Chapter 31

Pragmatics

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1. Short Definition

Pragmatics can be succinctly defined as the study of meaning in context. Although it does not have a long history as an independent academic subject of inquiry, the field has always been vibrant with diverse approaches, cross-disciplinary interactions, and several ingenious and highly sophisticated theoretical frameworks. In Chinese linguistics and applied language studies, pragmatics has also aroused great interests, all the more so because the term 'pragmatics' is translated into Chinese as yǔyòngxué 语用学, meaning 'the study of language use' which can often be shortened into yǔyòng 语用 (language use). Thus, pragmatics in Chinese has acquired a broader interpretation, encompassing all aspects of language use, making it more liable to be recognized as a useful subject of study by Chinese-speakers, whether or not they have been exposed to the more rigorously defined pragmatic studies.

2. Pragmatic Phenomena

Although there are several strands of pragmatics, due to page limit, this essay is only focused on linguistic pragmatics, which claims the longest tradition and has always been engaged with central aspects of pragmatic inquiry. Linguistic pragmatics evolved from the school of Ordinary Language Philosophy as represented by the works of Anglo-analytic philosophers J.L. Austin (who is the founder of Speech Act Theory), P.F. Strawson (who initiated studies on presupposition), and H.P. Grice (founder of the theory of Logic in Conversation). It became a self-contained discipline at the beginning of the 1980's, heralded by the publication of two territory-defining textbooks: Levinson (1983) and Leech (1983). It differs from linguistic semantics in that it goes beyond the analyses of word meaning and sentence meaning treated respectively by lexical and compositional semantics and studies how sentence meaning is developed and even twisted in discourse. Its focal object of study is utterance meaning, which is roughly equivalent to propositional

meaning read off a sentence in a given use context. The initial meaning of a sentence, composing out of the meaning of the words contained therein, when uttered in a context, may need to be explicated, through disambiguation and enrichment, to reach its full-fledged literal meaning, also called **explicature**. In addition, it may trigger the perception of a hidden and separate proposition taken for granted by the speaker, formally called **presupposition**. Furthermore, it may implicate some extra, inferred propositions that the speaker tries to convey through the use of the original sentence -- what is termed **implicature**. On top of all these layers of pragmatic meaning, a sentence always conveys a higher-order sense: what the speaker wants to do with the proposition or the set of propositions he produces, be it for making a statement, performing a speech act such as declaring, requesting, naming or marrying, making commentaries such as in a live football show, giving directions such as in an i-pad manual or in a recipe, expressing irony in that what is stated is to be taken as contrary to what is intended to convey … These additional tones variously attached to the propositions expressed form kinds of **propositional attitude** or **higher-order explicature**. Last but not least, some words and expressions can only be interpreted with reference to the physical properties in the situation of utterance, thereby revealing the very essential referential nature of natural language: that of using language to point to things right on the scene or in the vicinity, with demonstrative or symbolic gestures -- what is called the **deictic** or **indexical** use of language. The notions introduced so far form a cluster of pragmatic phenomena that have received extensive studies in the literature. Each of them is illustrated below with two examples in Chinese.

[1] méi xiǎng dào nǐ hái tǐng néng hē，yě tǐng néng liáo。

没想到你还挺能喝，也挺能聊。

'I was surprised to find that you can drink a lot, and can talk a lot too'.

[Explicature: Explicating the sentence so as to supplement what is left unsaid: what you drink is alcoholic, not just any soft drinks or water.]

[2] shìzhě sòng shàng jiān hǎo de niúpái，wǒ fēn fù guò tā ，jiān dé lǎo diǎn ，qiē kāi shí, lǐmiàn háishì hóng hóng de xuèsī。

侍者送上煎好的牛排，我吩咐过他，煎得老点，切开时，里面还是红红的血丝。

'The waiter served our steaks. Although I had told him to cook the steaks well-done, when they were carved up, there were still threads of red blood'.

[Explicature: The word lǎo (old) is enriched to give the special interpretation 'well-done' in this context.]

[3] hěnshǎo yǒu rén zhīdào，fāmíng zìxíngchē de shì déguó de yī gè kànlínrén，míng jiào déláisī。

很少有人知道，发明自行车的是德国的一个看林人，名叫德莱斯。

'Not many people know that the man who invented the bicycle was a German forester called Drais'.

[Presupposition: The *de*-construction fāmíng zìxíngchē de (发明自行车的) serves as a presupposition trigger showing that the speaker takes it for granted that the bicycle has been invented. This information is presupposed rather than asserted because nowhere in the sentence is the information 'the bicycle has been invented' explicitly stated. What *is* explicitly stated is only the identity of the inventor of the bicycle.]

[4] zhèxiē kòngdì , yàoshì yònglái zhòng zhuāngjià, guójiā jiù bú yòng huā nàme duō wàihuì jìnkǒu liángshi le。

这些空地,要是用来种庄稼,国家就不用花那么多外汇进口粮食了。

'If these abandoned lands are used to plant crops, our country will no longer have to spend so much foreign currency to import grains'.

[Presupposition: 'bú yòng huā nàme duō wàihuì' presupposes the fact that a lot has already been spent or has at least been committed to spend on purchasing something.]

[5] 'wǒ xiǎng nǐ yěxǔ bú shì qù sànbù de', tā túláo wúyì de pángqiāocèjī shuō。

'我想你也许不是去散步的，'他徒劳无益地旁敲侧击说。

' 'I thought maybe you didn't [go for a walk]', he said, beating about the bush in the most useless manner.   ' (from Sister Carrie, Chapter XXIII, by Theodore Dreiser.)

[Implicature: the speaker hinted at some other propositions, e.g. that he suspected that she was seeing someone else.   Neither in form nor in meaning does the intended implicature bear any similarities with the original sentence.]

[6] gāngcái chīfàn shí jiàn nǐ méi chī shénme dōngxi，xiǎngbì shì wèikǒu bu hǎo。

刚才吃饭时见你没吃什么东西，想必是胃口不好。

'At the dinner just now, I saw that you didn't eat much. Thought you must have had a rather bad appetite'.

[Implicature: Although 'méi chī shénme dōngxi' explicitly asserts that not much was eaten, it implicates that something was eaten, even though the quantity was minimal. This is because, according to the theory of scalar implicature, 'shénme dōu méi chī' (什么没都吃) and 'méi chī shénme' (没吃什么) can be said to form an ordered set:

＜shénme dōu méi chī， méi chī shénme＞

The item to the left is semantically stronger than the one to the right, conveying information that is higher in degree, larger in number, or more informative than the weaker one. The mentioning of the item to the right implicates the unavailability of the item to the left, as the speaker wants to be informative to the right extent.]

