

The *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* vol.51, no.2 (June 2023): 435–466  
© 2023 by the Journal of Chinese Linguistics. ISSN 0091-3723/ Chinese finiteness:  
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CHINESE FINITENESS:  
CHANGEABILITY, ACTUALITY, DURATIONALITY  
AND TELICITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on declarative sentences to demonstrate how four major concepts: changeability, actuality, durationality and telicity, work together in shaping Chinese finite clauses. In the Chinese lexicon there are changeable and unchangeable verbs distinguished by the latter's inability to co-occur with aspect particles in a finite clause. The changeable declaratives are further divided into two kinds: durational and non-durational, as the latter cannot occur alone without either the perfective *le*<sub>1</sub> in realis, or a modal auxiliary. Moreover, the durational declaratives can occur in either irrealis modality negated by *bù* or realis modality negated by *měi(yǒu)*. The declarative sentences for durational events are linguistically distinct in terms of telicity: the progressive *zài* and imperfective *zhe* are atelic, and the perfective *le*<sub>1</sub> and experiential *guo* are telic. Just like other world languages as was noted by Givón (1995, 2001), Chinese finiteness is also characteristically gradient, with the least finite forms functioning like a noun and the most finite forms functioning as a declarative sentence with an obligatory aspect particle.

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**Acknowledgements** I want to thank my Ph.D. students who have worked with me on modern Chinese grammar over the past decade at Stanford. Without all the inspirations from the intellectually stimulating discussions with them, I would not have chosen to work on Chinese finiteness. I also want to thank all the students who have taken *Structure of Chinese* at Stanford taught by me and have the patience to listen and help me develop my initial raw ideas. Finally, I want to thank all the scholars and friends in China and USA who have attended my talks and raised the questions that enabled me to resolve various issues presented in this paper.

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