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RETROSPECTIVE TURN CONTINUATIONS IN MANDARIN CHINESE CONVERSATION¹

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Abstract

How the status of further talk past the point of a turn's possible completion should be described, and what functions different kinds of turn continuation might serve – these are questions that have engaged many scholars since Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's turn-taking model (1974). In this paper, a general scheme is proposed with which one can tease out four interlocking strands in analyzing different kinds of turn continuation: Syntactic continuity vs. discontinuity, main vs. subordinate intonation, retrospective vs. prospective orientation, and information focus vs. non-focus. These parameters combine to form different configurations and interact in interesting ways, accounting for different kinds of turn continuation. The scheme is tested on, and illustrated with, a body of naturally occurring conversational data in Chinese.

Keywords: Turn-taking; Syntax; Prosody; Right Dislocation; Chinese; Mandarin.

1. Introduction

In Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) turn-taking model for conversation (hereafter SSJ 1974), a turn is made up of one or more turn construction units (TCUs). Upon the possible completion of a TCU, turn transition becomes relevant, i.e. a change of speakership may occur. If, however, turn transition does not occur, and current speaker continues to speak, then the turn will be lengthened through the delivery of further talk (by current speaker). If this further talk comes in the form of a new TCU, then we will

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have a case of turn continuation resulting in a two-TCU (and in time, multi-TCU) turn. However, as SSJ's 1974 paper pointed out, instead of a new TCU, further talk may also come in the form of a TCU-internal extension, so that the result (up to this point in time) is not a turn with two TCUs, but one with a single, complex, TCU (SSJ 1974: 730). While the broad outline as described above has been available since 1974, turn continuation is arguably an aspect of the turn-taking system which is still in need of elaboration. In what ways can turns be continued? What formal properties do different continuation methods have, and what kinds of communicative functions might they serve?

These points were left largely unattended to until the mid-1990's (with the notable exception of Goodwin 1979, 1981). From 1996 on (Schegloff 1996, 2000), issues relating to turn continuation began to attract increasingly more research interest. A body of literature has emerged as a result, documenting the many ways in which turns are continued in conversations in a variety of languages (Auer 1992; Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996; Schegloff 1996, 2000; Selting 1996; Ford & Thompson 1996; Ford, Fox & Thompson 1996, 2002; Tanaka 1999, 2000; Hayashi 2003; Tao 1996; Couper-Kuhlen & Ono, this volume; Field, this volume; Kim, this volume; Seppanen & Laury, this volume; Zhang & Luke 2003).

When Schegloff (1996, 2000) addressed the issue of post-completion continuation, his focus was on one particular type, "increment" in his terms, which is "grammatically fitted to, or symbiotic with" (2000: 3) its preceding TCU (called the "host"). Examples (all taken from Schegloff 2000) include:

- (1) I'm much better this afternoon. **than I was.**
- (2) Well because he knows what the problems are. **Already.**
- (3) How much did your momma give you. **for allowance.**

The utterances marked in bold in the above examples are "increments", i.e. words, phrases, or clauses added after a TCU's possible completion, which, furthermore, are legitimate next constituents in the sense that together with their host they form a longer sentence, as shown in (4) to (6) below:

- (4) I'm much better this afternoon than I was.
- (5) Well because he knows what the problems are already.
- (6) How much did your momma give you for allowance?

Schegloff's detailed analysis shows that this type of TCU expansion serves various interactional functions, e.g. upping the ante, covering inter-turn gaps, projecting further telling, doing insistence and backdown, etc. He takes incrementing a possibly completed turn as "a nearly generic possibility in conversation" and that it is implemented to deal with "[a]s many things, perhaps, as there are interactional junctures to be managed" (2000: 13).

In Ford, Fox and Thompson's (2002) study (FFT 2002 hereafter), in addition to Schegloff's "increments", another type of post-completion continuation is analyzed. This the authors call *free constituents*. Schegloff's increment is now called *extension*. *Increment* is used instead to subsume both types, and is defined as "any nonmain-clause continuation after a possible point of turn completion" (FFT 2002: 16). Forms of *extension* include various syntactic types, e.g. NPs, adverbs, adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases, relative clauses and adverbial clauses while *free constituents* are mainly "unattached NPs". Focusing on one particular kind of interactional work of the increment, namely pursuing recipient uptake, FFT found an interesting iconic relationship between the different formats of the increment and the range of interactional work that they do. While *extensions*, i.e. syntactic continuations, embody action continuations, unattached NPs, the syntactically less integrated form, are employed to perform interactionally less integrated actions.

More types of TCU continuation are examined in Couper-Kuhlen & Ono (this volume), where a cross-linguistic classification of turn continuations is proposed on the basis of earlier work carried out by Auer (1992, 1996) and Vorreiter (2003). A first differentiation is made between TCU continuations and new TCUs based on syntactic and semantic relatedness. Within TCU continuations, a further division is made between *Add-ons* and *Non-Add-ons* based on the presence or absence of a prosodic break following a possible completion. *Increment*, then, is one of two subcategories under the *Add-ons* (the other being *Replacement*). It includes *Glue-ons* and *Insertables*. Their *Glue-ons* are equivalent to Schegloff's "increments" and FFT's "extensions" as they refer to those TCU continuations which are grammatically fitted to the end of the host TCU. Thus, with each paper the scope of "increment" becomes a little different, as can be seen in the diagram on the next page.

In this paper, we wish to build upon these studies by proposing several concepts that in our view are fundamental to the study of turn continuation. We also wish to contribute to cross-linguistic comparisons by looking into the specifics of doing turn continuations in Chinese. Our focus is on retrospective turn continuations as opposed to

prospective continuations, which are generally not a problem for the analyst. Our examples are drawn from a small data collection, based on three conversations (two speakers in each) conducted in Mandarin, totaling one hour in length. Even though the data set from which our illustrations were drawn is small, the patterns identified therein are consistent with those that we have observed in Chinese conversational data in general. The variety of turn continuations that we have identified are probably not exhaustive. Nevertheless, we hope our analysis of the data can pave the way for more extensive and in-depth analyses in the future.

(7)

	Schegloff 1996	FFT 2002	Couper-Kuhlen and Ono (this volume)
Increment =	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “increment” (Grammatically fitted TCU continuation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “extension” (Grammatically fitted TCU continuation) • Free constituents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “glue-ons” (Grammatically fitted TCU continuation) • Insertables

We outline in Section 2 a general scheme in terms of which we believe the status of further talk can be determined. We then present in Section 3 some background information on aspects of syntax and prosody in Mandarin Chinese necessary for an appreciation of the analysis to be presented later in the paper. We move on to give, in Section 4, the result of our study of retrospective turn continuations in Chinese. The final section of the paper contains a summary and a conclusion.

