Indirect adverbial clauses in Chinese
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Abstract
Indirect adverbial clauses are clauses with a conditional form that do not seem to give conditions, clauses with a temporal form that do not seem to indicate the time etc. For instance, the indirect conditional If you're hungry, there's food in the fridge differs semantically from the direct conditional If you're hungry, I'll give you something to eat. A similar distinction is found in Chinese. This paper examines indirect adverbial clauses in Chinese in light of what we already know about Western languages. In order to show that the patterns described are not simply results of Westernized grammar, the material from modern Chinese is supplied with example sentences from the 18th century novel Hongloumeng.
INDIRECT ADVERBIAL CLAUSES IN CHINESE(*)

**ABSTRACT**

Indirect adverbial clauses are clauses with a conditional form that do not seem to give conditions, clauses with a temporal form that do not seem to indicate the time etc. For instance, the indirect conditional If you're hungry, there's food in the fridge differs semantically from the direct conditional If you're hungry, I'll give you something to eat. A similar distinction is found in Chinese. This paper examines indirect adverbial clauses in Chinese in light of what we already know about Western languages. In order to show that the patterns described are not simply results of Westernized grammar, the material from modern Chinese is supplied with example sentences from the 18th century novel Hongloumeng.

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1. INDIRECT CONDITIONALS

English conditional clauses may have exactly the same form and still have different functions:

(1) If you’re hungry, I’ll give you something to eat.

(2) If you’re hungry, there’s food in the fridge.

In sentence (1), the subordinate clause gives a condition for the truth of the main clause. The main clause is only asserted to be true if the subordinate clause is true. Sentence (2) is different. Here, the main clause is asserted to be true whether or not the subordinate clause is true. Also in this case, the subordinate clause gives a condition, but not for the truth of the main clause, only for its relevance. We may call sentences like (2) indirect conditionals, as opposed to direct conditionals like (1)  

We are hardly surprised that indirect conditionals occur not only in English, but also in other Western languages. Much less obvious is the fact that such sentences are found even in a language as distant as Chinese. The contrast between (1) and (2) is paralleled in Chinese by the following sentence pair:

(3) Rúguǒ nǐ xiǎng qiăokè, wǒ qīng nǐ chī  
   if - you - would-like - eat - chocolate, - I - invite - you - eat  
   “If you want some chocolate, I’ll give you some.”

(4) Rúguǒ nǐ xiǎng qiăokè, wǒ zhèli yǒu  
   if - you - would-like - eat - chocolate - I - here - have - de shì  
   SUBORD - be  
   “If you want some chocolate, I’ve got lots of it”.

Sentence (4) is an indirect conditional. Whether the hearer would like some chocolate or not has no influence on the amount of chocolate the speaker has in his possession. Like the English example above, the subordinate clause gives the condition not for the truth of the main clause, but for its relevance.

This sentence pattern does not seem to be a borrowing from Western languages. In the 18th century novel Hongloumeng, the main character Jia Baoyu tells the maid Wuer to wear his jacket, lest she gets cold. Wuer answers briskly: Wô bû liăng “I am not cold”, and goes on:

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1 The terms are borrowed from Quirk et al. (1985)
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(5) *Wo liáng wǒ yǒu wǒ de yǐshàng*
    I - cold - I - have - I - SUBORD - clothes
    “If I get cold, I have my own clothes.”
    *(Hongloumeng* ch. 109 p. 1650)*

Like so many Chinese conditionals, this sentence does not contain any conditional sentence connectives. The context makes it clear, however, that it is to be interpreted as an indirect conditional. Thus, there is hardly any reason to believe that the existence of indirect conditionals in Chinese is due to Western influence.