[7] zī rènmìng X xiānsheng wéi jiǔdiàn shìchǎng xiāoshòubù zǒngjiān。

兹任命　X 先生为酒店市场销售部总监。

'Mr. X is hereby appointed as the director of the Marketing Sales Department of the hotel'.

[Propositional attitude: a speech act of appointing.]

[8] fēi xiàng guòhé bù shǒu lǐ，shuāngjiǎo wù tà duìmiàn wèi。

飞象过河不守礼，双脚勿踏对面位。

'(Hong Kong Bus notice) Literally: It is against the rule (in Chinese chess) to march your elephant across the boundary river into the opponent's half. Paraphrase: Do not put your feet on the opposite seat. '

[Propositional attitude: an indirect speech act, making a request in the guise of a statement.]

[9] jīntiān wǒmen zhè'ér xiàyǔ le，bù zhīdào háiyǒu nǎxiē dìfang xiàyǔ le。

今天我们这儿下雨了，不知道还有哪些地方下雨了。

'Today it rained here at our place. Don't know which other places also rain'.

[Deictic use of jīntiān (today), wǒmen (we) and zhè'ér (here), whose exact referents can only be worked out with reference to the parameters of the utterance act, such as information about the speaker, the place and the time of the utterance, etc.]

One common feature shared by the terms introduced above is that such kinds of pragmatic meaning are inferred rather than completely encoded. That is, pragmatic meaning is never directly gleaned from the encoded meaning of linguistic expressions alone, and can only be obtained by making contextualized inferences, using the linguistic expressions as the starting point of total meaning construction. Hence what matters is not just the identification and analysis of pragmatic phenomena per se, but also the characterization of the general inferential mechanism involved. This calls for the need of an explanatory theory of pragmatics that can give an adequate account of the inferential mechanism, has the potential of giving unified analyses of all the pragmatic phenomena, and is sympathetic and compatible with recent developments in related areas and disciplines, notably cognitive science, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, clinical linguistics, natural language logic, artificial intelligence and information technology.

3. Pragmatic Theory

There have been several sophisticated theories of pragmatics, each competing with the others in trying to achieve explanatory adequacy. Only one of them, relevance theory, is presented here in detail and applied to the analysis of cases in Chinese.[1] Aiming at providing a cognitive account of utterance interpretation, relevance theory tries to formulate a model of pragmatic inference with psychological reality, i.e. true to what people do in real-life communication. The theory starts with the underdeterminacy thesis, arguing that every sentence needs to have its encoded meaning developed through inference to reach the more complete meaning. Meaning construction in this sense is carried out in the cognitive context of the hearer, formed by the new assumptions in the utterance he receives and the old assumptions he retrieves from his memory in order to process the new ones. When old and new assumptions interact, cognitive effects can be generated, in the form of deductive conclusions or strengthened assumptions or updated ones that contradict and replace some older ones. But the cognitive context can be a vast

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[1] Cf. Blake (1992) and Clark (2013) for textbook introductions, and Sperber and Wilson (1995), Wilson and Sperber (2012) for more detailed discussions.

pool of assumptions in which old assumptions can freely interact with the new ones, and the resulting cognitive effects will initiate even newer interactions, ad infinitum. The hearer has no time nor resources to process and evaluate every conceivable cognitive effect before deciding on the one he takes to be the intended meaning conveyed by the speaker. What he can do is to pick one cognitive effect he can get without exerting too much cognitive effort and take it to be the one intended by the speaker. This will not sound so arbitrary when several related factors are taken into consideration. First, the multitude of old assumptions in the cognitive context are not scattered in disarray, but are ranked and stacked, according to their different degrees of accessibility in the memory. As old assumptions are retrieved for the purpose of processing the new assumption, the most readily retrieved must be the most accessible, which is most likely to interact with the new assumptions, and most likely to yield enough cognitive effects without costing undue processing effort. Such an interpretation of the utterance is termed an optimally relevant interpretation. Second, the hearer is not working all by himself. He is also aided by the speaker in an unconscious, yet intuitively quasi-cooperative way. The speaker knows that, in order to get her meaning across, there is an optimally relevant way to express her thoughts, one that matches with the somewhat individualistic knowledge state of the hearer to the extent that this is made known to her. That should be the manner of expression she unconsciously chooses to employ. Thirdly, according to relevance theory, communication is by nature a guess work, miscommunication does occur frequently, especially between parties who do not make pertinent judgments of each other's knowledge state. When communication occurs, the hearer can only presume that the speaker has something to inform that will let him derive enough cognitive effects without exerting unjustified extra processing effort. This is called the presumption of optimal relevance. The speaker chooses her wording with the knowledge that the hearer uses the presumption of optimal relevance as an expectation in communication. Hence her wording is likely to help the hearer to infer her meaning, and she can have some degree of confidence that her utterance will be properly comprehended. And the hearer will take his first interpretation as the intended meaning of the speaker, without bothering to entertain alternative interpretations. This intersubjective production and comprehension process makes it possible for communication to succeed with much efficiency, even though it does not guarantee success, as a presumption is the weakest assumption and often turns out not to be failsafe, especially when the communicative parties are not able to make the right judgments of each other's knowledge state due to unfamiliarity, lapse of memory, or physical or mental exhaustion. Relevance theory summarizes the above considerations into the Principle of Relevance:

Every utterance comes with a presumption of its own optimal relevance. Utterance comprehension can now be viewed as a cognitive act in search of relevance. The underdetermined meaning of an utterance is developed to the extent that optimal relevance is attained, which is also the first relevant interpretation that the hearer can read off the processed utterance. Hence comprehension, and communication in general, appear to be instantaneous and effortless.

The relevance-theoretic comprehension mechanism can provide a programmatic characterization to the whole range of pragmatic phenomena introduced above. It also has the potential to give accounts to specific cases, with each account being a detailed case-based story. Overall, such a pragmatics starts with the encoded meaning of the utterance, taking the lexical and grammatical meanings as providing conceptual or procedural information. The former initiates other relevant assumptions, the latter instructs the hearer on how to establish relevance: whether to trigger a presupposition or to derive an implicature or to take the proposition with a special attitude or to obtain a specific deictic referent. Assumption introduction and deduction is guided by procedural cues, and is constrained by the principle of relevance, making it possible for pragmatic phenomena to be comprehended in no time, in spite of the underdeterminacy of explicitly encoded meaning. [2] Relevance theory is particularly helpful in that it can be used to investigate topics that are not wholly linguistic in nature. In such cross-disciplinary studies, the theory can often provide a novel explanatory perspective.

The next section exams a range of pragmatic cases in Chinese, showing how relevance theory can provide original and specific accounts as well as demonstrating how the study of Chinese pragmatics can make its unique contributions to linguistic pragmatics in both empirical and theoretical aspects.