2. The status of further talk

We present in this section a general scheme for the classification of further talk (in the sense of current speaker’s delivery of an utterance past a TCU’s possible completion point) in an attempt to address key questions for research on turn continuation. We believe that the status of further talk is best understood from the following four inter-related but distinct points of view:

1. Its syntactic relationship with prior talk (continuous or discontinuous?)
2. Its prosody relative to prior talk (main or subordinate?)
3. Its semantic/pragmatic orientation relative to prior talk (prospective or retrospective?)
4. Its information status (focus or non-focus?)

2.1. *The syntactic relationship of further talk with prior talk: Continuous vs. discontinuous*

Our first consideration is whether further talk is syntactically continuous with prior talk, i.e. how well further talk is syntactically fitted to its “host” (Schegloff 2000). Further talk is said to be syntactically continuous with its host if it can be parsed as a legitimate right-hand constituent that fits neatly to the end of the just-completed TCU, as in *I was so impressed. by that kid.* Otherwise, it is said to be discontinuous, e.g. *I was so impressed. I mean this kid.* (FFT 2002: 29) Diagrammatically, if we refer to the host as ‘string x’, further talk as ‘string y’, and the sequential “sum” of the two as ‘string z’,

(8) [z [x] [y]]

then we shall say that string y is syntactically continuous relative to string x if and only if string z also forms a legitimate syntactic string in the language. Otherwise, string y is said to be discontinuous with string x. We stress here the notion of *syntactic* legitimacy, as distinct from “grammatical symbiosis or fittedness”, terms more commonly encountered in the literature. We believe that “grammatical symbiosis” may be a conflation of two inter-related but independent concepts, namely syntax and intonation. It is important to make a clear distinction between syntax and prosody, because while they do work together at times they may also work at cross purposes at other times. To illustrate the possible combinations of syntax and intonation, consider the following examples:²

↘

(9) I’m much better this afternoon. (Syntactically and prosodically one unit. No further talk is involved. One TCU.)

↘

(10) I’m much better this afternoon. # than I was.# (Syntactically continuous and prosodically “fitted”. Further talk added after host. One extended TCU.)

↘

↘

(11) I’m much better this afternoon. Already. (Syntactically continuous but prosodically

² The arrows in the following examples indicate the locus of a falling intonation, and the # signs are used to bracket off stretches of talk that are said at the same or a lower level than preceding talk in terms of pitch and loudness, and often also at a faster rate. For details on the analysis of intonation in the context of lexical tones in Chinese, see Fox, Luke and Nancarrow (to appear).

separate. Two TCUs.)³

↘ ↘

(12) I'm much better this afternoon. How about you? (Syntactically discontinuous and prosodically separate. Two TCUs.)

Thus, syntax and prosody can combine in different ways to produce structurally different kinds of turns, e.g. turns which contain a TCU that gets extended in the course of its delivery, as in (10), or turns which contain one TCU followed by another which is nevertheless syntactically continuous with the first one, as in (11).

As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, turns can be extended in two main ways: either by appending material to a just-completed TCU, thus 'prolonging' it, or by adding a new TCU to it. As one would expect, in terms of syntax, TCU extensions are always syntactically continuous with their hosts. (Note, however, that the reverse is not always true: Further talk that is syntactically continuous may or may not be turn extensions, as example (11) and footnote 3 show.) The addition of new TCUs, on the other hand, can be achieved through further talk that is syntactically continuous or discontinuous with its host, as illustrated above. Thus, syntactic continuity alone is not sufficient in determining whether a given stretch of further talk is a TCU-extension or a new TCU. Intonation needs to be taken into consideration.

2.2. Prosody of further talk: Main vs. subordinate

An utterance may come with either "full intonation" (i.e. independent intonation) or "non-full intonation".⁴ Full intonation helps signal the boundaries of an utterance by indicating its beginning and end. The beginning is usually marked by higher pitch and greater loudness, and the end by a clear rising or falling pitch pattern (to be followed

³ Examples of contiguous TCUs that are syntactically continuous abound in everyday speech. To quote one example from Tao & McCarthy (2001:666)

<Speaker 1> He's a waiter he's a waiter at Rosa's. out there in Ontario.

<Speaker 2> (VOCAL NOISE)

<Speaker 1> **Which is a very nice restaurant I'm sure**, but, he wants to open his own restaurant someday.

Examples can also be found in novels written in a colloquial style, e.g. Anthony Horowitz's *Public Enemy Number Two*, which is to some extent indicative of everyday speech: (1) "The way I figured it was, they'd just forget about me and go and look for somebody else. **Which just shows you how much I knew.**" (2) "He figured it's time you kinda left the scene. **Permanently.**" (p.70)

⁴ Limitations of space preclude a detailed treatment of intonation in this paper. The system presented here draws much from such well-known works as Pike (1945), Bolinger (1951) and Halliday (1963), and is in broad outline compatible with them. Chapter 5 of Fox (2000) gives an excellent account of the literature.

possibly by some unstressed material). Non-full intonation, on the other hand, marks an utterance as dependent in status. It may be incomplete (such as with TCU-internal hesitations or word searches) or subordinate (such as with afterthoughts). A combination of lowered pitch, reduced loudness, and quickened tempo may indicate an utterance's dependent status relative to the immediately prior utterance. Subordinate intonation is of particular relevance to our main concerns in this paper, as TCU extensions are often accompanied by it. New TCUs, on the other hand, typically come with full (i.e. main) intonation. Thus, the TCU extension in (10) is done with subordinate intonation while the new TCU in (11) is marked with main intonation. Intonation is also relevant to information packaging, which will be discussed in section 2.4 below.

2.3. Semantic/Pragmatic orientation of further talk relative to prior talk: Prospective vs. retrospective

Our third consideration is the orientation of further talk. In terms of its relation to prior talk, further talk may be said to be prospective or retrospective in orientation. It must be conceded at the outset that in a sense, all utterances (except the first one and the last one in a discourse) are at once prospective *and* retrospective: On the one hand, their proper interpretation always depends to some extent on previous utterances (hence retrospective); on the other hand, the *raison d'être* of an utterance is that it helps move the discourse forward, e.g. developing an argument or a narrative (hence prospective). Nevertheless, we believe that there is a sense in which an utterance may be fundamentally or predominantly either prospective or retrospective. This can be determined by considering whether it is designed essentially to supplement the prior utterance (by being integrated more closely with it) or to progress the discourse.

The orientation of an utterance in relation to a prior utterance is a consideration which must be taken independently of its syntax and intonation. For example, in a turn like (13) below, even though the additional TCU (“*You really aren’t*”) is syntactically non-symbiotic and comes with a full and independent intonation, it is nevertheless retrospective in orientation in the sense that its predominant function is to supplement what was said in the prior TCU.

(13) You’re not mature enough. You really aren’t.

Prospective talk poses no difficulties for the analyst as it will always come in the form of a new TCU. Retrospective talk, on the other hand, may come in the form of

TCU extensions or new TCUs. The challenge therefore is in finding the key features with which one can recognize different kinds of retrospective turn continuation.