Indirect conditionals like (2), (4) and (5) constitute only one subtype of what we might call indirect adverbial clauses. We also find, for instance, indirect clauses of time and reason. While indirect adverbial clauses in Western languages have been a topic for linguistic debate for at least twenty years, their existence in Chinese has hardly been noted.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIRECT ADVERBIAL CLAUSES

Altogether, indirect adverbial clauses constitute quite a heterogeneous group with one thing in common: their semantic relation to the main clause is not of the normal, direct type. Indirect conditionals do not give the condition for the truth of the main clause, indirect time clauses do not give the time for the events of the main clause, and

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3 Lü (1982 p. 421f.) mentions briefly the topic-introducing type of indirect conditionals (see 3.4 below) and gives examples from classical and modern Chinese. Concerning their semantic properties, however, he has little to say, except that "[their] hypothetical meaning is very light". Wang (1959 p. 115) gives one example of an indirect conditional along with other sentences that he interprets as having the form but not the content of a conditional sentence.
indirect clauses of reason do not simply give the cause or the reason for the events or actions described in the main clause. Basically, direct and indirect adverbial clauses have the same formal properties. There is, however, a difference in the syntactic flexibility of the two types. Some of the things one can do with direct adverbial clauses are not normally done with indirect adverbial clauses.

First at all, the main clauses following clauses of condition, reason and time normally allow the insertion of the adverb jiu (or bian) ‘then’ after the subject:

\[(6) \text{Rúguò nǐ xiāng chī qıăokēlì, wǒ jiù qǐng you - would-like - eat - chocolate , - I - then - invite - you - eat} \]
\[\text{‘If you want some chocolate, I’ll give you some.’} \]

For many (though not all) informants, this is not possible where the relationship is indirect:

\[(7) \text{?Rúguò nǐ xiāng chī qıăokēlì, wǒ jiù yǒu you - would-like - eat - chocolate, - I - then - have very much} \]
\[\text{This fact reminds us of the way English then is often less acceptable in indirect clauses than in direct ones:}^5 \]

\[(8) \text{If you’re hungry, then I’ll give you something to eat.} \]
\[(9) \text{?If you’re hungry, then there’s food in the fridge.} \]

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4 Rutherford (1970) also operates with indirect relationships ("non-restrictive subordination" in his terms) in clauses of concession and comparison. These will not be discussed in this paper.

5 English informants also have different opinions concerning the acceptability of sentences like (7). Some accept (7) readily, but have more problems if the conjunction if is replaced with since.
Note, however, that Chinese has two different markers corresponding roughly to then: ｎेमे (or ｎà), which precedes the main clause subject, and ｊｉǚ (or ｂｉàｎ), which follows the main clause subject. Chinese ｎेमे is acceptable also after indirect clauses (cf. sentence (33) below).

The adverb ｃｕｉ ‘only then’ never follows an indirect adverbial clause. In direct adverbial clauses ｊｉǚ marks a sufficient relationship, while ｃｕｉ (often with the conjunction ｃｈुｆｅｉ rather than ｒｕｇｕǒ) marks a necessary relationship. In indirect adverbial clauses, this distinction is never made, and

(10) ｃｈुｆｅｉ ｎǐ ｘｉǎｎｇ ｃｈǐ ｑｉａｏｋèｌǐ, ｗǒ ｃｕｉ ｙǒｕ
only-if - you - would-like - eat - chocolate, - I - only-then - have.

can only be interpreted as a direct conditional - with a rather implausible meaning: ‘Only if you want some chocolate do I have any’.

Finally, indirect conditionals are rarely interpreted counterfactually. In Chinese, most direct conditionals can be interpreted both counterfactually and non-counterfactually. In sentence (3), ｒｕｇｕǒ ｎǐ ｘｉǎｎｇ ｃｈǐ ｑｉａｏkèlǐ may mean either ‘If you want some chocolate’ or ‘If you had wanted some chocolate’. In sentence (4), the latter interpretation is at best unlikely. In English, where counterfactual and non-counterfactual conditionals are distinguished formally, only non-counterfactuals are normally given an indirect interpretation.

(11) If you were hungry, there’d be food in the fridge.

sounds like magic thinking

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6 Indirect counterfactuals are rare, but perhaps not completely unacceptable:

?I wasn’t hungry. But if I’d been hungry, there would’ve been food in the fridge.

