論　文

Notes on the Expletive Negation of "Almost" Constructions in Mandarin Chinese[*]

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Abstract

Chayidian（差一点）'almost' constructions in Mandarin Chinese are known to have the so-called "expletive negation." In the framework of generative linguistics, Kaufmann and Xu（2015）propose a very complex lexical entry of the NPI version of *chayidian* 'almost' in order to account for this puzzling phenomenon. This paper suggests an alternative direction of analysis, in which constructions with *chayidian* 'almost' can have bi-clausal structures and the relevant negation is no longer expletive.

Keywords: almost, Mandarin Chinese, expletive negation

1.　Introduction

Chayidian（差一点）'almost' constructions in Mandarin Chinese are known for their peculiar behavior of "expletive negation," where negation appears to be ignored（Zhu 1959, Horn 2002, Borderia and Schwenter 2005, Kaufmann and Xu 2015, a.o.）.（1）is a prototypical example where *chayidian* 'almost' behaves normally, just like *almost* in English. It takes a proposition "Zhangsan died," and the sentence implies its negation "Zhangsan did not die."（The implication is in parentheses.）On the other hand,（2）is quite puzzling. *Chayidian* 'almost' takes a negated proposition "Zhangsan did not die," but the intuitive meaning of the sentence is "Zhangsan almost died" with the implication that "Zhangsan did not die." Thus（1）and（2）end up having the same interpretation, as if the negation in（2）is ignored. Because of this behavior, the negation is called an "expletive negation."

Notes on the Expletive Negation of "Almost" Constructions in Mandarin Chinese*

'Almost'

(1) Zhangsan chayidian si le.
　　Zhangsan almost 　　die LE
　　'Zhangsan almost died.' (Zhangsan did not die.)
　　张三差一点死了。　　　　（张三没死。）

"Expletive negation"

(2) Zhangsan chayidian mei si.[1]
　　Zhangsan almost 　Neg die
　　'Zhangsan almost died.' (Zhangsan did not die.)　　（Kaufmann and Xu 2015: 210）
　　张三差一点没死。　　（张三没死。）

　　The phenomenon of "expletive negation" is a very hard problem to solve. To my knowledge, the only prior research that has tackled this problem in the framework of generative linguistics is Kaufmann and Xu (2015). They propose an extremely complicated semantics for the NPI version *chayidian* 'almost' (*chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' henceforth) in order to account for this fact. While the analysis explains a certain set of data, its complexity makes the analysis less plausible.

　　In this paper, I suggest an alternative analysis. I propose that *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' has a bi-clausal structure with a desirability presupposition on each clause. The structure of (2) is given in (3). *Chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' takes a null and undesirable proposition (i.e., something undesirable) for the first clause, and then takes the negated and desirable proposition (i.e., Zhangsan did not die.) for the second clause. The sentence amounts to saying, "something undesirable almost happened but Zhangsan didn't die," where the negation is interpreted normally.

(3) *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ [$_{undesirable}$ Ø] [$_{desirable}$ Zhangsan did **not** die]
　　'Something undesirable almost happened but Zhangsan didn't die.'

　　In this analysis, the burden is more on the structure, which makes the lexical entry of *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' less complicated than Kaufmann and Xu (2015) proposed.

　　The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 observes the expletive negation of *chayidian* 'almost' and related desirability requirement on its prejacent.[2] Section 3 reviews the analysis by Kaufmann and Xu (2015). Section 4 contains this paper's proposal,

in which I argue that *chayidian*_{NPI} 'almost_{NPI}' takes two clauses with a desirability presupposition on each clause, while *chayidian*_{PPI} 'almost_{PPI}' takes one proposition without any desirability presupposition. A certain set of data including one with 'expletive negation' is accounted for by these two *chayidian* 'almost' constructions. Section 5 has some concluding remarks. In this paper, I focus on *chayidian* 'almost'; however, I expect the same analysis to apply for *xianxie*（险些）'almost.'