2.4. *The information status of further talk: Focus vs. non-focus*

Finally, further talk should be examined for its information status, as either carrying an information focus or not ('non-focus').⁵ It should be clear that this variable is not the same as, and is indeed independent of, the other parameters. If further talk is presented as an independent piece of new or significant information and forms a focus in its own right, we are more likely to be witnessing the addition of a new TCU. On the other hand, if further talk is presented as a piece of information which is already known (e.g. an old topic) or supplementary or relatively insignificant in information content, we are more likely to have a case of TCU extension. Thus, expressions like "actually" or "in fact" are often appended as an afterthought to a just-completed TCU. They are typically delivered in subordinate intonation and understood as a prolongation of the ongoing TCU. A Chinese example is given in (14) below to illustrate this point. Here, the second utterance, *kan wan yihou* (watch finish after 'after watching them'), can reasonably be described as being very low in information content, as the conversation has all along been about watching a popular drama series on TV.

(14) [After one of the conversation participants has just said that she had finished watching the TV series, the other participant asked:]

Zenmeyang a: **kan wan yihou?**
How PRT watch finish afterward

'What do you think, after watching it?'

In terms of information status, then, an instance of turn continuation like (14) will be described as a case of 'non-focus', as opposed to the second TCU in *She had it yesterday. Ten pounds*. (FFT 2002: 27), which will be treated as a 'focus'.

2.5. *Summary*

In our view, further talk is best understood comprehensively in terms of its relation to

⁵ Again, due to limitations of space it is not possible to go into a full discussion of information structure. The account given here draws mainly on Lambrecht (1996) and Halliday (1985).

prior talk; specifically, how it relates to prior talk in terms of syntax, intonation, orientation, and information status. Given this framework, particular instances of further talk can be given a more detailed and hopefully more accurate description, as, for example, a piece of significant information presented in a separate TCU but having a retrospective orientation relative to a just-completed utterance, or a piece of old information presented in a syntactically continuous position to supplement the main information that has just been supplied in the immediately prior utterance.

In the following table, we summarize the main differences between TCU extensions and the addition of new TCUs in terms of the four parameters described above.

	TCU extensions	New TCUs
Syntax: Continuous vs Discontinuous	Continuous	Continuous/Discontinuous
Intonation: Main vs Subordinate	Subordinate	Main
Orientation: Retrospective vs Prospective	Retrospective	Prospective/Retrospective
Information status: Focus vs Non-Focus	Non-Focus	Focus

The validity of this scheme will be tested against a body of data to be presented in Section 4, at which point further justifications for our proposal will also be given.

3. Aspects of Chinese syntax and prosody

Before presenting the Chinese data, however, it is necessary for the purposes of this paper to give a brief account of those aspects of Chinese syntax and intonation which are relevant to the study of turn continuations. For convenience, our presentation will be couched in terms of comparisons and contrasts with English.

According to Chao (1968) and Zhu (1982), there are six major syntactic types in Chinese. These are: (1) subject-predicate (SP)⁶, (2) modifier-head (MH), (3) verb-object (VO), (4) verb-complement (VC), (5) serial verb (VV), and (6) coordination (XX). Relations between words and phrases in Chinese which are in construction with one

⁶ According to both authors, the subject-predicate structure is used to encode topic-comment. For a discussion on topic and comment in Chinese grammar, see Li and Thompson (1976).

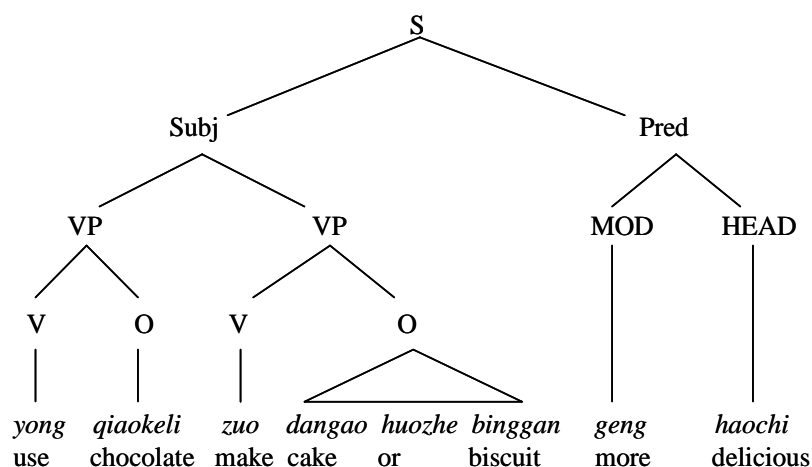
another can all be described in terms of these six syntactic types, which specify the linear order (left-right) of the elements as well as the grammatical meanings that bind them together. In the expression *huoche zhan* (train station ‘railway station’), for example, *huoche* ‘train’ is a modifier relative to *zhan* ‘station’, which is the head. The expression as a whole is thus an instance of the MH (modifier-head) syntactic type. Notice that in terms of linear position, the modifier *huoche* ‘train’ precedes the head *zhan* ‘station’. This order is correctly reflected in the formula ‘MH’. ‘MH’ also captures the order of relative clauses and head nouns in Chinese, as in *jia-le juhua de cha* (added chrysanthemum PARTICLE tea ‘tea with chrysanthemum’). In fact, the scope of ‘MH’ goes even further: Adverbials too occur before the verbs that they modify. Thus, phrases like ‘study properly’ or ‘see you tomorrow’ in English correspond to MH structures in Chinese: *haohao xuexi* (properly study) and *mingtian jian* (tomorrow see).

The other syntactic types can be illustrated with a longer example:

- (15) *Yong qiaokeli zuo dangao huozhe binggan geng haochi*
 use chocolate make cake or biscuit more delicious

‘It’s more delicious to make some cake or biscuits with chocolate.’

Here, *dangao huozhe binggan* ‘cake or biscuits’ first form a coordination structure (XX), which in turn serves as the object of the verb *zuo* ‘make’, resulting in a VO structure. *Yong qiaokeli* ‘use chocolate’ then forms a serial verb construction (VV) with ‘make cake or biscuits’. Finally, the whole VV structure stands as subject in relation to the predicate *geng haochi* ‘more delicious’, the two constituents forming an SP structure. Notice, incidentally, that *geng haochi* ‘more delicious’ is another example of an MH structure. In summary, the syntactic structure of (5) can be represented diagrammatically as follows:



It can be deduced from the above that many kinds of constituents which in English would occur after their heads are expected to come *before* their heads in Chinese. Thus, relative clauses occur as modifiers to the left of their heads (as in ‘added chrysanthemum’s tea’), and adverbials of time, place, or manner occur to the left of verbs either in the form of modifiers (as in ‘tomorrow see’) or as the first V in a VV structure (as in ‘use chocolate make cake’). What this means for turn continuation is that it is generally much easier to extend a sentence in English by adding another part to it than in Chinese. For example, prepositional phrases and different kinds of adverbials in English can be directly attached to the end of a just-completed sentence to give further information about time, place, or manner. Chinese syntax, on the other hand, would require these elements to come earlier in the sentence.