My English informant maintains that she would prefer to substitute the indirect counterfactual above with a direct counterfactual like:

But if I’d been hungry, I could’ve gone and taken some food in the fridge.
3. TYPES OF INDIRECT ADVERBIAL CLAUSES

In the following, we shall look at the classification of indirect adverbial clauses in Chinese, keeping in mind what we already know about such clauses in English.

3.1. Types not found in Chinese

Compared to English, the variety of indirect adverbial clauses in Chinese is limited. Some of the English types are impossible in pre-Westernized Chinese simply because they do not fit the traditional pattern with an adverbial clause always preceding the main clause. In English, some indirect adverbial clauses cannot precede the main clause. This applies to conditionals directing the hearer’s attention to a word or formulation in the main clause that may cause problems of interpretation:

(12) She has resigned, if you know what I mean.

(13) They became sort of the, you know, Piggies of the form, if you remember Lord of the Flies, you know, they were the [...] ones that people picked.7

The same is true for conditionals implying, often in an ironic way, that the hearer ought to know the facts expressed in the main clause:

(14) The war was started by the other side, if you remember your history lessons correctly.

These types are not found in Chinese. Now let us look at some types that we do find.

3.2. Indirect clauses of time

In Chinese, indirect clauses of time often contain the adverb yi ‘once, as soon as’ and the verb kàn ‘look, see’:

(15) Tāmén zǒu jìn qu yī kàn, fāngjiān hěn xiǎo
they - walk-enter-go - once - look, - room - very - small
"Once they went in and had a look, [they discovered that] the room was very small."
(Practical Chinese Reader vol. 2, p. 418)

Of course, the room did not all of a sudden shrink in size once the people referred to went in and had a look. The temporal clause refers to the point of time for their discovery of the fact that the room was so small.

Like indirect conditionals, indirect clauses of time are also rarely followed by a main clause with jiù ‘then’. Compare the two sentences below:

(16) Tā yī jǐn mén, wǒ jiù shā tā
he - once - enter - door, - I - then - kill-dead - he
“As soon as he comes in, I’ll kill him.”

(17) Tāmén zǒu jìn qu yī kàn, fāngjiān jiù hěn xiǎo
they - walk-enter-go - once - look, - room - then - very - small

Sentence (16) contains a direct time clause and may therefore use jiù, while sentence (17) contains an indirect time clause, and the inclusion of jiù is therefore, according to some informants, ungrammatical.

In indirect time clauses, the correspondence between English and Chinese is not as obvious as in the indirect conditionals described above. A direct translation of (15) into English would sound odd. At least in writing, one would normally add the words bracketed in the translation above.

This type is also found in the novel Hongloumeng (18th century):

“Once the Taoist monk Vanitas read it from the start, it turned out that this was a witless stone which had been of no use when the sky was repaired, but which had been magically transformed and entered into the world, and which had been taken by the bodhisattva Impervioso and the [Taoist] illuminate Mysterioso into the world of mortals, and which had [eventually] been brought to the other shore [reaching Nirvana].”

(Hongloumeng ch. 1, p. 2)

In the same chapter of the same novel we also find a similar example where the temporal clause is marked with post-clausal ʂhi ‘time’ instead of pre-verbal ʂi:

(19) Shìyīn jiěle kàn shì, yuányái shì kuài
Shiyin receiving PERF look time turn-out be piece
clear beautiful jade...
“When Shiyin received it and looked at it, it turned out that it was a clear and beautiful jade...”

(Hongloumeng ch. 1 p. 5)

Note that in both sentences, the main clause is introduced by the adverb yuánlái, which in meaning corresponds more or less to the English phrase ‘it turned out that ...’. Since English uses a verb phrase where Chinese uses an adverb, the English translations do not come out as indirect adverbial clauses.

English also has indirect clauses of time. However, these would normally not be translated into time clauses in Chinese. Consider the following sentence:

(20) When I come to think of it, it’s not impossible.

