



HAL
open science

Extraction out of Mandarin Clauses: Topic vs. Focus?

Ruihua Mao, Barbara Hemforth, Anne Abeillé

► **To cite this version:**

Ruihua Mao, Barbara Hemforth, Anne Abeillé. Extraction out of Mandarin Clauses: Topic vs. Focus?. AMLaP Asian 2023, Dec 2023, Honkong, China. hal-04368244

HAL Id: hal-04368244

<https://hal.science/hal-04368244>

Submitted on 31 Dec 2023

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Introduction

This study compares extraction out of Mandarin adjunct (if-initial clauses vs. if-final clauses) and complement (that clause) in topicalized constructions and focalized constructions through contextualized acceptability judgment experiments.

Research questions

- 1) Is extraction out of mandarin adjunct clauses acceptable?
- 2) In how far do discourse factors play a role?

Three main approaches to long-distance dependencies:

- Syntactic approach: adjuncts are “island” (e.g. Huang 1982, Chomsky 1986) .
- Processing approach: extraction out of adjunct is sensitive to frequency/distance and other processing factors (Kluender 1991, Hofmeister & Sag 2010)
- Discourse-based approach: Goldberg (2006, 2013) Backgrounded Constructions are Islands, Abeillé et al (2020): it is unfelicitous to extract an element out of a backgrounded constituent when the extracted element is focalized (as in wh-questions or clefts). If most adjunct clauses are backgrounded, it is unfelicitous to extract out of them with a focalizing construction.

Previous experiments:

Sprouse et al. (2016) found a penalty for extraction out of if-adjuncts with English wh-questions (without context) but not with relative clauses.

Kush et al (2018, 2019) and Bondevik et al. (2021) observed an if-adjunct penalty in Norwegian wh-questions but not in topicalizations.

Gibson et al. (2021) and Abeillé et al. (2022) replicated the adjunct penalty in English wh-questions (without context) but not in wh-questions with context, nor in topicalizations, compared to complement that-clauses.

Myers (2012) tested Mandarin topicalizations out of if- and because- initial adjuncts, finding a high acceptance rate (69.4%). However, he did not compare them with non extraction, nor with complement clauses

Zenker & Schwartz (2017) compared Mandarin topicalizations for because- and that-clauses, and found no adjunct island effect.

Mao et al.(2022) found no penalty for topicalizations out of Mandarin if- final adjuncts compared to that- clauses.

Two Experiments

Two Acceptability Judgment Experiments on Ixex Farm. Participants were presented with contextualized fsentence pairs & asked to rate the second sentence on a 1-7 Likert scale, and answer yes/no comprehension questions. Only participants with accuracy rates above 80% were kept.

Exp1: Extraction out of Mandarin if initial vs if final clauses

- 24 Experimental items, 30 filler items(6 ungrammatical ones) followed by comprehension questions
- 36 Mandarin natives recruited through social media
- A 2x2 design: **Focus Status**(Focus vs. Topic); **If-clause-position**(if initial vs. if final)

Context:

zhangshan de baba xiai wenxue.
zhangshan's father loves literature

(1)

a. Topic & If final:

zheben shu, ta hui feichang gaoxing, [ruguo ta renzhen yuedu].
(-FM) this-CL book, he will very happy, if she carefully read

b. Focus & If final

Shi zheben shu, ta hui feichang gaoxing, [ruguo ta renzhen yuedu].
FM this-CL book, he will very happy, if she carefully read

c. Noextraction & If final (controller)

ta hui feichang gaoxing, [ruguo ta renzhen yuedu zheben shu].
he will very happy, if she carefully read this-CL book

d. Topic & If initial

zheben shu, ruguo ta renzhen yuedu, ta hui feichang gaoxing.
(-FM) this-CL book, if she carefully read he will very happy

e. Focus & If initial

Shi zheben shu, ruguo ta renzhen yuedu, ta hui feichang gaoxing.
FM this-CL book, if she carefully read he will very happy

f. Noextraction & If initial(controller)

[ruguo ta renzhen yuedu zheben shu], ta hui feichang gaoxing
if she carefully read this-CL book he will very happy