Consider the following English examples, both taken from FFT (2002):

(16) Ah, John wz determining that. **a minute ago.**

(17) And how are you feeling? **these days,**

Here, the phrases ‘a minute ago’ and ‘these days’ are clearly syntactically continuous with their hosts, in the sense that longer sentences result from their appendage. ‘A minute ago’ is a time phrase that functions as an adverbial to ‘John wz determining that’, and occurs in a position that this kind of adverbial phrase is normally found in, i.e. after the verb phrase. Similarly, the noun phrase ‘these days’ functions as an adverbial relative to the rest of the sentence, and is found in a position normally expected of such noun phrases in English.

A direct rendering of (16) and (17) in Chinese will not work, however. The

following are not possible syntactic strings in Chinese.

- (18) **Zhangsan zai zuo jue ding yi fengzhong zhiqian.*
 John was making decision one minute ago
- (19) **Ni jue de zenmeyang zuijin?*
 you feel how lately

Instead of (18) and (19), the recurrent pattern in Mandarin conversations is for the time phrase to come before the verb phrase. Thus:

- (20) *Zhangsan yi fengzhong zhiqian zai zuo jue ding.*
 John one minute ago was making decision
- (21) *Ni zuijin jue de zenmeyang?*
 you lately feel how

There is, however, a very important exception to this restriction on the occurrence of modifiers and adverbials. Like most other languages, Chinese has at its disposal a “Right Dislocation” construction (hereafter RD) which allows it to place what would otherwise be left-hand constituents to the right of the elements with which they are in construction. Thus, in the following examples, adverbial phrases which are normally placed before their verb phrases nevertheless occur after them in a RD structure:

- (24) *Gei guo ma shangci?*
 give ASP PRT last.time
 ‘Did I give it to you last time?’
 (cf. *Shangci gei guo ma?*)
- (25) *Zhang Aijia de pianzi feichang hao wo jue de.*
 NAME GEN movie very good I feel
 ‘Silvia Chang’s movies are very good, I think.’
 (cf. *Wo jue de Zhang Aijia de pianzi feichang hao.*)
- (26) *Nianji tai da le ganjue shang.*
 age too big ASP feel LOC
 ‘She’s too old (for the role), I feel.’
 (cf. *Ganjue shang nianji tai da le.*)

A necessary condition for the RD construction to be acceptable is that it must come with the right prosodic design. Specifically, the “dislocated” element (i.e. right-hand element) is generally delivered in subordinate intonation.⁷

While RD is by no means unique to Chinese -- indeed it is available also in English and most other languages, -- its presence in Chinese is particularly prominent. Comparing Chinese with English in this respect, one notices some fundamental differences between RD's formal features and frequency of use. In English, dislocated elements tend to be noun phrases (as in *He's so strong, that guy.*) In Chinese, on the other hand, almost every kind of constituent can be found in the ‘dislocated’ position – subjects, verbs, complements, objects, modifiers, adverbials, conditionals and other kinds of clauses. For example,

- (27) *Ting youyisi de zhege* (Dislocated subject)
quite interesting PRT this

‘It’s quite interesting, this one.’

- (28) *Ruguo xuyao wo bangmang zai nabian* (Dislocated place adverbial)
if need I help at there

‘If you need me to help from there,’

- (29) *Lai duo nian le ba, Beijing* (Dislocated object)⁸
come many year ASP PRT Beijing

‘So you’ve come to Beijing for quite a few years, haven’t you?’

In addition to this formal difference, RD can also be considered from the point of view of text frequency in the two languages. While no directly comparable data are available, the following figures seem quite telling. Luke (2004) found 115 instances of RD in a Chinese conversational corpus of about 30,000 Chinese characters (roughly some 15,000 words)⁹, which must be considered a fairly high proportion by any standard. In comparison, Givón (2001: 268), based on his own study of topic continuity in English (1983), noted that “the text frequency of R-dislocation in spoken English was ... roughly 1/10th of that of L-dislocation”. According to Biber et al (1999: 957), “both

⁷ These observations as well as empirical evidence were first reported in Chao (1968) and Lu (1980), although neither work used the cross-linguistic concept of RD. It is interesting to note in this connection that Prince (1981) has made similar observations concerning the intonation of RD in English.

⁸ This example is taken from Packard 1986:3.

⁹ The corpus referred to here is in fact a sub-corpus of a larger collection of contemporary Beijing conversations made by Zhang Bojiang and Fang Mei of the Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing. The authors are very grateful to them for their permission to use the data.

types of dislocation occur over 200 times per million words in conversation and occasionally fictional dialogue, but very rarely in written prose”. This is further confirmed by Couper-Kuhlen and Ono (this volume) who observe that non-add-ons are “rare” and insertables are “vanishingly rare” in English¹⁰. One must conclude from these data that the text frequency of RD is extremely low in English but very high in Chinese. What are the reasons for such a major difference? Recall that in English, all kinds of adverbials can occur after verb phrases. When the need for TCU extension arises, it is possible, indeed quite easy, to append adverbials and other constituents to the end of a sentence naturally. Such a strategy is heavily limited by the requirements of Chinese syntax. However, with RD it becomes possible for constituents to be positioned after the end of a sentence after all, so long as their ‘untypical syntax’, i.e., infrequently occurring, is supported by the presence of appropriate intonation and prosodic features. We therefore suggest that one of the reasons why RD is so pervasive in Chinese is that it provides a compensatory measure making up for the limitations on turn extension imposed by the syntax of the language.

Another way of putting this is to say that in English conversations, when elements are added after a sentence has reached a point of possible completion, they can still occur in a place which is in a sense reserved for them. In Chinese, on the other hand, additional elements occurring after sentence completion often find themselves in “unreserved” positions¹¹. But in spite of these fundamental differences, there is an important commonality: Both languages have means of doing TCU extensions. English, because of its predominantly right-branching syntax, can often do this ‘imperceptibly’. Chinese, on the other hand, makes much greater use of special measures like RD to “get round” its predominantly left-branching syntax.

4. Types of retrospective turn continuation in Chinese

In this section, we present an analysis of retrospective turn continuations identified in our data. It will be seen that further talk can be built as retrospective turn continuations in several ways, involving different combinations of features relating to syntax, intonation, and information structure as described in the previous two sections.

4.1. Retrospective turn continuations in the form of TCU prolongations

¹⁰ In Couper-Kuhlen & Ono’s scheme (this volume), materials used for TCU continuations which are dislocated or “out of place” are classified into two categories, i.e. non-add-ons and insertables, depending on whether there is a prosodic break between the just completed TCU and the added material.

¹¹ The authors are very grateful to one of the reviewers for this formulation.

The first kind of TCU extension comes in the form of further talk which, in terms of its relation with prior talk, is at once syntactically continuous, accompanied by subordinate intonation, and carrying no information focus.