A direct translation of (20) into Chinese would not sound very fluent. In the following sentence, however, the clause xī zuǒmo has approximately the same function:

8 The names of the mythical beings are taken from David Hawkes’translation, The Story of the Stone. Apart from these names, my translation is much more literal than his.
(21) Xuan shi zhen xuan, ke xi zuomo, shi obscure - be - really - obscure, - but - thoroughly - reflect, - be neme ge lir thus - CLASS - principle
“It is really obscure, but on thorough reflection, that’s how it works.”
(Acheng p. 20)

However, this clause can hardly be classified as a time clause. It belongs to a big group of what we shall call style clauses, see below.

Another type of indirect time clause in English is the one that contains topic-introducing phrases like when it comes to ... Such clauses may be rendered in Chinese by topic-introducing conditionals containing phrases like ruo lun... or yao jiang..., both having the literal meaning ‘if one talks about ...’. For further discussion, see below.

3.3. Indirect clauses of reason

The early debate concerning indirect adverbial clauses in English focused mainly on sentences where a postposed reason clause gives or at least hints at the reason why the speaker knows the facts conveyed by the main clause:

(22) Jenny isn’t here, for I don’t see her.
(Ross 1970 p. 248)

(23) He’s not coming to class, because he just called from San Diego
(Rutherford 1970 p. 97)

In pre-Westernized written Chinese, adverbial clauses always preceded the main clause. Therefore, we never find examples of this type in early Chinese sources. In modern spoken and written Chinese, however, it is quite common to add clauses of reason (as well as other adverbial clauses) as “afterthoughts” after the main clause. In some cases, such postposed reason clauses have an indirect relationship to the preceding main clause. I have found no examples of this in printed materials, but my informant had no problems accepting the following sentence:

(24) Ta bu hui guola - yinwei ta ganggang da he - not - will - exceed-come - because - he - just - hit - dianhua - lalle telephone - come-PERF
“He won’t come, because he just called.”
Some such reason clauses give the basis for an inference made in the main clause, such as in (22). In this they resemble preposed clauses of inference:

(25) Yīnwèi nèige rén dàižhe ěrhuán, suǒyì
certainly - that-CLASS - person - wear-PROG - earring, - so - yídīng shì Wáng Déhuí
certainly - be - Wang Dehui

"Because that person was wearing an earring, it must have been Wang Dehui."

However, the relationship between the clauses may be much looser when the subordinate clause is postposed. Sentences (23) and (24) are not strictly inferential, since the basis for inference is just hinted at vaguely. This type represented by sentence (25) is probably not to be regarded as indirect at all, see 4.2 below.

One sentence type similar to (24) that we do find in pre-Westernized Chinese is the one where a clause introduced by yībiàn ‘in order that’ gives the purpose of uttering the preceding clause:

(26) Zūn yù zài hé chú ? Yībiàn yǔ biàn
deprecated - stay - at - what - place ? - In-order-that - in-case - yǒu biàndòng, zhuó rén lái qǐng
exist - change, - send - people - come - invite

"Where are you staying? [I ask this] so that in case there are any changes, I can send people to invite you."

(Lao Can ch. 3 p. 30)

3.4. Topic-introducing conditionals

In English, adverbials that introduce a topic often have the form of prepositional phrases (with regard to A..., as for A...), nonfinite clauses (regarding A..., concerning A...), or time clauses (when it comes to A...). In Chinese, one common strategy for separating out a topic is to use a conditional clause where a verb of saying has the topic as its object:

(27) Rùo lùn zhèixiē yītōumen, gòngzōng bǐ/qǐlái
if - speak - this-CLASS - maid-PL,- altogether - compare-INCH
dōu méi Qīngwén zhǎng de hǎo.
all - not-have -Qingwen - grow - COMPL - good

Lùn jùzhī yányū, tā yuán qīngbō xiē
Speak - manner - speech, - she - originally - frivolous - CLASS
"As for these maids, all of them compared, none is as pretty as Qingwen. Concerning manners and language, she has always been a little too frivolous."
(Hongloumeng ch. 74 p. 1236)