2.　Semantically Selective Behaviors of Mandarin Chinese "Almost"

In this section I will review the environment in which "expletive negation" appears. It appears only when an undesirable proposition is negated as a prejacent of *chayidian* 'almost.' For example in（2）, repeated below, *chayidian* 'almost' takes a proposition whose literal translation is "Zhangsan did not die," where an undesirable proposition "Zhangsan died" is negated.

"Expletive negation"
（2）Zhangsan　chayidian　mei　si.
　　Zhangsan　almost　　　Neg　die
　　'Zhangsan almost died.'（Zhangsan did not die.）　　　（Kaufmann and Xu 2015）
　　张三差一点没死。　　（张三没死。）

Such examples of "expletive negation" are not unique cases. Similar examples are easy to be obtained. Consider another case with "They divorced," for instance. Divorce is considered undesirable commonly. Despite the negation in（5）,（4）and（5）mean the same thing. Again, the negation in（5）appears to be ignored.

'Almost'
（4）Tamen　chayidian　　　lihun　　le.
　　they　　almost　　　　　divorce　LE
　　'They almost divorced.'（They did not divorce.）
　　他们差一点离婚了。　　（他们没离婚。）

Notes on the Expletive Negation of "Almost" Constructions in Mandarin Chinese*

'Almost' with "expletive negation"

(5) Tamen chayidian mei lihun.

    they   almost   Neg divorce

    'They almost divorced.' (They did not divorce.)

    他们差一点没离婚。　　（他们没离婚。）

On the other hand, when negated propositions are desirable, negation behaves normally and "expletive negation" does not appear. Consider (6) and (7). In (6), *chayidian* 'almost' takes "He got into college," which is desirable. In (7), *chayidian* 'almost' takes "Zhangsan did not get into college." This time negation is interpreted normally. The sentence is literally understood as "Zhangsan almost did not get into college," which implies that "Zhangsan got into college."

'Almost'

(6) Zhangsan chayidian gaoshang le daxue.

    Zhangsan almost   get.into   LE   college

    'Zhangsan almost got into college.'　（Zhangsan didn't get into college.）

    张三差一点考上了大学。　　　　　（张三没考上大学。）

'Almost' with negation

(7) Zhangsan chayidian mei gaoshang daxue.

    Zhangsan   almost   Neg get.into   college

    'Zhangsan barely got into college.' (Zhangsan got into college.)

                                           （Kaufmann and Xu 2015: 211）

    张三差一点没考上大学。　　　　（张三考上了大学。）

Such normal negation in *chayidian* 'almost' sentences is also widely observable. Consider another example with "I won the lottery," which is considered desirable.

'Almost'

(8) Wo chayidian zhong caipiao

    I   almost   win   lottery.

    'I almost won the lottery.'　(I did not win the lottery)

    我差一点中彩票。　　　　（我没中彩票。）

'Almost' with negation

(9) Wo　chayidian　mei　zhong caipiao

　　 I　　almost　　Neg　win　 lottery.

　　'I almost didn't win the lottery.'（I won the lottery）（Kaufman and Xu 2015: 213）

　　我差一点没中彩票。　　　　　　 （我中彩票了。）

In summary, "expletive negation" appears when *chayidian* 'almost' takes a negated undesirable proposition such as "not die" and "not divorce." The question is how to account for this fact. In the next section I will review Kaufmann and Xu's（2015）analysis.