4. Case Study One: the presupposition of the adverb 'bái' (白) that resembles the principle of relevance

Textbook examples of presupposition triggers in English often appear straightforward and obvious, and textbook discussions on the topic often seem to create the impression that all the known types of presupposition triggers can be found in all languages. In reality, each

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[2] More studies can be found in Carston (1988, 2002) and Soria and Romero (2010) on explicature, and in Blakemore (1987) and Escandell-Vidal et al. (2011) on procedural meaning.

language has very unique ways to encode its triggers. In Chinese, quite a number of them trigger complicated presuppositions and cannot be literally translated into English without losing their triggering power. Among these, the adverb 'bái' (白) [in vain/for free] provides an interesting case for discussion.[3] Predicates modified by 'bái' yield two kinds of meaning: (a) doing something gratuitously, as shown in (10) - (12), and (b) getting something (done) for free, as shown in (13) – (15):

[10]   wǒ gēge bái gàn yī nián，yī gè zǐér yě méi lào zhào，hái āi le yī dùn chòumà

我哥哥白干一年，一个子儿也没落着，还挨了一顿臭骂。

'My elder brother worked hard in vain for a whole year without getting a single penny. Instead, he got a heap of abuse. '

[11]   zhēn xiǎng zhīdào wéishénme gàn le yībèizi，què méiyǒu le tuìxiūjīn, sānshí duō nián dōu bái gàn le？qián dào nálǐ qù le ne ？

真想知道为什么干了一辈子，却没有了退休金，三十多年都白干了？钱到哪里去了呢？

'I really want to know why I worked for all my life, but ended up without the pension. Does more than thirty years of work come to nothing? Where did the money go? '

[12]   chū gèrén zhuānjí shì hěn róngyì de shìqíng，dàn jīngbànzhě shì fēi yào zuàn nǐ yī bǐ de，tā jué búhuì gěi nǐ bái gàn

出个人专集是很容易的事情，但经办者是非要赚你一笔的，他决不会给你白干。

'It is easy to publish a collection of your own works. But the publishing agent will certainly make you pay a lot for it. There is no way for him to work for you for nothing'.

[13] xǐhuān xiàndài tōngsú yīnyuè de qīngniánrén shòubúliǎo   xìqǔ de màn jiēzòu yǔ tīng bú dǒng de chàngcí hé dàobái，qǐng tā bái kàn xì tā yě wèibì zuò dé zhù

喜欢现代通俗音乐的青年人受不了戏曲的慢节奏与听不懂的唱词和道白，请他白看戏他也未必坐得住。

'Those young people who prefer modern pop music to traditional Chinese opera cannot

appreciate the latter's slow tempo and its incomprehensible song-lines and spoken parts. Even if they were treated with the performance for free, they would probably still fail to stay on in the theatre'.

[14]   miǎndiàn duì xxx guānjiàn shíkè zhǐyào zǒu chū yībù tuì mǎ de qí ，
shuāngfāng jiù huì lìkè héqí ；dàn xxx cǐkè jǐnzhāng zhī xià wù zǒuchū yībù jìn
jiāng ，bèi yy bái dǎ yī pào

缅甸队 xxx 关键时刻只要走出一步退马的棋，双方就会立刻和棋；但 xxx 此刻紧张之下误走出一步进将，被 yy 白打一炮。

'At this critical juncture, Burmese player xxx only needed to make the move of retreating the horse, the game would have ended with a draw. But xxx was so nervous that he advanced the general by mistake, letting player yy take his cannon for free'.

[15]   jiǎrú wǒ xiànzài è le，kěyǐ dào diǎnxīnpù bái ná xiē bōbō mā？

假如我现在饿了，可以到点心铺白拿些饽饽吗？

'If I were hungry now, could I go to the bakery and get some cakes for free?'

This apparent ambiguity of 'bái' between the two opposite meanings of 'loss' and 'gain' is found to be two sides of the same coin: what one side loses, the other side gains, depending on the speaker's perspectives. When the speaker talks about the subject as the receiver of a transaction, the 'gain' sense is conveyed; when the subject is viewed as the giver of a transaction, the 'loss' sense is conveyed. The kind of transaction presented by 'bái' is special in the sense that the presumed equilibrium between gains and losses is not reached. What 'bái' literally contributes as its lexical meaning is a sense of imbalance, not a negation on the transaction itself, but a claim that the transaction is not conducted according to a presupposition it triggers: that normal transactions are expected to be balanced in gains and losses. Negation of 'bái' will create a contrary effect, the maintenance or reinstatement of the balance-expecting presupposition. Looking at a broader range of examples involving 'bái', it can be concluded that this balance-expecting presupposition does not only apply to transactions involving financial gains and losses measured in terms of exertion of strength and labour. Criteria of evaluation on the presupposed balance may vary a lot, from the very concrete exemplified by [10]-[15] to the very subjective and abstract, as shown in [16]-[23]:

[16] 'bàn tiáo yú，' tā shuō。'nǐ yuánlái shì tiáo wánzhěng de。wǒ hěn bàoqiàn，wǒ chūhǎi tài yuǎn le。wo bǎ nǐ wǒ dōu huǐ le。búguò wǒmen shāsǐ le bù shǎo shāyú，nǐ gēn wǒ yīqǐ，hái dǎshāng le hǎoduō tiáo。ni shāsǐ guò duōshǎo ā，hǎo yú？ni tóu shàng zhǎng zhe nà zhī chǎngzuǐ，kě búshì bái zhǎng de ā 。'

'半条鱼，' 他说。'你原来是条完整的。我很抱歉，我出海太远了。我把你我都毁了。不过我们杀死了不少鲨鱼，你跟我一起，还打伤了好多条。你杀死过多少啊，好鱼？你头上长着那只长嘴，可不是白长的啊。'

' 'Half fish', he said. 'Fish that you were. I am sorry that I went too far out. I ruined us both. But we have killed many sharks, you and I, and ruined many others. How many did you ever kill, old fish? You do not have that spear on your head for nothing'.' (Ernest Hemingway: The Old Man and the Sea)

[17] gēn wǒ hǎo zěnme le？chīkuī ma？nándào wǒ jiù bái zhǎng zhème shuài le？shuài jiùshì běnqián！

跟我好怎么了？吃亏吗？难道我就白长这么帅了？帅就是本钱！

'What's wrong with dating me？ Do you think I am not worthy enough? Do I own this handsome face for nothing? Being handsome is my investment capital!'

[18] nà zhǎng dé piàoliàng búshì bái zhǎng dé piàoliàng de，yào zhíqián de。

那长得漂亮不是白长得漂亮的，要值钱的。

'Being pretty is not for nothing. It should be rewarding'.