Consider in this context extract (30), in which a TCU is extended through the addition of an object clause after a verb. The extract is taken from a conversation in which two colleagues, Ming and Fang, are talking about possible ways in which SARS may be spread. At one point during the SARS outbreak in Asia in 2003, a lot of people were worried the disease might be air-borne. Ming, however, does not subscribe to this theory. Just prior to the start of the extract, he reported hearing about someone who had been to a hospital to visit a patient but did not contract the disease. In the first turn of (30), he re-iterates his doubt in the air-borne theory. Fang responds with an agreement and then cites the WHO as an authoritative source in support of Ming's view (lines 4-5).

(30) TZ-2-01:23¹²

- 1 Ming: *Jiushishuo zhe ge ye (0.3) he zhe zhong kongqi*
 that.is.to.say this CL also with this CL Air
- 2 *chuanbo= youren shuo zhe ge kongqi chuanbo weibi*
 spread some.people say this CL air spread may.not
- 3 *shi[: (xx)*
 BE
 'That is to say this is also (0.3) with regard to air transmission = it's said air transmission may not be : (xx)'
- 4 Fang: [*Dui, shijie na ge WHO jiushishuo buhui- jiushi-*
 right world that CL WHO that.is.to.say will.not that.is
- 5 *zhishao meiyou zhengju biao ming. ∨*
 at.least no evidence indicate
 'Right, WHO said it's not- I mean- at least there's no evidence for it.'

¹² Several symbols are used to indicate the intonation of TCUs and stretches of further talk following them. ∨ following an utterance indicates falling intonation; ↗ following an utterance indicates rising intonation; two # signs surrounding further talk shows that that stretch of talk is produced without pitch re-set (i.e. said in a lower pitch and with reduced loudness relative to prior talk); ↑ at the beginning of a stretch of further talk shows that it is said with pitch re-set (i.e. pitch uplifted to a new level). Talk enclosed within a pair of raised circles (°xx°) indicates, in line with most CA work, an utterance said in a particularly low and soft voice. Likewise, stress is indicated by underlining, following CA transcription conventions. These prosodic notations were made on the basis of repeated listening and confirmation through measurements using phonetic instruments (mainly the Kay Computer Speech Lab and Praat).

6 Ming: *Dui a, [meiyou zhengju biaoming ta hui] (.) tongguo=*
 right PRT no evidence indicate it would through

‘Right, no evidence to indicate it can be (.) transmitted through air.’

7 Fang: [# *shi kongqi chuanbo ma #*]
 BE air spread PRT

‘that is air-borne’

8 Ming: =*kongqi chuanran*
 air spread

At lines 4-5, Fang’s turn up to *zhishao meiyou zhengju biaoming* ‘at least no evidence to indicate’ is syntactically complete and comes with a falling intonation. Although *biaoming* ‘indicate’ is a transitive verb, null-objects are acceptable in Chinese so long as their reference is clear from the context. Indeed, Ming is hardly perturbed by the ‘missing object’ after *biaoming* ‘indicate’, as he responds to Fang’s view by offering an agreement token in line 6.¹³ However, as soon as Ming has said *dui a* ‘right’, Fang comes in again with more talk *shi kongqi chuanbo ma* ‘that (it)’s air-borne’ in line 7, which is delivered in overlap with Ming’s turn in line 6.

Syntactically, Fang’s further talk is made up of a clause which can be fitted to the end of the prior TCU as an object. Indeed, the utterance *shi kongqi chuanbo ma* ‘that (it)’s air-borne’ can only be interpreted as supportive of Ming’s view if and only if it is analyzed as the object of the verb ‘indicate’. Taken in isolation, it could have meant exactly the opposite, i.e. that SARS *does* spread through the air. However, having been incorporated into the just-completed TCU where there is negation on the verb *you* ‘have’, the utterance now falls within the scope of negation, and can thus be given the intended interpretation. In terms of intonation, Fang’s further talk is accompanied by reduced loudness and lowered pitch, relative to prior talk. Semantically, as we have already argued, its meaning is tied to the previous word *biaoming* ‘indicate’, and is therefore primarily retrospective in orientation. In terms of information exchange, the information contained in that further talk (i.e. the possibility that SARS is air-borne) is clearly *not* new information, but a re-statement of Ming’s expressed belief. Thus, we can see in this example how retrospective turn continuation can be done by building further talk as an extension of a prior TCU through a combination of syntactic continuity, subordinate intonation, semantic dependency and information structuring.

¹³ By starting with “*dui a*” (right), Ming is seen as responding, and agreeing, to the content of Fang’s turn. Had he felt that Fang’s turn is not complete when she stops at the verb, he could have addressed the “incompleteness” of her turn by either withholding from immediate start up of his own turn or supplying a candidate item as in the case of collaborative turn completion (Lerner 1991).

Consider next a similar example in Extract (31). The two speakers in this part of the conversation are talking about possible visits to Beijing. Bin, who is from Beijing (visiting Hong Kong at the time of the recording), invites Mei and her colleagues to make a trip to Beijing, and offers to help them when they are there.

(31) A/S-p43

1 Bin: *Jiaru* () *xiang qu* [*na wan-yi-wan* °*shenme*°
if want go there play what

‘If you want to go there for a visit or something’

2 Mei: [°*Qu wan*°
go play

‘Go for a visit’

3 Bin: *Wo- gei nimen- bang nimen.* ∇
I give you help you

‘I’ll- give you- help you.’

4 (.)

5 Mei: Mm

6 Bin: #*Anpai yixia.* # *a.*
arrange a.little INTJ

7 *Wo neng zuo dao de Fanzheng jiu bang nimen.*
I can do COMP PRT Anyway then help you

‘Make some arrangements, ok? I’ll do what I can to help you anyway.’

Bin’s TCU in lines 1 and 3 is constructed in an *if X, (then) Y* format (although “then” does not occur overtly in the sentence). There is a cut-off after *gei nimen* ‘give you’. In Chinese, this phrase can be heard either as part of a VOO (double-object) construction, with *gei* ‘give’ functioning as the main verb and *nimen* ‘you’ the indirect object, or as the first V (known also as ‘co-verb’)¹⁴ in a VV (serial verb) structure, meaning something like ‘to you’ or ‘for you’ (e.g. *gei ni mai liwu* (give you buy present ‘buy you a present’)). However, before this ambiguity is resolved, the speaker carries out a self-repair and replaces *gei nimen* ‘give you’ with *bang nimen* ‘help you’.

¹⁴ A few verbs in Chinese have these properties (such as *gei* ‘give’, *bang* ‘help’ and *yong* ‘use’). Interested readers are referred to Li and Thompson (1981, chapter 9) for a discussion. Historically, most co-verbs in Modern Chinese are derived from verbs.

