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Non-Finiteness

'Non-finiteness' is a phenomenon that occurs in most natural languages, whereby a verb is not inflected by grammatical tense and does not possess the grammatical features of aspect, mood or voice. Various theories have been developed to explain their distribution and their role in clause structure, but many instances of non-finiteness remain unaccounted for. Taking a functional approach, this study proposes a 'process-relation framework' to explain the more complex, previously unaccounted for instances of non-finiteness in clause structure. It applies the framework comparatively to non-finiteness in English and Chinese, showing how it can be applied across typologically distinct languages. Drawing on corpus-based instances and observations, it introduces numerous thought-provoking cases, in which constructional (or combining) types and the predictability of non-finiteness co-occur. In terms of application, non-finiteness is decisive in categorizing language types, and it is critical in processing natural languages, text segmentation and annotation in particular.

BINGJUN YANG is Professor in Systemic Functional Linguistics at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. His publications include *Corpus-Based Investigations into Grammar, Media and Health Discourse* (Springer Nature, 2020), *Language Policy* (Routledge, 2017) and *Absolute Clauses in English from the Systemic Functional Perspective* (Springer, 2015).

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A Process-Relation Perspective

Bingjun Yang
Shanghai Jiao Tong University

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Preface

With the help of Jianhui Xu, my English teacher in senior high school, I managed to write a letter in English to a potential pen pal in 1986. Fortunately, a girl named Julie Willson from Yorkshire wrote back to me and we became pen friends. While at college, I wrote to her asking if she could buy me a book on linguistics. She was generous and sent me the book entitled *Modern Linguistics: The Results of Chomsky's Revolution* by Neil Smith and Deirdre Wilson. That was my first impression of what linguistics looked like.

As a student of English at Southwest University, I was very much encouraged by many teachers, among whom are Fengying Zhang, who taught me comprehensive English, and Wenbiao Yang, who was a teacher of English at the senior high school from which I graduated and who was selected to be trained at the university under a programme by the British Council. During my undergraduate years, I was lucky to be taught and supervised by Professor Rijin Long, who earned a MA degree with Professor Michael Halliday at the University of Sydney in 1981, and Professor Jiarong Liu, who is a stylist and sociolinguist. I completed my MA thesis under the supervision of the systemicist Professor Zhi'an Chen. Professor Li Li, who earned his MEd in TESOL from the University of Manchester, taught me computer-assisted language learning in 1992, which elicited my passion for computers. These people helped me dive into the sea of linguistics.

At a national conference on functional linguistics in 1997, I became acquainted with the systemicist Guowen Huang, who was then a professor at Sun Yat-sen University. Professor Huang earned a PhD in applied linguistics from the University of Edinburgh and a second PhD in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) from Cardiff University, and that was impressive in many ways. In 1999, I became a doctoral student under the supervision of Professor Huang. At an international conference held in Guangzhou that year, I met many leading systemicists, including Michael Halliday, Ruqaiya Hasan, Robin Fawcett, Christian Matthiessen and Peter H. Fries. For the purpose of learning the way of scientific observation better, I started a post-doctoral journey on narrative time in 2004 with the psychologist Professor Xiting Huang. With the

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help and guidance of these scholars, I learned to swim in SFL, which is a part of the linguistic sea.

After graduation with a PhD in June 2002, I received funding from the Freeman Foundation and went to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) for further research. Professor Halliday once worked there, and it was quite by luck that I met him again at the World Englishes Conference held at UIUC. We talked a little about the relationship between theory and practice at tea break. There I also met Professor Carolyn G. Hartnett, who agreed to comment on the draft of my first book. She then wrote a foreword for me upon the acceptance for publication of the book. At UIUC, I attended classes taught by Adele Goldberg and several other professors. The whole class hoped that Professor Goldberg would teach us Construction Grammar, but she said she had to follow the requirements of the course, entitled 'Conceptual Semantics'. That year of visiting enriched my sense of a wider sea of linguistics.

In 2014 I transferred to Shanghai Jiao Tong University under the recommendation of Professor Feng Yang and with the support of Professor Jie Zhang, Professor Kaibao Hu and Professor Longgen Liu. Soon after the settlement, I was accepted by Miriam Locher and went to the University of Basel in Switzerland as a visiting professor. It was a privilege to be invited to attend all kinds of activities in the English department there during the whole academic year. I attended classes run by Professor Locher, and was very much enlightened by her and also by other linguists there, including Professor Heike Behrens, Dr Daria Dayter, Dr Catherine Diederich and Dr Thomas C. Messerli. During my stay, I was invited to deliver a lecture on interpersonal metaphors in online communication between doctors and patients. I also had an opportunity to have a long talk with Professor Wolfgang Teubert about topics of corpus linguistics in a pub in Basel. The year in Basel widened my vision further, and it seemed to me that I could swim better in the sea of linguistics.