[19] sūn jiàndōng de nèixīn yīrán bǐbó yè táo：diēmā xīnkǔ gòng tā niàn le shíwǔ nián shū，què dé bú zháo tā yī fèn qián de hǎochù，……bái zhǎng le yīfù hǎo pínáng 。

孙建冬的内心依然鄙薄叶陶：爹妈辛苦供他念了十五年书，却得不着他一分钱的好处，……白长了一副好皮囊。

'Inside his heart, Sun Jiandong still looked down on Ye Tao: his parents paid for his tuition for 15 years, yet did not get even one cent from him。 Although Ye Tao had a handsome face, it was pretty useless'.

[20]   wǒmen péiyǎng chūlái de réncái，dōu bú wèi zìjǐ de guójiā fúwù，wǒmen bú
        shì bái péiyǎng le mā？wǒmen de tóunǎo nándào bù yīnggāi qīngxǐng yīxiē mā？

我们培养出来的人才，都不为自己的国家服务，我们不是白培养了吗？我们的头脑难道不应该清醒一些吗？

'Of the talents we trained, no one served for our own country. Didn't we train them gratuitously? Shouldn't we be more sober on this point?'

[21]   huí dào cèzhuāng yǐjīng kāishǐ màishōu le，shuǐkù píruǎn wúlì，zuìhòu de
        yīdiǎndiǎn nítāng shuǐ kěliánbābā，bái kàn zhe hēicūn de rénmen yòu fēngshōu
        le yīhuí

回到册庄已经开始麦收了，水库疲软无力，最后的一点点泥汤水可怜巴巴，白看着黑村的人们又丰收了一回。

'Back to Ce Village, wheat was harvesting. The reservoir did not have enough water. The last bits of muddy water looked miserable. People watched in vain, seeing that the Hei Village farmers had a bumper harvest again, without themselves being able to do the same'.

[22]   dàjiā dōu kàn zhèngzhì，bù guǎn xuéshí，jíshǐ yǒu jiùguó de zhēnxīn，érqiě
        nádào zhèngquán，yě shì shìdàolíntóu bái dèngyǎn！méiyǒu yīngfù de nénglì
        yǔ zhīshí

大家都看政治，不管学识，即使有救国的真心，而且拿到政权，也是事到临头白瞪眼！没有应付的能力与知识。

'If we all just study politics and do not care for knowledge, even if we are genuinely dedicated to the salvation of our country and win the power, we still can only stare and do nothing in the end! That is because we will not have the ability and knowledge to run the country'.

[23]   zhègè fāxiàn jiājù le wǒ de kǒngjù，yě chèdǐ dǎxiāo le wǒ dúzì yī rén xiāomiè
        yāoguài de xióngxīn。shuí dōu zhīdào yīgè rén zhīshēn hé shīzǐ bódòu nà jiào
        bái gěi 。

这个发现加剧了我的恐惧，也彻底打消了我独自一人消灭妖怪的雄心。谁都知道一个人只身和狮子搏斗那叫白给。

'This discovery intensified my horror, and completely took away my ambition of dealing with the monster single-handedly. Everyone knows that a single man is no match for a lion, if he wishes to grapple with it'.

In [16], the old man was prescribing his conception of the use of the spear mouth of the big fish, which was to help him kill sharks so that he could keep the big fish as his prey. If this usage was not put into action, the spear was considered to be gratuitously grown. In [17]-[19], a commonly conceived view was presupposed: good-looks should be rewarding, and rewarding in an unspecified sense, since the other end of the balancing scale is not explicated. [20] again presupposes a vague balancing scale: students who received free education are expected to render service to the country as a form of repayment. If not, the teachers will feel that their teaching work is not adequately rewarded, so are the officials who work for the student-aid system or for the education institutes in general. But the real balance is between the students who benefit from the free education and the country that provides the service. [21] presents a case in which people in village A watch people in village B harvesting, but A were not able to do the same. Hence they could only watch in vain. [22] talks about people not being able to rise to the occasion, but can only look around in vain, with no beneficiary side at all. In both [21] and [22], only one end of the balancing scale is clear, the other side is not directly involved. Finally, the 'bái gěi' (give in vain) in [23] means being no match to the opponent, letting him take the upper hand without being able to put up a resistance. The emphasis is on 'no match' rather than on the balancing scale and its two ends.

The above considerations lead to some modifications of the content of the presupposition triggered by 'bái', that is: events or processes, whether involving humans or not, are expected by humans to preserve a balance of energy flow, which may transform itself into some other forms in the process, so long as the energy is preserved in some way, i.e. labour at one end being compensated by money at the other end, good-looking having the potential of being rewarded by marrying a wealthy spouse, dedicated research being credited with good research indices, etc. On the other hand, since the criteria are wholly subjective, there is no guarantee for proper balance. The presupposition is only to expect that energy flow is preserved to the extent that the speaker does not feel the need to use 'bái', or he feels justified to negate 'bái' in his utterance. Otherwise, the balance is upset, and 'bái' can be used to describe the event. With this understanding, we can enrich the presupposition of 'bái' in the following way:

Events or processes, whether involving humans or not, are expected by humans to preserve a balance of energy flow, which may transform itself into some other forms in the process, so long as the energy is preserved in some way, to the extent that the balance is still considered to hold. Upsetting the balance at either end will lead to the likelihood of the use of 'bái', and awareness of the maintenance of the balance provides the reason for the use of the negation of 'bái'.

The above presupposition, henceforth shortened to '*bái-presupposition*', is probably a rather rare presupposition because it addresses the general tendency of human cognition. Put in an even stronger way, it is an embodiment of human cognitive principle, which explains most human endeavours throughout the whole human history and even the whole process of human evolution. It then comes as a no surprise that '*bái-presupposition*' bears some resemblance to the communicative principle of relevance introduced above, which also professes to be a principle of human cognition. Applying '*bái-presupposition*' to the case of utterance comprehension, the hearer expects that his comprehension effort will not come to nothing. That is tantamount to saying that he expects the utterance to give him some cognitive effects so that his cognitive comprehension effort will not be of no avail. And the speaker is also aware of the hearer's expectation because her cognitive actions are also guided by the principle of relevance. So she will justify her verbal behavior by producing an utterance that will give the hearer some cognitive effects. Otherwise, even her own cognitive effort will be exerted gratuitously. In verbal communication, therefore, there is an expectation of cognitive effort preservation, to some extent, being a special case of the '*bái-presupposition*'. As the concept of 'relevance' in relevance theory is a specially defined term, using the notions of cognitive effect and effort, which is different from the usual sense of 'relevance' in ordinary English language, we can envisage the possibility of using '*bái*' to redefine the principle of relevance, making it sound more natural, at least in Chinese. Since the presupposition can be overtly revealed and maintained by using '*bái*' with negation, we come up with the following definition:

[24]   The Not-*bái* Principle of Communication:

Speaker: bú bái shuō [不白说] 'Do not talk with no effects'.