(28) Yao jiang shuo huà, wǒ yě suàn de le, bù zhī wèi shénme zōng shuō tā bù guò.
"As for conversing, I know how to express myself; I don’t know why I’m never able to win arguments with him."
(Example sentence form Lü 1982 p. 421)

There is no conditional relationship between speaking of the maids and the fact that none of these maids is as pretty as Qingwen, or between speaking of manners and language and Qingwen’s being a little too frivolous. And there is no plain conditional relationship between speaking about speaking and the fact that the speaker counts as one who is good at speaking. Thus, (27) and (28) are indirect conditionals.

In fact, the phrase ruò lùn is very commonly used to introduce topics in early Mandarin. It seems to function almost as one single unit, rather than as a collocation of ruò ‘if’ and lùn ‘speak’. Still, the fact that modern spoken Chinese has replaced the phrase with the more colloquial yào jiàng shows that the meaning of each morpheme is still very much alive to the speaker.

One might wonder whether the yào of yào jiàng is not the auxiliary verb meaning ‘will, wants to, is going to’ rather than the conjunction meaning ‘if’. However, my informant has no objections to replacing this yào with yàoshi, which may only mean ‘if’. Meng (1984 p. 139) also gives yàoshi shuō as an equivalent to yào shuō, though all his examples contain the latter.

3.5. Relevance conditionals

Relevance conditionals are conditional clauses that give a condition not for the truth of the main clause, but for its relevance. We have already seen examples of relevance conditionals in English (sentence (2)) as well as Chinese (sentences (4) and (5)). In all of these, the conditional clause describes a situation giving rise to certain needs, while the following main clause describes the existence of items that will satisfy those needs.
In English, there are at least two other types of relevance conditionals:
a. The conditional clause describes a certain situation motivating the speaker to express his need in the main clause:

(29) If you’re going my way, I need a lift back.

b. The conditional clause, often introduced by in case, describes the hearer’s need for knowledge about the facts describes in the main clause:

(30) They’re having a party, in case [or: if] you wonder what that noise is.

These do not have Chinese equivalents.

English relevance conditionals can easily be made into clauses of reason by substituting if with since. The corresponding use of jiran ‘since’ in Chinese is not possible.

3.6. Style clauses

In English, adverbials describing the style, attitude or perspective adopted in the main clause may consist of pure adverbs (frankly...), prepositional phrases (in all frankness...), non finite clauses (to be frank..., frankly speaking..., put frankly...), or finite clauses like politeness conditionals (if I may be frank...). In Chinese, they most often have the form of a subjectless clause without a conjunction:

(31) Shuō yì jù bù kěqi de huà, wōmen say - one - sentence - not - polite - SUBORD - speech - we - zhèzhòng xiǎo zīběnjíā, shì jīngjǐ qífēi zhēnzhèng this-type - small - capitalist, - be - economy - fly - real - de gōngchén.

SUBORD -merit-minister

“Frankly speaking, small capitalists like us are the ones who deserve the honour for our booming economy.”

(Qiwang ch. 6 p. 78)

(32) Shuō de bù tài hǎoóng ne, tā kěyǐ say - COMPL - not - too - nice-to-hear - PART, - it - can - wéichí wǒ de shēnghuó... shuō de hǎoóng support - I - SUBORD - life; - say - COMPL - nice-to-hear yìdiǎn ne, zhěgè yīnyüè kěyǐ tǐshēng a-little - PART, - this-CLASS - music - can - heighten -
"To put it crudely, it [music] can support my life; to put it a little more nicely, this music can strengthen the self-respect of the Chinese."

(The musician Wong On-yuen in a tape-recorded interview)

The subordinate clauses of (31) and (32) are examples of what I shall call style clauses.