Interestingly, *bang nimen* is in a similar way ambiguous as *gei nimen*, in that it may be heard either as a VO structure functioning as the predicate of the main clause, or a co-verb (i.e. first verb) in a serial verb structure, meaning something like ‘for you’, in which case a further VP is still to come. However, unlike ‘give you’, ‘help you’ is said with a full falling intonation, suggesting that the clause is a main VP. Bin’s turn could have ended there, but after Mei’s acknowledgement token “*mm*”, he comes back in to produce more talk at line 6 by adding another expression, *anpai yixia* ‘make some arrangement’. Syntactically, this phrase is fitted nicely to the end of the prior TCU in the form of a second part of a VV structure, i.e. *bang nimen anpai yixia* ‘make some arrangement for you’. Thus, in adding the phrase ‘make some arrangement’, Bin has in effect extended and re-structured what was originally a VO sequence into a VV sequence, i.e. from “If you visit Beijing, I can help you” to “If you visit Beijing, I can make some arrangement for you”. In terms of intonation, the second VP (‘make some arrangement’) is delivered in a flat tone, and pitched at the same or a slightly lower level than the preceding utterance. In this way, it is designed to be heard as being in construction with the immediately prior VP rather than as a new TCU. Thus, in packaging further talk with syntactic continuity, subordinate intonation, and semantic dependency, Bin has succeeded in carrying on with the action he was performing in lines 1 and 3, i.e. offering to help Mei if and when she comes to Beijing. Incidentally, the TCU extension is done after Mei’s slightly delayed and somewhat non-committal response, suggesting that perhaps it is delivered in pursuit of a more positive uptake (Ford, Fox & Thompson 2002).

A second, and more common, type is for a TCU to be extended through the use of a Right Dislocation construction (RD), which as we may recall is syntactically discontinuous. Before the start of the next extract, Bin was talking about buying presents in Hong Kong for his family in Beijing. He told Mei that during one of his previous visits he had bought a pair of brand name trainer shoes without realizing that one could get a similar item at much the same price in Beijing. At the beginning of (32) he says it was his family who found out that the shoes he bought were only forty or fifty dollars cheaper than in Beijing.

(32) A/S-p22

- 1 Bin: *Wo mai huiqu tamen shuo ai, zhe xie gen zhebian- (..)*
 I buy back they say INTJ this shoe with Here
- 2 @ *pianyi siwushi kuai qian:: # cai. # (0.6)*
 cheap forty.or.fifty CL money **just**

3 ↑*Ta* *ye* *YOU*:: *jiu* *mafan* *le*.
 he also have then trouble PRT

'I bought them and took them home and then they said well these shoes were just forty or fifty dollars cheaper, not more than that. Since they can get them in Beijing too they won't be thrilled to get them (from Hong Kong).

Bin's TCU in lines 1-2 is most likely to be heard as having reached a point of possible completion after *pianyi siwushi kuai qian* 'forty or fifty dollars cheaper'. Although the pitch does not drop to a very low level (due partly to the fact that the word *qian* 'money' carries a rising lexical tone), the stress and lengthening of the last syllable still give one a sense of completion. A brief pause occurs at this juncture, at the end of which Bin goes on to produce further talk. This next bit consists simply of one word, the adverb *cai* 'just; only', which is delivered in a markedly lower pitch and reduced loudness than the immediately preceding utterance. Following this, there is another slight pause before Bin produces more talk with pitch reset.

Syntactically, *cai* is not fitted to the end of the prior TCU. Like most other adverbs in Chinese, its usual position is before the verb. In fact, as a right-dislocated element in a RD construction, it is often thought of as having been 'moved out of' its 'canonical' position inside the first TCU, at the point marked by the @ symbol in the extract, where it would function as modifier to the predicative adjective *pianyi* 'inexpensive'.¹⁵ It is in this sense that it is said to 'belong with' the prior TCU, and embodies a retrospective orientation. However, although syntactically discontinuous, its occurrence in the dislocated position is 'legitimized' by the accompanying intonation which marks the whole sequence off as a case of RD. Also, in terms of information status, *cai* clearly does not carry any focus, its information content being relatively speaking insubstantial. This combination of syntactic, prosodic and informational features is highly typical of TCU extensions done through the use of RD in Chinese.

For another example of RD, consider extract (33) below. Before the start of the extract, Ming has said that viruses cannot usually survive in cold temperatures. Fang challenges Ming's belief by asking if there really are no viruses that can live in cold weather.

(33) T/Z-11:11

1 Fang: @ *Nandao* @ *meiyou naihuan* *de* *pinzhong ma*, ↗

¹⁵ In actual fact, while most RD items can be moved back to their usual position, not all of them can do so. See Lu 1980 on RD in Mandarin; Luke 2000 and Liang 2002 on RD in Cantonese; and Luke 2002 for a review of different accounts of RD (also called inversion or transposition by some authors).

really no cold-resistant GEN variety PRT

2 **#bi[ngdu.#**
Virus

‘Are there really no varieties that can survive cold weather? Talking of viruses?’

3 Ming: [you- you a, dangran shao la kending.
have have PRT of.course few PRT certainly

‘Of course there are, but can’t be more than a few kinds.’

Fang’s query is issued in a slightly rising intonation as indicated by the comma in the transcript. An interrogative format is projected right from the start with the use of the word *nandao*, an adverb in Chinese that serves to mark a negative question. The completion of the question is indicated by the occurrence of the particle *ma* in line 1 which occurs at the end of the sentence. Before Ming can begin to answer her question, however, Fang goes on to add further talk in the form of an NP, *bingdu* ‘viruses’, which shows that by “varieties that can survive cold weather” she was referring to viruses.

Syntactically, *bingdu* ‘viruses’ is discontinuous with the prior TCU: There simply is no syntactic slot available for an NP after the question particle. However, it could have occurred at places which are marked with a @ in the transcript, which are syntactically legitimate positions for topic-NPs. In any case, this NP (*bingdu*) is now in a “displaced position” and by occurring there serves to prolong the ongoing TCU. In terms of prosody, the utterance is delivered with reduced loudness and lowered pitch, giving the distinct effect of subordinate intonation. As in the previous example, the syntactically discontinuous element found attached to the end of the TCU is now re-constituted, with the help of the appropriate intonation pattern, into a right-dislocated NP. The re-constituted sequence now takes on a new life, having been turned from a common interrogative structure into a RD construction. Semantically and pragmatically, *bingdu* (‘viruses’) clearly ‘belongs with’ the prior TCU, relying on the backward link for its meaning and proper interpretation, and is thus essentially retrospective. In terms of information exchange, as ‘viruses’ is precisely the current topic of conversation, it is evident that reiterating it at this point serves little informational purpose.¹⁶ Thus, like (32), extract (33) is another example of how a TCU can be extended through the use of RD, exhibiting a by now familiar combination of syntactic, prosodic, semantic, pragmatic, and informational features.

¹⁶ It may well have cognitive and conversational functions, but that is a matter for another paper. See Luke (2000) for an account of the turn-taking functions of RD in Chinese.