Exp2: Extraction out of Mandarin if clauses vs. that clause

- 24 Experimental items, 24 filler items followed by comprehension questions
- 37 Mandarin natives recruited through social media
- A 2x2 design: **Focus Status**(Focus vs. Topic); **Clause Type**(if clause vs. that clause)

(2)

a. Topic & That clause

zheben shu, ta feichang gaoxing ta renzhen yuedu le.
(-FM) this-CL book, he very happy she carefully read-ASP

b. Focus & That clause

Shi zheben shu, ta feichang gaoxing ta renzhen yuedu le
(+FM) this-CL book, he very happy she carefully read-ASP

c. Noextraction & That clause

ta feichang gaoxing ta renzhen yuedu le zheben shu
he very happy she carefully read-ASP this-CL book

d. Topic & If clause

zheben shu, ta hui feichang gaoxing, ruguo ta renzhen yuedu.
(-FM) this-CL book, he will very happy, if she carefully read

e. Focus & If clause

Shi zheben shu, ta hui feichang gaoxing, ruguo ta renzhen yuedu.
(+FM) this-CL book, he will very happy, if she carefully read

f. Noextraction & If clause

ta hui feichang gaoxing ruguo ta renzhen yuedu le zheben shu
he will very happy if she carefully read-ASP this-CL book

Predictions

Syntactic approach:

- Exp1: Higher structural distance with initial if-clauses might lower their acceptability(Haegeman,1994).
- Exp2: Extractions from if-clauses should be rated worse than that-clauses (adjunct island).

Processing approach:

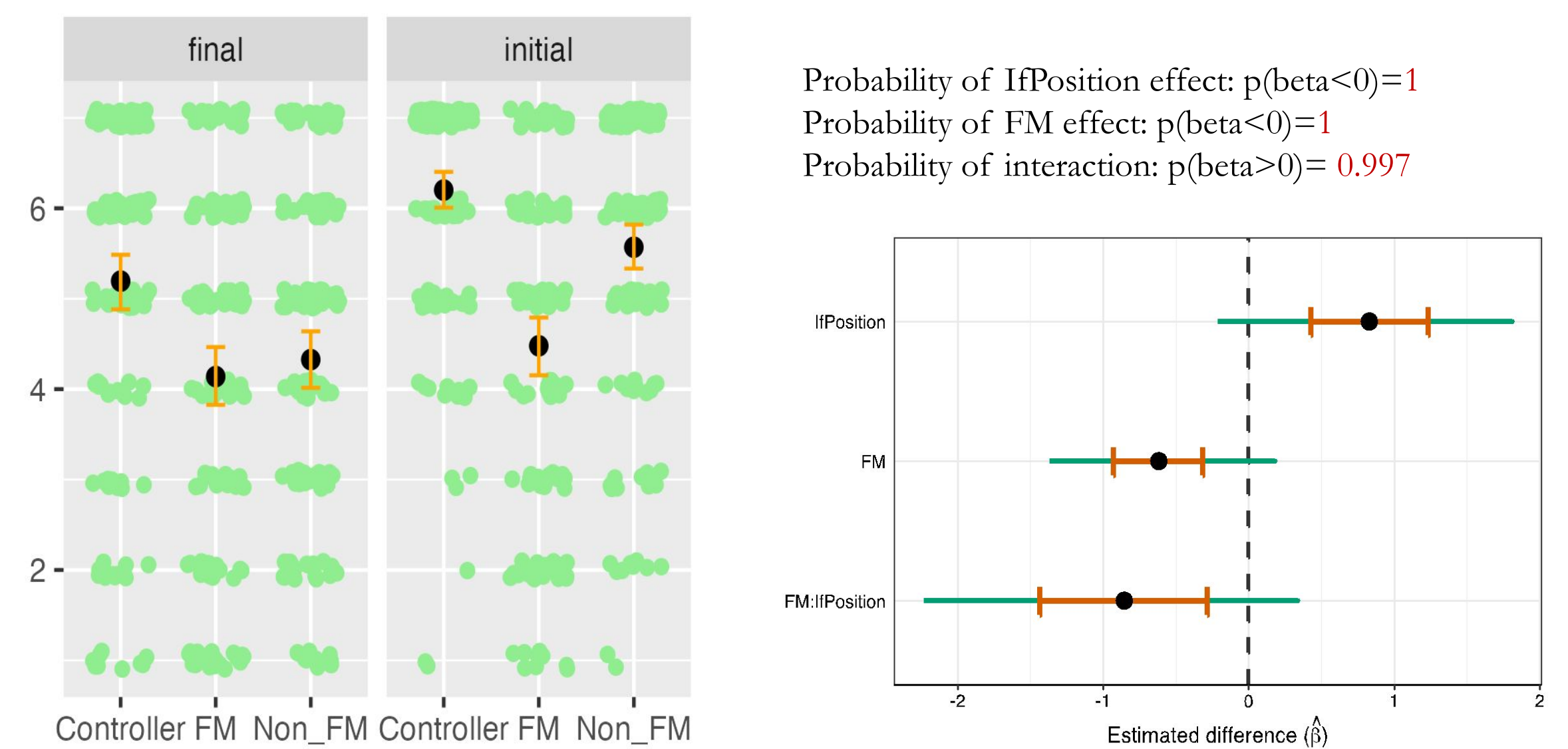
- Exp1: shorter linear distance between the filler and the gap favors extraction out of if-initial adjuncts
- Exp2: no differences between if-clauses and that-clauses