Hearer: bú bái fèi jīnglì [不白费精力] 'Do not exert mental effort in vain'

[24] follows from the more general [25], which could have been the shorter definition of the '*bái-presupposition*', yet to do that is to make the definition circular, as it

contains '*bái*', which needs to be defined itself:

[25]   bú bái fèi lì [不白费力] 'Do not exert energy in vain'.

This coincidental resemblance of '*bái-presupposition*' to the communicative principle of relevance comes as a happy surprise. But at a more deliberated level, it comes as no surprise at all. Both address one fundamental aspect of human cognition. If there are laws of human cognition to be found, relevance theory discovered the principle of relevance, and we find in '*bái-presupposition*' a natural language embodiment of the principle in the form of a presupposition. Such a resemblance is not an impossibility.

5. Case Study Two: the rhetorical figure 'lièjǐn' 列锦格 (list-gem) as a touchstone in the debate between Contextualism and Semantic Minimalism

As a figure of speech christened only for thirty odd years, [4] *list-gem* refers to an idiosyncratic structure in Chinese, which consists of several semantically unrelated NPs (single nouns or noun phrases) lined up in a row as one sentence, with no verb predicates nor adjectives or nouns used as predicates. The general understanding is that the figure of list-gem should contain three NPs as its norm. A sentence containing only two NPs should best be categorized as *couplet*, as two single NPs forming a couplet is common in Chinese poetry. Besides, the interpretation of couplet differs a lot from list-gem, as a couplet either forms an antithesis or expresses a sequence. On the other hand, in most cases, a sentence containing four or more stand-alone NPs is to be categorized as *enumeration* or *escalation*, which means the NPs contained therein are also related in meaning, again being very different from list-gem. Classic examples of list-gem are found in classical poetry, as shown by [26]-[27]

[26]   kūténg lǎoshù hūnyā，枯藤老树昏鸦，[list gem 1]

xiǎoqiáo liúshuǐ rénjiā，小桥流水人家。[list gem 2]

gǔdào xīfēng shòumǎ。古道西风瘦马。[list gem 3]

xīyáng xī xià，夕阳西下，[subject predicate construction]

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[4] Cf. Tan (1996) for its naming history.

duàncháng rén zài tiānyá 。断肠人在天涯。[existential construction]⁵

'Dry-vine old-tree blind-crow,

Small-bridge flowing-water human-home

Old-road west-wind lean-horse

Setting-sun falls west

Heart-broken man at end of the world'

[27]　　gūcūn luòrì cánxiá，孤村落日残霞，[list gem 1]

qīngyān lǎoshù hányā，轻烟老树寒鸦，[list gem 2]

　yī diǎn fēi hóng yǐng xià。一点飞鸿影下。[complex description]

　qīng shān lǜ shuǐ，青山绿水，[couplet]

bái cǎo hóng yè huáng huā。白草红叶黄花。[list gem 3]⁶

'Lone-village falling-sun patch-twilight,

Thin-smoke old-tree jack-daw

One spot of shadow cast down by the flying swan-goose

Green-mountain olive-water

White-grass red-leaf yellow-flower'

　　　In [26], the first three lines are three cases of list gem instead of one, as they form three distinct meaning clusters. The remaining two lines do not contain list gems. Likewise in [27], even though only NPs can be found, not all lines are composed of list gems. Each of [28]-[31] are two-line couplets taken from whole poems, but each line in each couplet constitutes a list gem, which introduces further complications to the distinction between couplets and list gems.

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⁵ Composed by Mǎ Zhìyuan　马致远 [c.1250-c.1321].

⁶ Composed by Bái Pǔ　白朴 [1226-c.1306].

[28]   jī shēng máo diàn yuè，rén jì bǎn qiáo shuāng。

鸡声茅店月，人迹板桥霜。[two list gems]

'Rooster-sound small-inn moon/Foot-print wood-bridge frost'.

[29]   táolǐ chūnfēng yībēi jiǔ，jiānghú yèyǔ shínián dēng 。

桃李春风一杯酒，江湖夜雨十年灯。[two list gems]

'Peach-plum spring-wind a-cup-of-wine/River-lake night-rain ten-year-light'

[30] sān shí gōng míng chén yǔ tǔ , bā qiān lǐ lù yún hé yuè。

三十功名尘与土,八千里路云和月。[two list gems]

'Thirty-feat-fame dust and mud/Eight-thousand-li-road cloud and month'

[31] wèn rǔ píng shēng shì yè，huáng zhōu huì zhōu dān zhōu 。

问汝平生事业，黄州惠州儋州。[list gem in the second line]

'Ask you life achievement/Huáng-Town Huì-Town Dān-Town'

The interpretation of list gems could be an interesting topic in cognitive-pragmatic studies of rhetoric, as there do not seem to exist similar structures in languages that have been well exposed to pragmatic studies. Since a list gem forms a sentence but does not have a predicate, it seems necessary to accommodate one through explicating, so as to obtain the complete explicature with a saturated argument-predicate structure. But the three NPs in the list gem are no more than keywords. Each one may be accommodated with a different predicate. And the thorny issue is that different language users may supply different predicates to the same NP, to the extent that they are confident enough in obtaining the explicature of the sentence. Even the poet himself may find it hard to supply the exact predicate, for there simply isn't one that can capture the rich meaning left open by the non-presence of any predicates, which is the hallmark of implicit meaning. Perhaps the best an interpreter can achieve is some impressions created by the line-up of the three stand-alone NPs. He can try to make inferences to establish the links among the three, but he is always ill at ease in deciding on the one single literal meaning for the sentence. At the same time, he can obtain a rich array of weak implicatures, appreciating fully the poetic effects of list gem. The comprehension process is unavoidably guided by the principle of

relevance. The interpreter understands list gem in the optimally relevant way, resulting in a very unclear explicature and a set of weak implicatures. But to the mind of an individual interpreter, some weak implicatures may be even clearer than the explicature.