Style clauses raise the problem of the distinction between so-called finite and non-finite clauses in Chinese. Chinese does not distinguish between finite and non-finite verb forms, at least not in the traditional sense of these terms. However, the verb form is only one of the criteria for distinguishing between finite and non-finite clauses. In English, most non-finite adverbial clauses share at least two other characteristics:

1. They do not allow the use of conjunctions. (Clauses with in order to are an exception.)

2. They do not allow the use of syntactic subjects. (In in order for him to leave, the pronoun him is only a logical subject, not a syntactic one.)

In Chinese adverbial clauses, almost any conjunction or subject may be left out, as long as their meaning can be inferred from the context. Still, style clauses differ from most other subordinate clauses in hardly ever including a conjunction or an explicit subject at all. Thus, although Chinese does not distinguish between finite and non-finite verb forms, it does distinguish between finite and non-finite clauses.

The above examples of style clauses all contain the verb shuō ‘say, speak’. Often, this verb is modified by a complement introduced by de, as is the case in (32). The marker de may be left out: shuō hàoting yīdiǎn. Sometimes, the verb is followed by an object, as in (31). Or it

See for instance Liu (1964 p. 233)

In Chinese as in English, clauses of purpose come in an in-between position. They often include the conjunction (preposition?) wèile and are formally very similar to clauses of reason, but they do not allow subjects.
may be modified by a preposed element, as in lǎoshī shuō ‘to be honest’ (dir. trans.: ‘honestly say’). The verb of saying may also be left out: fāngwùlái (shuō) ‘in opposite terms’, huàn (yì) jù huà (shuō) ‘in other words’. But even in these cases, such expressions always contain a verb (fāngwùlái literally means ‘turn upside down’, while huàn (yì) jù huà means ‘change one’s wording’). Some style clauses rarely if ever contain the verb shuō, e.g. XY biāolái ‘XY compared’, where XY stands for a noun phrase with two or more referents (cf. sentence (27) above). Many style clauses with shuō have literary equivalents with yán ‘say, speak’; jiù wǒ ér yán = dù wǒ lái shuō ‘from my perspective’, zōng ér yán zhī = zōng de lái shuō ‘to conclude’, yī bān ér yán = yī bān lái shuō ‘generally speaking’.

To a very large extent, style clauses are conventional expressions without much room for linguistic creativity.

3.7. Other types

I do not expect the above classification to be exhaustive. Even if it were, however, I still suspect that some indirect adverbial clauses would pop up here and there that could not be placed firmly in any preconceived category. The reason is that this is an area where language itself tends to be indeterminate. The following sentence, for instance, does not fall into any of the categories above:

(33) ...shìwèn nǐ: Jiādìng Rìběn shì hǎo de, jīn mèi guòqù cèngjīng Rìběn fūchūle shìmē? ‘I ask you: Suppose Japan is a good place, what did you ever do for Japan?’ (Sayonara p. 76-77)

The subordinate clause of (33) gives a condition for the relevance of the question posed in the main clause. However, the sentence does not resemble the relevance conditionals considered in 3.5. In sentences like (4) and (5) above, the subordinate clause describes a situation giving rise to certain needs, while the following main clause describes the existence of items that will satisfy these needs. This is not the case in sentence (33). Sentence (33) may be described as the result of movement of the phrase shìwèn nǐ ‘[I] ask you, [I] interrogate you’. If this phrase is
placed after the subordinate clause instead of before it, we end up with a normal direct adverbial clause.

When we look for indirect adverbial clauses, we also face the problem of interpretation. A problematic example from classical Chinese is found in Mencius (1/1A/3):

(34) Cha' lin guo zhi zheng, wu ru gua ren zhi yong xin zhe

 Either: 'I have examined the political conditions of our neighbouring countries; there is no one there who cares so much [about the fate of his country] as I do.'

 Or: 'When we examine the political conditions of our neighbouring countries, [we find that ] there is no one there who cares so much [about the fate of his country] as I do.'