Discourse approach:

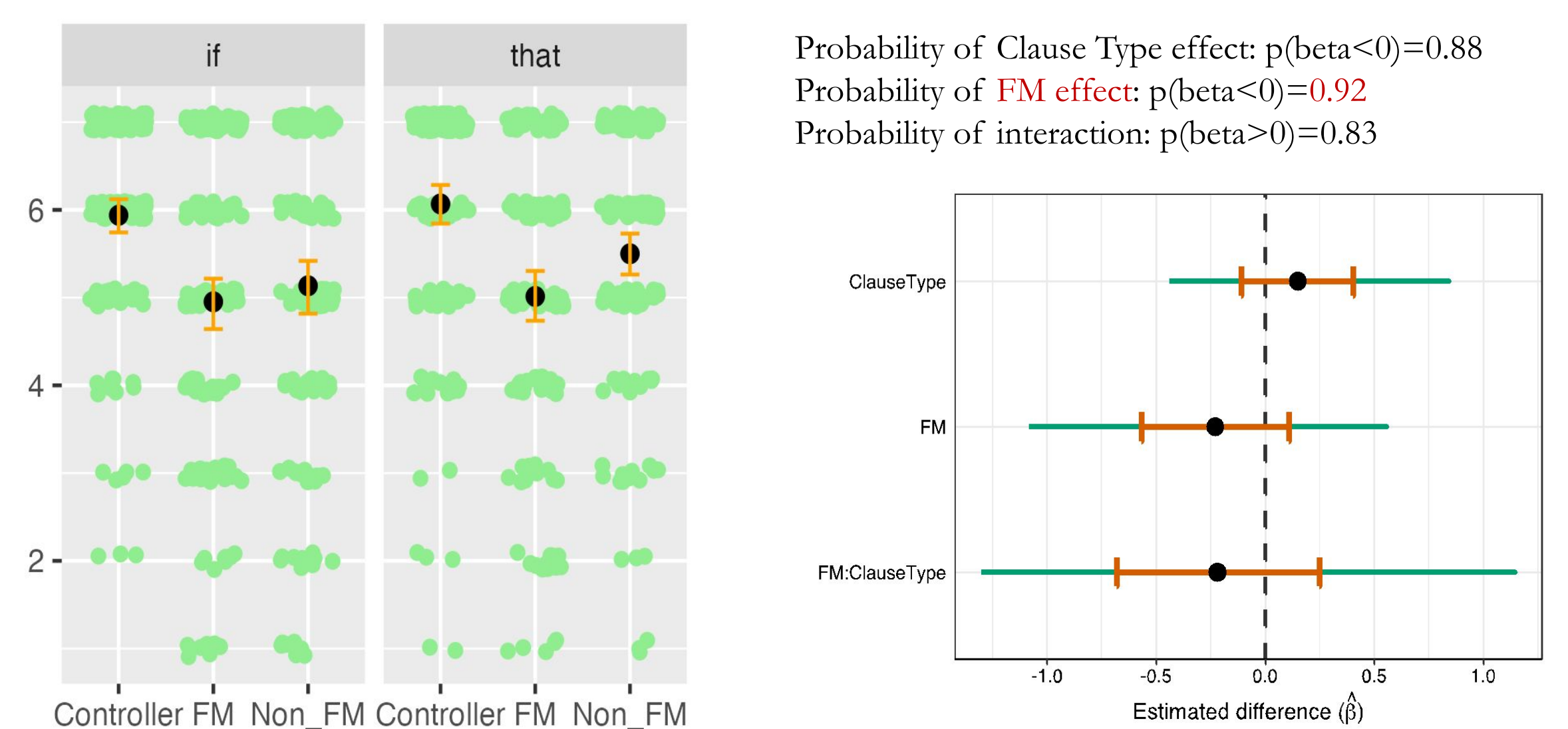
- Exp1: Focus-Background Conflict Constraint (Abeillé et al., 2020) penalizes extraction of a focused element from a backgrounded constituent because there is a discourse conflict. If initial if-clauses are more backgrounded than final if-clauses, a bigger penalty for focusing out of initial if-clauses is predicted.
- Exp2: A penalty for focus extraction out of if-clauses is predicted, if that-clauses are less backgrounded.

