are noun phrases, it is expected that the nominal conjunction word be or gen is used. Two entities are conjoined; therefore, the distributive marker dou is possible, as in (50a). Note that the use of erqie indicates that the conjunction creates one CP, which can be accompanied by a noun phrase expressing single, not plural entities. The occurrence of dou is impossible (see note 15).

(61) a. wo renwei yiwei cai
Zhangsan keyi lai erqie Lisi ye keyi lai
I think/thought/guess Zhangsan can come and Lisi also can come
(*zhe liang-jian shi).
The two-Ct. matter
'I think/thought/guess *(the two) matters that Zhangsan can come and Lisi can also come.'

cf. b. wo zhidao Zhangsan keyi lai he/gen Lisi ye keyi lai
I know Zhangsan can come and Lisi also can come
zhe liang-jian shi.
The two-Ct. matter
'I know *(the two matters) that Zhangsan can come and Lisi can also come.'
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cf.

(63) Zhangsan bu-neng lai heigen Lisi bu-neng lai dou bu shi wenti.
Zhangsan not-can come and Lisi not-come come all not be question
‘Whether Zhangsan can come and whether Lisi can come are not problems.’

In addition, it is expected that the focus marker shi, glossed as ‘be’, does not appear within a complex NP, illustrated below:

(64) a. [[Akiu(*shi) yizhi pao-zhe] zhe-jian shi]
Akiu be continuously run-DUR this-CL matter
‘the matter that Akiu is indeed running continuously’
b. [[Akiu(*shi) neng-bu-neng] zhe wenti]
Akiu be can-not-can come this question
‘the question whether Akiu indeed can come’

The distribution of the focus marker shi is sensitive to island conditions, which is expected if the focus marker shi needs to be raised to the matrix clause at LF, which cannot cross island boundaries (complex NP constraint in this case — no extraction crossing the boundary of a complex NP, one of the island constraints as in Ross 1967, Chomsky 1981).

The island effects created by the complex NP structure are manifested not only in where the focus marker shi can appear but also in the constructions involving overt extraction. Consider the patterns containing a clause assigned Case by bu ‘by’, he and bei. Extraction of the subject from within such a clause is not possible as in (65), in contrast to (66), which allows the embedded subject to be topicalized:

(65) a. Lisi, wo [dui (*ta) bu hui jia] hen bu gaoxing.
Lisi I to he not will come very not happy
‘Lisi, I am not happy that he will not come.’
b. Lisi, wo [ba (*ta) bu hui jia] dangguo shi hen zhongyao de shi.
Lisi I ba he not will come regard be very important de matter
‘Lisi, I took it as important that he was not coming.’
c. Lisi, wo [bei (*ta yizhi] ku-zhe]]. fansi le.
Lisi I bei he continuously cry-DUR annoyed
‘Lisi, I was annoyed by (his) crying continuously.’

(66) Lisi, wo renweiyiwei/cai (ta) bu hui lai.
Lisi I think/thought/guess he not will come
‘Lisi, I think/thought/guess that he would not come.’

In addition, only argument question words can appear inside a clause in the relevant Case positions and be interpreted as having scope outside the clause. Adjunct question words are not possible.

(67) ta dui shei hui bei qing lai yanjiang hen gaoxing ne?
he to who will be/invite come speak very happy Q
‘Who(x) is he happy (x) will speak?’

(68) a. *ta dui ni weishenme yao yanjiang hen gaoxing ne?
he to you why will speak very happy Q
‘Why(x) is he happy he will speak (x)?’
cf. b. ta dui ni weishenme yao yanjiang hen haqi ma?
he to you why will speak very curious Q
‘Is he curious about why you will speak?’

(69) a. *ta dui ni yao-bu-yao yanjiang hen gaoxing ne?
he to you will-not-will speak very happy Q
cf. b. ta dui ni yao-bu-yao yanjiang hen haqi ma?
he to you will-not-will speak very curious Q
‘Is he curious about whether you will speak?’

(70) ta ba shi yao yanjiang kande hen yanzhong ne?
he to who will speak regard very serious Q
‘Who(x) does he take seriously (x) will speak?’

(71) a. *ta ba ni weishenme yao yanjiang kande hen yanzhong ne?
he to you why will speak regard very serious Q
‘Why(x) does he take seriously he will speak (x)?’
cf. b. ta dui ni weishenme yao yanjiang kande hen yanzhong ma?
he to you why will speak regard very serious Q
‘Does he take seriously about why you will speak?’

(72) a. *ta ba ni yao-bu-yao yanjiang kande hen yanzhong ne?
he to you will-not-will speak regard very serious Q
cf. b. ta ba ni yao-bu-yao yanjiang kande hen yanzhong ma?
he to you will-not-will speak regard very serious Q
‘Does he take seriously whether you will speak?’