4.2. Retrospective turn continuations in the form of new TCUs

In the last sub-section we have seen some examples of how further talk may be produced as a prolongation of a just-completed TCU. In this sub-section, we will examine some cases of retrospective turn continuation where further talk is produced as new TCUs. Regarding the four parameters discussed in section 2, further talk of this kind is by definition retrospective in orientation. Their major difference with TCU extensions is in intonation and information status: They are delivered with main intonation and typically carry an information focus. While they are often syntactically discontinuous with the prior TCU, this is not always the case, as we shall see below.

To this end, let us look at three conversational extracts. Consider first extract (34), taken from the same conversation as extract (32) but occurring a little before it. Bin has been telling Mei about his shopping experience in Hong Kong. In this extract he is making a comparison between the prices of shoes in Hong Kong and Beijing. The demonstrative occurring at the beginning of his utterance, *Zher* ‘here’, refers to Hong Kong. Bin is saying that shoes in Hong Kong are a little cheaper than those in Beijing.

(34) AS-p21

Bin: *Zher xie bi Beijing pianyì yidian.* ∨ = ↑*ye youxian.* ∨
 here shoe compare Beijing cheap a.little CONJ limited

‘Shoes here are a little cheaper than in Beijing. But only a little.’

Bin’s utterance *Zher xie bi Beijing pianyì yidian* ‘shoes here are a little cheaper than those in Beijing’ is possibly complete with a falling intonation, after which further talk *ye youxian* ‘But only a little’, said with another falling intonation, is immediately latched on to the just completed TCU. Stress falls on the second syllable of the word *youxian* ‘limited’. Syntactically, *ye youxian* is not a usual next right-hand constituent; a sequence like *Zher xie bi Beijing pianyì yidian ye youxian* is not a continuous sentence. While independent of the prior TCU, both prosodically and syntactically, Bin’s further talk here is nevertheless retrospective in orientation in that the whole point of its production is to provide a supplementation, clarification, or even repair, on his just-formulated evaluation, i.e. shoes are a little cheaper in Hong Kong – but, on second thought, perhaps not all that much cheaper after all.

In the next extract, further talk is produced in the form of an NP accompanied by main intonation occurring immediately after a just-completed TCU. Prior to the extract

Yu was expressing her admiration for two colleagues who had gone through some hard times with great determination, and come out of it stronger and happier people. She also mentioned having children and PhD degrees as examples of their success in life. Yu also has a child herself but he is much younger, and she is still working on her own PhD. Li, at the start of the extract, counters that what Yu takes to be indications of success in life is only so by her present standard which may change in a few years' time.

(35) GH-p1

1 Li: *Na shi ni xianzai de::(.) biao zhun. Dui ao-chu-tou-le.*
 that BE you present GEN standard for hold.out

2 *Keneng zai guo ji nian ni ao-chu-tou De*
 possible more pass several year you hold.out GEN

3 *biao zhun you bu yiyang le.*
 standard again not same PRT

'That's your present :: (.) standard. For having outlived hardship. Maybe in a few years' time your standard for surviving hardship would not be the same.'

4 Yu: *Ai, keneng shi >ba<↘ = ↑xiao haizi ma.↘*
 INT possible BE PRT little kid PRT

'Yeah, probably true = little kid.'

Responding to Li, Yu (line 4) concedes that what she has said may be true. Her utterance *ai, keneng shi ba* 'yeah, probably true' is complete both in terms of syntax and prosody. Immediately after this, however, Yu goes on to say: *Xiao haizi ma* 'little kid + particle'. Although it is delivered with main intonation and is syntactically unconnected to the prior TCU, *xiao haizi ma* 'little kid + particle' is not offered as new information, since 'having children' has been mentioned in Yu's immediately prior talk (just before this extract) as an indicator of success. Produced right after *ai, keneng shi ba* 'yeah, probably true', *xiao haizi ma* 'little kid + particle' provides a reason for conceding to Li's argument, i.e. Yu is giving in to Li's contention because of the "children" factor, meaning that when her own child grows older her standard for having survived hardship in life may indeed change. Through delivering further talk after a concession, Yu makes explicit the grounds on which the concession is made.

It can be seen from the above two examples how new TCUs can be used to build retrospective turn continuations in spite of their intonational independence and syntactic discontinuity. In Chinese, such further talk usually takes the form of what Chao (1968) calls "minor sentences", i.e. they are often stand-alone nominal or verbal expressions.

We turn next to example (36). Prior to this extract, Ming and Fang were talking about SARS in Beijing. Fang had asked Ming to estimate the danger of contracting SARS there. In responding to Fang's question Ming reminded her that a difference between Beijing, or Guangzhou, and Hong Kong was the density of population. Fang had said that Beijing had a larger population, but Ming pointed out that density rather than absolute size is the determining factor.

(36) T/Z-2-08:47

- 1 Ming: *Youqi* *dao* (0.3) *zui* *shizhongxin* *de* *difang*, *na* *zhen*
 especially to most downtown GEN place that really
- 2 *shi* *midu* *juedui* *shi* *Beijing* *gan-bu-shang* *de*.↘ (0.4)
 BE density absolute BE Beijing can't.compare PRT
- 3 ↑*Guangzhou* *ye* *gan-bu-shang*.
Guangzhou **also** **can't.compare**

'Especially (when it) comes to (0.3) the most downtown area, really as far as density is concerned, Beijing is absolutely no comparison. (0.4) Guangzhou isn't either.'

Ming's utterance in line 2 *midu juedui shi Beijing gan-bu-shang de* 'As far as density is concerned, Beijing is absolutely no comparison' is constructed in a TOPIC + COMMENT structure in which the clause *Beijing gan-bu-shang* ('Beijing is no comparison') is part of the COMMENT. The utterance up to the end of the clause is a clear point of completion in terms of intonation, syntax and pragmatics. But when this meets with no immediate uptake from Fang (as indicated by the 0.4 second pause), Ming carries on speaking (at line 3) and produces another clause: *Guangzhou ye gan-bu-shang* 'Guangzhou isn't either' with full intonation, indicating its status as a separate unit. In information terms, even though as a place name *Guangzhou* was mentioned earlier in the same conversation, arguably it does carry an information focus in *this* utterance, as the point of it is that the comparison between Hong Kong and Beijing can be extended to include Guangzhou, and that although in some ways Guangzhou is more crowded than Beijing, neither it nor Beijing can compare with Hong Kong in terms of crowdedness.

On the other hand, this second clause relies heavily on the prior TCU for semantic interpretation. In other words, for the clause to make sense, it has to be interpreted as another COMMENT sharing the same TOPIC of the first clause. The adverb *ye*¹⁷ in the

¹⁷ *Ye*, as an adverb, can indicate identity or resemblance between coordinated items such as the subjects of two clauses. (See Hou 1998)

second clause, together with the parallel structure¹⁸ and the same predicate of the two clauses, indicates a relationship of resemblance between the subjects of the two clauses. This way, the two clauses echo and cross-reference each other, and no doubt contribute to the performance of the action of stressing Hong Kong's 'leading position' in terms of how crowded a city's streets can be.