My favourite sport is tennis, but doing research, as I have already hinted at, may be better compared to swimming. Without some teaching of the basics, you will never know how to swim; and without some advanced guidance, you will not be able to become a good swimmer. The sea of linguistics is so vast that it is impossible for me to swim across it. Yet, with the help of the people mentioned here, and many others, I think I am now able to swim towards a tiny destination: non-finiteness.

Tiny as it is, non-finiteness has been one of the most controversial topics in linguistics. It is a hard nut, which disturbs theoretical linguists, text annotators, typologists and many others. With numerous findings for this hard nut, there must have been some consensus on the 'cracking' of it, but quite unfortunately few people from distinctive perspectives may be ready to accept others' views

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on non-finiteness. This may not be akin to Plato's cave, where chained prisoners would not believe what a freed prisoner claimed to see outside of the cave. It is the real nature of academic pursuit. If we take the elephant as the truth, then scholars are indeed the blind men. It is not possible for any blind person to see the whole elephant, but it is still useful for a blind person to be able to tell others what the elephant is like in his/her perspective. What is important is that his/her way of investigating the part s/he feels or touches should be sound and convincing. What I present in this book is simply a perspective on the 'elephant' of non-finiteness, and I hope that my argument will be convincing. More importantly, I hope that the knowledge I add to the understanding of non-finiteness, if any, will be beneficial both in theory and in practice.

The year 2020 challenged human beings with COVID-19, and millions of people have suffered losses of their beloved ones, although numerous people in their professions rose to the challenges and helped others. At the time of this crisis, it is really tough for people to continue their work. Yet, in this period of time the commissioning editor at Cambridge University Press (CUP), Helen Barton, and the three anonymous reviewers helped me improve the book with their professional suggestions and insightful comments. Professor Akila Sellami Baklouti at the University of Sfax provided helpful and insightful comments at the stage of clearance reading. Isabel Collins and Joshua Penny from CUP helped a lot in preparing the documents. I am also grateful to Jayavel Radhakrishnan and Judy Napper for their professional work in copy-editing. Without their support and encouragement, this book would never have been completed in its present form. I am particularly grateful to Helen and the reviewers for their help.

Upon the publication of this book, I am thankful to my father, Canjin Yang, who loved me very much but who passed away in 2007. I am thankful to my mother, Zengyu Yang, and my siblings for their constant love. My family's warm support is always very much appreciated: my wife, Lijuan Wang, my elder son, Ziqing Yang, and my younger son, Zibai Yang. They are the indispensable meaning of life to me. It is with the help and love of the people mentioned here and many others that this book is possible. Sincere thanks go to them, and errors remain mine.

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Symbols and Abbreviations

α	dominant clause
β	dependent clause
|||	boundary symbol of a clause complex
||	boundary symbol of a clause
^	followed by
+	extending
=	elaborating
×	enhancing
↘	realized by
AGR	agreement
ANC	action nominal construction
AUX	auxiliary
BCC	Beijing Language and Culture University Chinese Corpus
BNC	British National Corpus
CCL	Centre for Chinese Linguistics Corpus
CEC	Chinese existential construction
CG	Cognitive Grammar
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English
CP	complementizer phrase
DP	determiner phrase
EC	existential construction
EPP	Extended Projection Principle
FRP	Full Realization Principle
GG	Generative Grammar
GM	grammatical metaphor
IFG	*Introduction to Functional Grammar*
IGM	ideational grammatical metaphor
INFL	inflection
LFVP	Limit of Finite Verb Principle
LOB	Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus
MC	main clausehood
NOW	News on the Web corpus
NP	noun phrase
OI	optional infinitive
PRO	pronoun without phonological content
RRG	Role and Reference Grammar
SFG	Systemic Functional Grammar
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SG	Semiotic Grammar

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SQ	search query
SVC	serial verb construction
T	tense
TAM	tense–aspect–modality
TP	tense phrase
VMC	verb-mediated construction
VP	verb phrase

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Leipzig Glossing Abbreviations

ASP	aspect
CLF	classifier
COMP	complementizer
COMPL	completive aspect
CONJ	conjunction
EXCL	exclamative word
FUT	future tense indicator
JUSS	jussive mood
LNK	linking word
MOD	modal word
NEG	negation
PASS	passive voice indicator
PL	plural
POSS	possessive marker
PRS	present progressive tense indicator
PST	past tense indicator
Q	question particle/word

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