Results

Exp1 Extraction out of Mandarin if-initial vs. if-final clauses



Exp2 Extraction out of Mandarin if-clauses vs. that-clauses



Bayesian analyses excluding the control condition show:

Exp1:

- a high probability for a main effect of If-clause Position effect (higher ratings in if-initial sentences)
- a high probability for a main effect of Focus-Marker effect (lower ratings in focused conditions)
- a high probability for an interaction: bigger difference between Focus and Topic in if-initial sentence

Ungrammatical fillers were rated much lower (3.64)

Preference for initial if-clauses confirm previous work (Li & Thomson 1981, Paris 1999) and corpus data (Wong, 2006): 82% if-clauses in initial position

Exp2:

- a low probability for Clause-type effect
- a high probability for a main effect of FM(lower ratings in focused conditions)
- a low probability for an interaction (no adjunct island)

Ungrammatical fillers were rated lower (4.37)

Discussions

1. Extraction out of Mandarin adjunct clauses is acceptable.

- Generally, there is a penalty for topicalization (cf Zenker & Schwartz 2017), as in English.
- However, topicalization remains quite acceptable, both out of that- and out of if-clauses. We did not find any adjunct penalty in Exp 2 (in the non FM condition). This would not be predicted by an adjunct island approach

2. Discourse factors do play a role.

- Generally, topicalization is sensitive to discourse factors; it is disfavored by a focus marker, both for if-clauses and that-clauses. The FM is worse out of initial than final if-clauses, which is compatible with a discourse clash theory assuming that initial if-clause are more backgrounded than final if-clauses (Pan & Paul, 2018), as in English (Haegerman, 2010).
- The lack of difference between if-final and that-clause may be due to a similar background status.

Selected References

- [1]Abeillé et al. 2020, Cognition; [2] Goldberg, A. E. (2016). Constructions at work. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [3]Goldberg, A. E. 2013. Backgrounded constituents cannot be “extracted”. Experimental syntax and island effects, 221. [4] Mao et al. 2022, Topicalization out of Mandarin and English if-clauses and that-clauses, Exling; [5]Myers, J. 2012. Testing adjunct and conjunct island constraints in Chinese. Language and Linguistics, 13; [6] Huang, 1982, Logical Relations in Chinese and the Theory of Grammar; [7] Pan & Paul, 2008. The syntax of complex sentences in Mandarin Chinese; [8] Ross, Constraints on Variables in Syntax,1967; [9]Zenker, F., Schwartz, B. D. 2017. Topicalization from adjuncts in English vs. Chinese vs. Chinese-English interlanguage. 41st BUCLD Conference,