

On the syntax of asyndeton: The case of Mandarin correlative constructions

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This study explores the syntax of Mandarin correlative constructions whose conjuncts are juxtaposed without an overt coordinating conjunction in between, as illustrated below.

(1) a. *Mali you/ji xi yifu, you zuo wanfan.*
Mary also/not.only wash clothes also make dinner
'Mary not only washed clothes but also made dinner.'

b. *Mali yi-bian xi yifu, yi-bian zuo wanfan.*
Mary one-side wash clothes one-side make dinner
'Mary was washing clothes on the one hand and making dinner on the other.'

c. *Ni yue nuli, yue rongyi dacheng mubiao.*
2SG more hardworking more easy reach goal
'The harder you work, the more easily you will reach the goal.'

We distinguish paired coordinators like *you/ji...you* in (1a), *yi-bian...yi-bian* in (1b), and *yue...yue* in (1c) from coordinating conjunctions like *erqie* 'and' and *danshi* 'but', given that the latter do not occur in paired forms. In this study, we find that not all Mandarin correlative constructions behave alike syntactically. We observe that they differ in clausal fronting, the addition of an overt linking element, and asymmetric extraction. In our proposal, Mandarin correlative constructions fall into two major types. Those of the *yue...yue* type are coordinate structures which involve complementation, while those of the *yi-bian...yi-bian* and *yue...yue* type are subordinate structures which involve left-adjunction. We also make a distinction between VP-adjoined structures such as *yi-bian...yi-bian* constructions and CP-adjoined structures such as *yue...yue* constructions. The results of this study have several implications. First, syntactic differences observed in this study cast doubt on a unified syntactic analysis as proposed by Zhang (2008). Second, the possibility of extraction from the second correlative clause in *yi-bian...yi-bian* constructions poses a challenge to the pseudo-subordination analysis (Lin 2023), as opposed to our simple subordination analysis. Third, the island property of the

first correlative clause in Mandarin *yue...yue* constructions does not support the paratactic hypothesis built from English *the more...the more* constructions (Culicover & Jackendoff 1999). While the paratactic hypothesis assumes that in English comparative *the more...the more* constructions, neither correlative clause is an adjunct, a complement or a specifier, this study argues that in Mandarin comparative *yue...yue* constructions, the first correlative clause is an adjunct.

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References

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