One important theoretical bearing of this case has to do with the recent debate between Contextualism and Semantic Minimalism in philosophy of language. [7] Contextualists hold the view that the exact truth-value cannot be determined at the sentence level, because meaning directly gleaned from the logical form of any sentence is unavoidably underdetermined and cannot be recovered without the use of free pragmatic inference. Hence truth-conditional semantics cannot be self-sufficient, as pragmatic processes always intrude into the determination of literal meaning of a sentence, without which the truth value can never be ascertained. Truth can only be established at the level truth-conditional pragmatics. On the other hand, Semantic Minimalists contend that truth-conditional semantics can still be self-contained and adequate. Although meaning is underdetermined at sentence level, the logical form of the sentence can be reanalyzed so that motivated indexicals can be posited. Thus all pragmatic processes aiming to derive perfect literal meaning are activated by indices, which are represented as free variables in the logical form and instantiated through pragmatic inference. Truth-conditional semantics is thus salvaged because semantic interpretation refers to all the items in the logical form, including interpretive rules for all the indices. It is the indices that refer outward to contextual information. Pragmatic intrusion is fended off at sentence level. Arguments contributing to this debate come in two kinds. From a theoretical point of view, it is important to propose claims and mechanisms that are strong in explanatory power. From an empirical point of view, it is also important that either side can take into consideration a wide range of structures and cases, including those in different languages that prove to be challenging to existing accounts. In such a testing ground, Contextualism and Semantic minimalism can compete with each other, and the results can best reveal the advantages or inadequacies of the either side.

List gem appears to provide a strong case in support of Contextualism, and a knock-down case against Semantic Minimalism, as it is impossible to determine the explicature of list gem sentences: language users don't bother to flesh out the complete meaning of list gems. If pressed, one may supply an ad hoc explicature, which is most likely to be very different from the one constructed for the second time when he is asked to explicate the

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[7] Cf. Borg (2004), Carston (2004, 2010), and Stanley (2000).

very same sentence. When two people are asked to explicate the same list gem, they always differ a lot from each other in what each can produce. Hence, classic list gem examples never have standard explicatures. Contextualists can therefore use list gem to show that the truth-conditional content cannot be established at sentence level, as there is no commonly accepted way to explicate a list gem. However, Semantic Minimalists can find an escape hatch by arguing that list gems do not have explicatures at all: the whole point of using list gems is to let them create impressions, which lead to the derivation of weak implicatures. In list gems, we find a rare case of language use which has a lot of implicatures but no agreed explicatures.

6. Case Study Three: the reach of counterfactual meaning in Chinese – a unique logic?

How counterfactual conditionals are expressed in Mandarin Chinese (and in Chinese dialects) has remained a mystery since the advent of modern linguistics.[8] Unlike Indo-European languages which almost always use verb inflexion to mark counterfactuals, Chinese lacks explicit morphology to distinguish counterfactual conditionals from indicative ones. Although there are a few lexicalized constructions such as 'yàobúshì'[要不是](If-not-be) and 'zǎozhīdào' [早知道] (early-know) whose presence necessarily lead to counterfactual interpretations, there are many others that are interpreted counterfactually in contexts of utterance that do not make any use of these constructions. As native speakers of Chinese do perceive counterfactual conditionals and produce them as well, the challenge is to provide an adequate mechanism that can characterize the reach of counterfactual meaning in Chinese. Right now, there are two approaches. According to the first approach, as Chinese counterfactuals are largely unmarked, Chinese conditionals are either indicative or counterfactual, depending on the information gathered from the context. It is the contextual information that provides the interpretive guidance. If the antecedent of a conditional makes a contrary-to-fact hypothesis in content (though not in form), counterfactual meaning is reached through pragmatic inference.[9] This thesis can lead to the claim that every conditional is ambiguous between indicative and counterfactual. But native speakers do not seem to perceive conditionals in this way. At least, more specific claims are needed to explain how context can determine counterfactuality for a conditional.

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[8] Wáng (2013) contains a survey on this topic.
[9] Cf. Jiǎng (2000).

Another approach argues that some words and particles in Chinese serve as markers or weak features of counterfactuality.[10] Although each of them may be too weak to make it happen, some such features can work together in some subtle ways to bring about counterfactuality. Such an approach also needs more clarifications. Weak features seem to be all optional in nature. Although sometimes, their presence makes the difference and counterfactuality is reached, some other times, similar counterfactual meaning can be reached without any of the weak features being present. Again, it is not clear how the mechanism works.

The account we propose is different from either of the above. We start by examining the semantics of the explicit counterfactuals, i.e. the 'yàobúshì'[要 不 是](If-not-be) conditionals, followed by a comparison between 'yàobúshì' and 'me51hau3'[蛮好](*Much-preferred*) in Shanghainese, reaching the conclusion that they are by nature falsifying and truthifying counterfactuals. Then we try to generalize the findings to the majority of Chinese counterfactuals, claiming that they can be treated on a par with the 'yàobúshì' and 'me51hau3' counterfactuals.

Some examples involving 'yàobúshì' are given below.

[32] dāngchū，wǒ cóng diànyǐngyuàn cízhí láidào běijīng de shíhòu，jiālǐrén jí tóngshì、péngyǒu jiù jílì fǎnduì。yàobúshì wǒ yìng xià yītiáo xīn，gēnběn jiù cí bú liǎo zhí，gèng lái bú liǎo běijīng。(当初，我从电影院辞职来到北京的时候，家里人及同事、朋友就极力反对。要不是我硬下一条心，根本就辞不了职，更来不了北京。) 'Initially, when I quit my cinema job to come to Beijing, my family members, colleagues and friends were all deadly against it. Had I not made up my mind, I would not have been able to resign, nor would I have been able to come and make it in Beijing.'

[33] 1:0, zhōngguó zúqiúduì yíng de gòu xuán de, bǐsài jìnxíng de yě gòu xié de。yàobúshì Hǎo Hǎidōng nà yǒudiǎn yùnqì de jìnqiú , píngjú kěndìng huì zhāo lái bùmǎn hé fēiyì 。suǒyǐ, shuǎng bú qǐlái 。(1:0, 中国足球队赢得够悬的, 比赛进行得也够邪的。<u>要不是</u>郝海东那有点运气的进球,平局肯定会招来不满和非议。所以, 爽不起来。) *'One: Nil. The Chinese football team won a very close match with real good luck. Had it not been for Hao Haidong to score that lucky goal, a tie would surely have incurred dissatisfaction and complaints. That is why nobody took it with a light heart'.*

[34] xīlà dàibiǎotuán suī shì zuìhòu yīgè rùchǎng, dàn huòdé de zhǎngshēng shì zuì jiǔ、 zuì rèliè de。zhè bú qíguài, yīnwèi tāmen shì dōngdàozhǔ , guānzhòng méiyǒu lǐyóu lìnxī zìjǐ de zhǎngshēng。zhídé yītí de shì, xīlà dàibiǎotuán cóng zhǔnbèi rùchǎng dào ràochǎng yīzhōu duō hòu, gòng dédào le 18 fēn 2 miǎo zhōng de zhǎngshēng , yàobúshì zhǔchírén dǎduàn, hěn nánshuō gǔzhǎng néng chíxù dào shēnme shíhòu 。 (希腊代表团虽是最后一个入场,但获得的掌声是最久、最热烈的。这不奇怪, 因为他们是东道主, 观众没有理由吝惜自己的掌声。值得一提的是,希腊代表 团从准备入场到绕场一周多后,共得到了 18 分 2 秒钟的掌声, <u>要不是</u>主持人 打断,很难说鼓掌能持续到什么时候。) '*Although the Greek delegation were the last to enter the stadium, they won the longest and loudest round of applause. This is hardly surprising, as they represented the host country and the spectators had no reason to save on their applauses. It is worth pointing out that the Greek delegation won a round of applause lasting for 18 minutes and 2 seconds, from the time they prepared to enter the stadium to the end of one lap's march. Had it not been for the ceremony presenter who put the cheers to an end, it would have been hard to tell how long the applause would last*'.