In sum, Ming has first brought a TCU with a simple TOPIC + COMMENT structure to completion, and through further talk just beyond that completion point, expands the just completed unit into a TOPIC + COMMENT₁ + COMMENT₂ structure. While the added clause is retrospective in semantic/pragmatic orientation, and designed with a degree of syntactic continuity, the full intonation and information focus it carries makes it a separate unit.

4.3. *Replacement as retrospective turn continuation*

A third kind of retrospective turn continuation involves self-repair (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977; Schegloff 1979); specifically, the sub-type of self-repair called replacement. Strictly speaking, this is a sub-type of 4.2, i.e. retrospective turn continuations in the form of new TCUs. Replacement is understood as a process whereby, given two elements X and Y (being delivered in that order in conversation), upon the appearance of Y, X is heard to have been sequentially deleted, with the slot thus vacated being taken up retrospectively by Y. It has been found that in Chinese replacement can occur either within a TCU or at or just after its possible completion point (Zhang 1998; Zhang & Luke 2000). Given the clearly retrospective character of repair and the not infrequent occurrence of replacement at TCU junctures, it should not come as a surprise that one kind of retrospective turn continuation is replacement.

From a syntactic point of view, one would expect replacement to be discontinuous, and indeed it is. In fact, repair in general and replacement in particular will *not*, by definition, be syntactically fitted to the end of the prior TCU, for the point of a repair operation is to disrupt or interfere with the structure or content of a just-delivered item. Replacements usually come with a kind of repair prosody. Features of this include cut-offs, rush-throughs, pitch step-ups, and an abrupt increase in loudness.

In Extract (37) below, further talk is produced as a repair on the last item of the prior TCU.

¹⁸ Parallelism, often employing similar syntactic structures across clauses, is a common discourse strategy in Chinese.

(37) DJY-0B-1-001¹⁹

W: .hhh wo ye shi ni de: rexin guanzhong
 I also BE you GEN enthusiastic viewer

hh **tingzhong** a.
Audience PRT

‘.hhh I’m also your: enthusiastic viewer hh audience.’

Here a woman caller is making a call to a radio phone-in program. When she says to the host *Wo ye shi ni de: rexin guanzhong* ‘I’m also one of your enthusiastic viewers’ the TCU is possibly complete. However, the speaker soon realizes that she has made a slip in describing herself as a *guanzhong* ‘viewer’. What she meant to say was *tingzhong* ‘audience’. This she indicates by continuing right after the prior TCU’s possible completion point and delivers the word *tingzhong*. It should be clear that this word is meant to be heard as a replacement of the previously misused word *guanzhong*. In terms of intonation, the replacing item is delivered with an abrupt increase in loudness. Syntactically, *rexin guanzhong tingzhong* ‘an enthusiastic viewer audience’ is not well-formed in Chinese, nor does it make any sense. We can therefore say that, as a replacement of ‘viewer’, ‘audience’ is syntactically discontinuous and prosodically independent, but is retrospective in orientation and carries an information focus.

(38) is an example of another replacement format. Here, a separate, new TCU is produced in replacement of the last part of a prior TCU.

(38) A/S

1 Bin: *Ok, Ok na wo mingtian wudian wushi zuoyou wo*
 then I tomorrow five.o’clock fifty approximate I

2 *huilai. Wo gan huilai.*
 return I hurry return

‘OK, OK then I’ll come back by five fifty tomorrow. I’ll hurry back.’

Prior to this extract, Mei, the other participant in this conversation, has asked Bin to do her a favour. At the start of the extract, Bin accepts the request by delivering a TCU which in every way looks (and is) complete: *Ok ok na wo mingtian wudian wushi zuoyou wo huilai* ‘Ok, ok then I’ll come back by five fifty tomorrow’. However, once past the completion point, Bin goes on to repeat *wo huilai* ‘I return’, but with a

¹⁹ Example taken from Zhang 1998.

difference: He has now inserted the verb *gan* ‘hurry’ into the phrase, and in so doing changed *huilai* (‘return’) from a main verb to a directional complement, now positioned after the main verb *gan* ‘hurry’.²⁰ While independent of the prior TCU (both syntactically and prosodically), as a case of self-repair/ replacement, Bin’s further talk is retrospective in orientation. In terms of information status, it must be regarded as significant and in-focus, as the whole point of its delivery is to create a contrast with an earlier item, which it now serves to delete and replace.

5. Summary and conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, we proposed a general scheme intended to capture and accommodate all kinds of turn continuation -- from prospective to retrospective ones, and within the latter, from TCU extensions to new TCUs. Our focus, however, has been firmly on retrospective turn continuations and how these are done in Chinese conversations.

The general scheme is based on four inter-related but distinct parameters all having something to do with an utterance’s structure, meaning, and information status relative to their host. The four parameters are: syntactic continuity vs. discontinuity, main vs. subordinate intonation, prospective vs. retrospective orientation, and information focus vs. non-focus. As we have attempted to show, these parameters interact in interesting ways. Together they define different turn continuation methods located along a continuum ranging from the tightly integrated to the loosely linked.

As far as syntax is concerned, continuity or discontinuity is certainly a very important consideration. But it would be wrong to regard it as the only consideration. We have tried to show how syntax interacts in complex ways with prosody and intonation. The two work hand in hand some of the time, but at cross purposes at other times. In the case of Right Dislocation, for example, syntactic discontinuity is off-set by subordinate intonation. Syntax may even on occasion be over-ridden by prosody. A unit may be syntactically continuous with a prior unit, but this alone does not preclude it from attaining the status of a new, separate TCU, provided that it comes with full intonation and is supported by appropriate features of rhythm and tempo. We believe that the study of turn continuation can proceed on a firmer footing if these four

²⁰ It goes without saying that the time-bound nature of speech production means that it is not possible to literally delete or replace an item in an already-produced utterance. The *effect* of insertion is achieved by producing immediately after a constituent X (*wo huilai*, in this case), another, sometimes larger, constituent Y (*wo gan huilai*) which is an expanded version of X (See Zhang 1998 and Zhang & Luke 2000 for more details on repair sequences in Chinese).

parameters are kept conceptually distinct, even though their interaction and combination are clearly very important.

Regarding the communicative functions of turn continuation, within our limited corpus we have been unable to find any systematic mapping between particular forms and particular functions, except the general observation that all retrospective turn continuations offer a means of supplementing or commenting upon the information conveyed in the just-completed TCU. We did find in our small data collection a range of interactional motivations for further talk after the possible completion of a TCU, e.g. pursuing recipient uptake (FFT 2002), showing affiliation, upgrading one's stand in face of potential disagreement, etc. However, as our corpus contains only Chinese data, and a limited amount of data at that, this question must be left to further research.

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