11 It is not possible to extract from within an appositive clause, either, even though the term ‘complex NP constraint’ generally is not used to accommodate apposition cases.
These patterns demonstrate that the clauses following *dui*/*bebei* behave like islands, which seems to support the proposal that these clauses are not what they appear to be. The structures are more complicated: there is a covert noun (phrase) — complex NP structures. Unfortunately, resorting to the complex NP constraint is not the only possibility. The unacceptable patterns discussed above involve extraction from a constituent on the left branch of the tree structures. Even though the nature of the left-branch condition is not clear (e.g., see Kennedy & Merchant 2000 for the claim that the left-branch condition is a PF phenomenon and see the variations regarding the relevance of left-branch condition in different types of languages such as Bosković 2005, Corver 1990, 1992, among many others), it is still a possible factor. Therefore, we can only claim that the facts regarding extraction are compatible with a complex NP structure but do not exclusively argue for it.\(^\text{13}\) Still, there is some evidence from postverbal clausal complements that supports the more complex structure. Recall that some verbs can assign Case to their clausal complements and the nominal conjunction word he or gen can conjoin such clausal complements, as in (61b), repeated below:\(^\text{19}\)

(61) b. wo zhidaoh Zhangsan keyi lai he/gen Lisi ye keyi lai I know Zhangsan be can come and Lisi also be can come (the liang-jian shi) the two-CL matter 'I know (the two matters) that Zhangsan can come and Lisi can also come.'

The complex NP analysis would predict that the shi focus is not possible in this pattern, nor an adjunct wh-question or A-not-A (alternative) question in the clausal complement but with scope outside the clause. These predictions are born out:

\(^{13}\) Nonetheless, it is relevant to point out that the constituents following *dui* or *bebei* are all arguments (thematically-marked). Tsim (1995) notes that the *dui* phrase is selected by the verb arguments among the layers of structures constituting or adjoining the predicates of sentences (for the details of possible analyses on *beibei*, see Li 2006 on *beibei*). Chinese may be considered as a head-final language (Li 1985, 1990). It would be important to investigate the nature of the Left Branch Condition in head-final languages.

\(^{19}\) The postverbal position can be ambiguous: Case marked or non-Case marked. A verb can optionally assign Case in Chinese, as suggested in Li (1985, 1990). An extraposition option might also be entertained.

(73) *wo zhidaoh Zhangsan shi keyi lai he/gen Lisi ye shi keyi lai I know Zhangsan be can come and Lisi also be can come (the liang-jian shi) the two-CL matter 'I know (the two matters) that Zhangsan indeed can come and Lisi indeed can also come.'

(74) a. *ni xiangxin Zhangsan you believe Zhangsan you believe Zhangsan why can come and (the liang-jian shi) ne? why can come and (the liang-jian shi) ne? Lisi also why can come the two-CL matter Q 'Why(x) you believe Zhangsan can come(s) and Lisi can also come(s)\textsuperscript{?}'

b. *ni xiangxin Zhangsan ke-bu-keyi lai he/gen Lisi you believe Zhangsan ke-bu-keyi lai he/gen Lisi may-not-may come and Lisi may-not-may come the two-CL matter Q (the liang-jian shi) ne? 'You believe Zhangsan may or may not come and Lisi may or may not come.'

6. Conclusion

Case-marked positions allow NPs and NPs are assigned Case. The question is whether clauses in Case positions are indeed what they are: are they really assigned Case by the relevant Case assigners? We argued that such instances of clauses in Case-marked positions actually are deceptive. The tools available from the study of conjunction and null objects helped to make the discovery. The relevant clauses have more complex structures. They are complex nominals and Case is assigned to the nominal. The clause itself is not assigned Case, which is why clauses are possible in the positions where Case is not assigned and NPs are not possible. This amounts to saying that it is still possible to consider C-selection as derivative of s-selection interacting with Case, as proposed by Pesetsky.\(^{20}\) The Case filter applies to NPs, not to clauses.\(^{21}\) To complete the paradigm, we should point out that, just like their English counterparts, non-Case marked

\(^{20}\) Our work focuses on the role played by Case and clauses. However, the general issue of whether C-selection can be completely derived from a very well articulated theory of s-selection (such as the work on lexical semantics by Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1996, 2005 and many others) is still debatable. Further discussion on this issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

\(^{21}\) Li (1985, 1990) argues that non-argument NPs such as duration phrases also receive Case.

Some languages overtly case mark such NPs, such as Korean.
clauses in Chinese cannot undergo A'-movement, leaving variables in need of Case. Recall that the complement clauses of happy/paрад in the English sentences (75a-b) are not assigned Case, as illustrated by the unacceptability of topicalization in (76a-b), in contrast to the possibility of topicalizing the clausal complement when Case is available as in (78a-b).  

(75)  
a. I believe that Mary is happy that Charles is leaving.  
b. I know that Neil is afraid that the computer will break down.

(76)  
a. *[That Charles is leaving], I believe that Mary is happy.
   b. *[That he computer will break down] I know that Neil is afraid.

(77)  
a. [That Charles is leaving], I believe that Mary knows.
   b. [That the computer will break down] I know that Neil understands.

The same contrast is found in Chinese:

(78)  
a. ta shuo [ta hui lai, tamen renwei/cai ta hui lai],
   he say he will come
   'He said that he would come.'
   'He said they thought/guessed that he would come.'

b. ta shuo, [ta hui lai, tamen renwei/cai],
   he say he will come
   'He said he would come.'
   'He said they thought/guessed that he would come.'

(79)  
a. ta shuo [tamen zhidao/bu xiangxing ta hui lai],
   he say they know/not believe he will come
   'He said they knew/did not believe that he would come.'

These generalizations suggest that among the three options in (30a-c), only (30c) is adequate empirically — Case is relevant to NPs, not clauses, and the occurrence of clauses in Case-marked positions is only apparent.

References