Yang (1982 p. 6) clearly favours the first interpretation. Lau (1984 p. 5) avoids the problem by translating the whole thing as: 'I have not noticed any of my neighbours taking as much pains over his government'. Xie et al. (1967 p. 249) seems closer to the second interpretation, though their translation (into Modern Chinese) seems almost as indeterminate as the original. Legge (1960 p. 436) comes very close to the second interpretation: "On examining the government of the neighbouring kingdoms, I do not find that there is any prince who employs his mind as I do". We simply do not know whether or not this sentence belongs to the group of indirect adverbial clauses.

4. THE NATURE OF INDIRECT ADVERBIAL CLAUSES

With some exceptions noted above, direct and indirect adverbial clauses have the same formal features. There are important functional differences between the two groups. However, both types express the same basic relationships. For instance, the relevance conditional in If you're hungry, there's food in the fridge gives a condition just as much as does the direct conditional in If you're hungry, I'll give you something to eat. The only difference is that the direct conditional gives a condition for the event described in the main clause, while the relevance conditional gives a condition for the relevance of uttering the main clause. In the following we shall have a closer look at the nature of the relation between indirect adverbial clauses and their corresponding main clauses.
4.1. Speech act adverbial clauses?

It is generally assumed that indirect adverbial clauses relate to the speech act of the main clause rather than to its content. This is certainly true in many cases. Relevance conditionals (as in If you're hungry, there's food in the fridge) give a condition for the relevance of uttering the main clause. And politeness conditionals (If I may say so at this stage...) give a condition for the politeness of uttering the main clause. Even in these cases, however, the relationship is not a simple one. These subordinate clauses do not give conditions for the speech acts as such, but for the relevance and the politeness of these speech acts.

We also have clear examples of indirect adverbial clauses that do not relate at all to the speech act of the main clause. In conditionals like

(14) The war was started by the other side, if you remember your history lessons correctly.

it is impossible to say that the subordinate clause gives the condition for any aspect of the speech act of the main clause. Strictly speaking, the subordinate clause of this sentence gives the condition for the hearer's already knowing the facts related by the main clause.

Bearing this in mind, we discover that also some of the clause types commonly assumed to relate to the speech act of the main clause may be analyzed in other ways as well. In conditionals like

(12) She has resigned, if you know what I mean.

it is possible to see the subordinate clause as a condition for, say, the possibility of uttering the main clause without being misunderstood. Under this analysis, the subordinate clause relates to the speech act of the main clause. However, it is also possible to see the subordinate clause simply as a condition for a correct interpretation of the main clause. And interpretations are not speech acts.

Thus, the term "speech act adverbial clause" is at most appropriate for some indirect adverbial clauses.

4.2. Discourse-oriented vs. event-oriented?

It might be tempting to say that indirect adverbial clauses relate to some aspect of the discourse situation in which the main clause is

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11 See, for instance, Quirk et al. (1985).
uttered: the relevance or politeness of uttering it, the basis for its correct interpretation etc. Direct adverbial clauses, on the other hand, might be said to relate to the *events* described in the main clause. If this is correct, one might say that while direct adverbial clauses are event-oriented, indirect adverbial clauses are discourse-oriented.

However, though most indirect adverbial clauses seem to relate to the discourse situation in which the main clause is uttered, this is not always so. One particularly clear counter-example is the Chinese temporal clauses of discovery like

(15) *Támen zǒu jìnqù yī kàn, fāngjiān hěn xiǎo*  
**they - walk-enter-go - once - look, - room - very - small**  
"Once they went in and had a look, [they discovered that] the room was very small."

The subordinate clause gives the time when the people referred to discovered the facts related by the main clause. This discovery is not part of the discourse situation. Neither does it seem to be the case that all direct adverbial clauses are purely event-oriented. Consider the case of subordinate clauses that give the basis for an *inference* made in the main clause:

(35) *Rúguǒ nèige rén dài zhe ěrhuàn, nà yídǐng shì Wáng Déhuī*  
**if - that-CLASS - person - wear-PROG - earring, - then - certainly - be - Wang Dehui**  
"If that person was wearing an earring, then it must have been Wang Dehui."