In the above examples, 'yàobúshì', though internally complex, behaves exactly like a conditional functor. It is used as a single lexical item, different from the compositional meaning of 'yàoshì…bú'/If … not/'要是… 不'. 'yàoshì…bú' is not an explicit marker of counterfactual conditionals, because it can also form indicative conditionals. 'yàoshì…bú' resembles 'If … not' in English, but 'yàobúshì' is similar to the English 'Had it not been for …' in meaning.

'Yàobúshì' is internally complex for a special reason. It takes on a proposition P, which should be about a state or event that is both true and real, and returns a protasis P* which is counterfactual. Here, negation obviously plays a vital role, but negation is only a necessary condition, not a sufficient one. In the 'yàoshì…bú' construction, which also forms a protasis, negation works as well, but the resulting protasis does not have to be contrary to fact. What is more, the proposition led by 'yàobúshì' should not be some proposition about abstract, general, timeless states. This can be established through both introspection and corpus search. Try to create a 'yàobúshì' counterfactual with abstract ideas, the resulting conditional is bound to be weird. What also tend out to be anomalous are 'yàobúshì' counterfactuals containing a proposition with an extra layer of negation. To say the least, they are difficult to process.

To sharpen the above characterizations of 'yàobúshì', we look for more precise theoretical concepts in linguistic and philosophical studies. One viable notion to adopt is

(*subjective*) *veridicality*, whose definition can be found in Giannakidou and Mari (2014) : 'truth judgments depending on what epistemic agents know or believe to be true, and other factors in the context relating to the epistemic status of individuals'.

Aided by this new definition, 'yàobúshì' can be characterized as an operator taking a veridical proposition as its argument: what the agent knows or believes to be true. We can also call 'yàobúshì' a *veridical operator*. A similar operator in Mandarin is 'zǎozhīdào …'(早知道) /Early know… /, which however, is not a conditional connective, as it can follow 'rúguǒ' or 'yàoshì':

[35] Tā xiàng xiāoxié tóngzhì kūsù shuō：'yàoshì zǎo zhīdào shàngdàng shòupiàn，wǒ jiù bú gàn le。xiànzài nòng dé yīshēn máfan，xiōngdì jiěmèi dōu bù xiāng rèn，hái jīyā le yīdàduī méi tuīxiāo chūqù de chǎnpǐn，wǒ qù zhǎo shuí a？'(她向消协同志哭诉说：'要是<u>早知道</u>上当受骗，我就不干了。现在弄得一身麻烦，兄弟姐妹都不相认，还积压了一大堆没推销出去的产品，我去找谁啊？') '*She told staff from Consumer's Association in tears, 'Had I known it was a fraud, I would not have got involved. Now I am all troubles. My brothers and sisters have all turned away from me. And I am stuck with loads of unsold goods. Who can I turn for help*?' '

Subjective veridicality constitutes one necessary condition for the use of 'yàobúshì', but it still does not capture the intuition that 'yàobúshì' does not take on abstract propositions like science or math laws, even though they can be subjectively established as truth. In Armstrong (2002), non-abstract counterfactuals are given the name *contingent counterfactuals*: 'Contingent counterfactual claims are often to be found in ordinary discourse, for instance, 'If you had not put your foot on the brake so promptly just then, there would have been a nasty accident'. Talks of *historical contingencies* are also frequently encountered: 'What if there had been no American War of Independence? What if Ireland had never been divided? What if Britain had stayed out of the First World War? What if Hitler had invaded Britain or had defeated the Soviet Union? What if the Russians had won the Cold War? What if Kennedy had lived? What if there had been no Gorbachev?' (Ferguson 1999)

Another useful source is Rescher (2007), in which he distinguishes between *falsifying* and *truthifying* causal counterfactuals. Falsifying counterfactuals hypothesize what actually did happen had not happened, whereas truthifying counterfactuals hypothesize what did not actually happen had happened. According to Rescher, historical counterfactuals of the falsifying type 'are in general retrospectively cause-determinative in

nature' and 'generally address the preconditions for an actual occurrence'. Such counterfactuals are less speculative and more situation-bound. This rightly fits the characterization of 'yàobúshì' counterfactuals. So what follows 'yàobúshì' can now be re-characterized as a proposition which is both veridical and a falsifying contingent. And Armstrong's term of contingent counterfactuals can now be elucidated as contingency-referenced falsifying counterfactuals. The whole protasis led by 'yàobúshì' can therefore be taken as an encoded falsifying counterfactual context.

On the other hand, some structures can be encoded as counterfactual, but allowing either falsifying or truthifying possibilities. Jiang and Wang (forthcoming) characterizes the behavior of the Shanghainese 'me51hau3' (蛮好……) /*Much-preferred…*/ as a counterfactual *desiderative*, which can give a truthifying reading:

[36] Mehau   ganggang   cen ditik   qi nao ![11]

Much-preferred   just-now take underground go   EM-SMP

蛮好刚刚乘地铁启孬！

(EM-SMP = emotive sentence-final particle)

'*It would have been much better that we took the underground at the time*.

刚才要是坐地铁去就好了。'

But the negation of P in such a context turns the whole sentence into a falsifying one:

[37] Mehau   nong   ganggang   vyao   gang   bak yi

Much-preferred   you just-now   do-not   tell   to   him

tin   nao.
hear EM-SMP

蛮好侬刚刚勿要岗摆伊听孬！

'*It would have been much better that you did not let him/her know (that) at the time*.

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[11] As tone sandhi in Shanghainese varies a lot in different phonetic contexts, it is customary for non-phonetic studies to omit tones in example sentences.

你刚才要是不告诉他就好了。'

The proposition following 'me51hau3' is necessarily *antiveridical*. That is, the speaker presupposes that the truth-value of the proposition is false. But it can either take the positive form with a truthifying reading, as in [36], or adopt a negated form with a falsifying reading, as in [37]. Thus, 'yàobúshì + S' and 'me51hau3 + S' share the same feature of being encoded forms of counterfactual meaning, even though the former S is marked by [+veridical], and the latter, by [+antiveridical]. This comparative study provides a clue to the treatment of implicit counterfactual conditionals in Mandarin. In addition, sentences involving 'zǎozhīdào …'(早知道) /Early know… / should now be taken as encoded truthifying counterfactual constructions, as shown in [35].

Previous psycholinguistic studies have revealed that native speakers of Chinese are not used to processing unexpected, out of the blue implicit counterfactual conditionals. But they are ready to weigh up different contingencies if enough contextual information is supplied.[12] Relating this finding to our characterization about explicit counterfactuals, we can further hypothesize that even in the case of implicit counterfactuals, native speakers of Chinese still treat them as either falsifying or truthifying counterfactuals. The question then boils down to how a Chinese can tell the difference between an indicative conditional and a falsifying/truthifying counterfactual conditional. The cues, we suggest, are the weak features, such as the aspect marker 'le' 了 (optional marker of perfect aspect), the temporal adverb 'zǎo' 早 (early), and the negation words such as 'bú' 不 (not) and 'méi' 没 (not-in-past). These words have varied meaning and functions, but when used in conditionals, they share the similar function of indicating a change of eventuality, presenting an alternative which falsifies the current case or truthifies what is not there by making things happen. Hence the counterfactual meaning. Related examples are given below:

[38] yàoshì nǐ qù le，jiù bú huì bú zhùyì tā nà piāoliàng de tàitài de。[truthifying]

要是你去了，就不会不注意他那漂亮的太太的。

'If you had been there, you would not have failed to notice his pretty wife'.

[39] rúguǒ wǒ zǎo zhīdào tā bú lái ，wǒ yě bú huì lái le。[truthifying]

如果我早知道他不来，我也不会来了。

'If I knew it earlier that he would not come, I would not come either'.

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[12] Cf. Bloom (1981) .

[40] yàoshì wǒ zhēnde zhōng le liùhécǎi，nà wǒ mǎshàng jiù huì cízhí。

[truthifying]

要是我<u>真的</u>中了六合彩，那我马上就会辞职。

'If I really won the Mark Six, I would quit my work immediately.'

[41] yàoshì gāngcái nàgè rènyìqiú méi fá jìn，jiù huì tī jiāshísài le。[falsifying]

要是刚才那个任意球<u>没</u>罚进，就会踢加时赛了。

'If that free kick had not been in, the match would have gone into extra-time'.

[42] zhè chǎng huǒ，xìngkuī xiāofángduì lái dé zǎo。fǒuzé hòuguǒ bùkān shèxiǎng。
[falsifying]

这场火，幸亏消防队来得早。<u>否则</u>后果不堪设想。

'This fire, lucky was it that firemen arrived in good time [to put it out]. Otherwise, it would have caused unimaginable damages.'

Having treated explicit and implicit counterfactual conditionals, the remaining counterfactuals are the conditionals that hypothesize a situation known to be blatantly false according to language users' knowledge of the world: situations that are absurd, improbable or self-contradictory. Some such examples are given below:

[43] yàoshì huàn le wǒ de huà，jiù búhuì duì tā zhème kèqì le。

要是换<u>了</u>我的话，就不会对他这么客气了。

'If I were to deal with the case, I would not be so nice to him'.

[44] rúguǒ tàiyáng cóng xībiān chūlái，wǒ yīdìng jià gěi nǐ。

如果太阳从西边出来，我一定嫁给你。

'If the sun comes out from the west, I will be your wife for sure'.

[45] yàoshì tā shuō èr jiā èr děngyú wǔ —— nàme hǎo de，èr jiā èr jiù děngyú wǔ。

要是他说二加二等于五——那么好的，二加二就等于五。

'If he says that two and two are five—well, two and two are five. ' [George Orwell: Looking Back on the Spanish War]

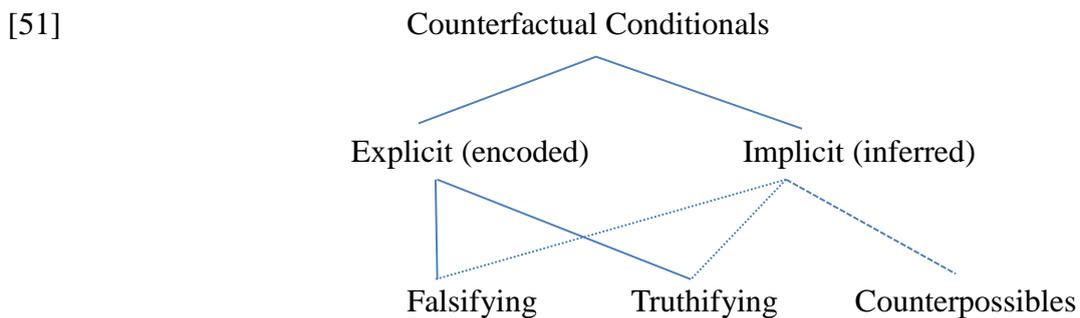[46] jiǎrú wǒ yǒu yīshuāng chìbǎng，wǒ xiǎng xiàng xiǎoniǎo yīyàng zìyóu de fēixiáng。

假如我有一双翅膀，我想像小鸟一样自由地飞翔。

'If I had a pair of wings, I wish to fly freely like a little bird'.

The above investigation may give the impression that only semantic factors are taken into consideration. But gradually, we have outlined an inferential path for the comprehension of Chinese counterfactual conditionals, and the overall reasoning is a matter of pragmatic inference --   in our present framework of analysis – a comprehension inference conducted under the guidance of the principle of relevance. Whether a sentence is interpreted counterfactually depends on the following factors:

[47]   The encoded meaning of 'yàobúshì' and a cluster similar expressions
[48]   The identification of the contingent fact under discussion
[49]   The pragmatic function of the weak features
[50]   The identification of the absurd, the impossible, or the self-contradictory
       content

Obviously, [48]-[50] are pragmatic factors. The typology of Chinese counterfactual conditionals is now summarized in the following graph:

[51]   Counterfactual Conditionals

              Explicit (encoded)   Implicit (inferred)

              Falsifying   Truthifying   Counterpossibles

7. Epilogue

This is an extended introduction to Chinese theoretical pragmatics, or linguistic pragmatics for Chinese. After introducing some general concepts and phenomena, I present relevance-theoretic pragmatics and apply theoretical notions to three case studies. With these I hope to show how pragmatics can be put to work in linguistic analysis. It is important for students of Chinese grammar to seek insights in pragmatics so as to give novel accounts of some puzzling grammatical issues. It is equally important for workers of Chinese pragmatics to roll up their sleeves and work on actual topics, rather than always remain at the stage of reading, surveying and evaluating works and ideas from the West.

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