Whether or not a person is wearing an earring has of course no influence on his name, let alone his identity. What the subordinate clause of (35) does is to give a condition for the inference made in the main clause. Similar cases also occur in *Hongloumeng*:

(36) *Tānghuò lǎo tāitāi zhīdāo le zhèixī ē shì, dōu shì nǐ shuō de*  
**if - old - lady - know-PERF - this-CLASS - thing, - all - be - you - say - SUBORD**  
"If the Old Lady gets to know about these things, then you will be the one who has told her."
*(Hongloumeng* ch. 80 p. 1368)
One might insist that since the relationship in (35) is not event-oriented, it must be indirect. However, this sentence has none of the syntactic restrictions that characterize sentences with an indirect adverbial clause. All informants agree that it may take the adverb jiù, and the corresponding sentence with chūfēi - cāi is perfectly acceptable:

(37) Rúguǒ nèige rén dàizhe érhuan, nà jiù yǒldìng shì Wang Déhui

"If that person was wearing an earring, then it must have been Wang Dehui."

(38) Chūfēi nèige rén dàizhe érhuan, cāi shì Wang Déhui

"Only if he was wearing an earring might it have been Wang Dehui."

Also, sentence (35), unlike indirect conditionals, may very well be interpreted counterfactually: “If that person were wearing an earring, it would have had to be Wang Dehui”.

In addition we have the significant fact that, whereas indirect conditional clauses do not influence the truth value of the main clause, the conditional clause in (35) does. The clause in (35) (as well as its English translation) is therefore best regarded as direct. And this in spite of the fact that it is not purely event-oriented in the sense described above. The distinction between event-oriented and discourse-oriented does not fall together with the distinction between direct and indirect adverbial clauses.

Note, once more, the difference between this sentence type expressing inference and the type where a postposed reason clause gives or at least hints at the reason why the speaker knows the facts conveyed by the main clause, without necessarily being strictly inferential. See. 3.3 above.12

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12 Comrie (1986 p. 81) seems to confuse these types.
4.3. Tight vs. loose connection

We have examined two different ways of analyzing indirect adverbial clauses. The "speech act" analysis works all right for some cases, but by no means for all. The "discourse" analysis works for even more cases, but again not for all.

The one thing that all the indirect adverbial clauses we have examined seem to have in common is their rather loose connection to the main clause. This is especially evident in conditionals and temporals, where a direct clause actually restricts the range of situations where the main clause is asserted to be true, whereas an indirect clause has no such effect. This loose connection is also reflected in the fact that the main clause following indirect adverbial clauses normally does not contain the connective jìù 'then'.

Direct adverbial clauses are far more common than indirect ones, and they are semantically much more transparent. Indirect adverbial clauses seem much more peripheral and their semantic relationship to the main clauses seem much more complicated. On the basis of this, it seems reasonable to say that among the different types of adverbial clauses, the direct ones constitute prototypes from which the indirect ones are derived - perhaps both historically and psychologically. Historically, we might imagine a stage of development where only direct adverbial clauses exist, whereas it would be very surprising to find a stage of development with only indirect and no direct adverbial clauses. Psychologically, we might assume that a native speaker of English or Chinese not only knows how to use both clause types, but also has some conscious or unconscious knowledge of the fact that the two are related, and also of the fact that the direct type is more basic that the indirect type.

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13 In some languages, such as German, the same loose relationship is reflected in the word order of the main clause. In a main clause following its subordinate clause the finite verb normally precedes the subject. In a main clause following an indirect adverbial clause, however, the subject often precedes the finite verb, just as in simple declarative sentences. See König & Auwera (1988).
These conclusions have not been reached on the basis of direct historical or psychological evidence, only on the basis of the roles of the two clause types in each language system. This article has tried to show that in spite of many smaller differences, these roles are basically the same in two languages as distant as English and Chinese.

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SOURCES


BIBLIOGRAPHY