3.　Kaufmann and Xu（2015）

Kaufmann and Xu（2015）propose a lexical entry of *chayidian* 'almost,' where relevant negation is literally ignored in particular circumstances. They argue that there are two kinds of *chayidian* 'almost': *chayidian*$_{PPI}$ 'almost$_{PPI}$' and *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$.' The semantics of *chayidian*$_{PPI}$ 'almost$_{PPI}$' is defined in（10）. This is the same as the lexical entry of *fast* 'almost' by Rapp and von Stechow（1999）.[3]

(10)　$[\![chayidian_{PPI}]\!]^{c} = \lambda p.\ p(w) = 0 \wedge$ there is a *w'* which is almost not different from *w*

　　　　　　　$\wedge p(w') = 1.$

As for the licensing condition of *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$,' Kaufmann and Xu（2015）assume that it is an "inversely licensed" case of NPI. This means that *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' is not in the scope of negation but rather it c-commands negation. Kaufmann and Xu point out that such "inversely licensed" items have already been already established. For instance, NPIs in Japanese and Korean often require negation in their scope rather than being in the scope of negation.（Sells and Kim 2006, Shimoyama 2011）

(11)　Daremo　ie　　ni i-naka-tta.

　　　 anyone　home　at be-Neg-Past

　　　'No one was at home.'

Kaufmann and Xu further point out that Mandarin Chinese also has such a case. In (12), *conglai* 'ever' always co-occurs and precedes negation.

(12) Ta   conglai bu   lai   shang ke.
    he   ever   Neg   come   take   class
    He never came to class.'   （Kaufmann and Xu 2015: 219）
    他从来不来上课。

Next, consider the lexical entry of $chayidian_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' given in （13）. This is the central part of their analysis. In a nutshell, the lexical entry means that it does not matter whether $chayidian_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' takes a positive proposition or a negated proposition. In either case, the undesirable part of the proposition almost happened but it did not.

(13) $[\![chayidian_{NPI}]\!]^c = \lambda p$: there is a $q \in \{p, \neg p\}$ s.t. c-Undesirable(q). $\lambda w. \iota q[q \in \{p, \neg p\} \wedge$
               c-Undesirable$(q)](w) = 0 \wedge$ there is a w' which is almost not different
               from w s.t. $\iota q[q \in \{p, \neg p\} \wedge c$-Undesirable$(q)](w') = 1$.
                                 （Kaufmann and Xu 2015: 217）

The definition of desirable/undesirable propositions is given below. Importantly, what is desirable/undesirable is relative to the speaker of the context.

(14) c-Undesirable(p) iff$_{def}$ $\neg p <$des$^c p$.
(15) $p <$des$^c q$ iff$_{def}$ proposition p is considered more desirable than proposition q in context
    c by the speaker of c.
                                    （Kaufmann and Xu 2015: 217）

Now consider an example. In （2）, repeated below, $chayidian_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' is "inversely licensed" by the negation in its scope. Its prejacent p is "Zhangsan did not die." However, what is undesirable is the proposition without negation, that is, "Zhangsan died." Thus "Zhangsan died" corresponds to q in （13）, which does not hold in the utterance world but holds in a world that is almost not different from the utterance world.

(2) Zhangsan   chayidian mei   si.
   Zhangsan   almost   Neg   die
   'Zhangsan almost died.' （Zhangsan did not die.） （Kaufmann and Xu 2015: 210）
   张三差一点没死。   （张三没死。）

(16) $[\![(2)]\!]^c=[\![chayidian_{NPI}]\!]^c(\lambda w.\neg[Z.\text{ died in }w])$

     This is defined only if there is a $q\in\{\lambda w.\neg[Z.\text{ died in }w],\ \lambda w.Z.\text{ died in }w\}$,

     s.t. c-Undesirable(q). In context c, c-Undesirable$(\lambda w. Z.\text{ died in }w)$.

     Therefore, $[\![(2)]\!]^c=\lambda w. Z.$ did not die in $w\wedge$ there is a w' which is almost not

     different from w s.t. Z. died in w'.　　　　(Kaufmann and Xu 2015: 218)

In other worlds, the lexical entry defined in (13) is semantically selective, and it literally ignores relevant negation when such a deletion satisfies the presupposition of *chayidian*_{NPI} 'almost_{NPI}.'

Next, consider (7), repeated below, where negation has a canonical interpretation. The prejacent "Zhangsan did not get into college" is undesirable. Thus, it will be q in (13).

(7) Zhangsan   chayidian   mei   gaoshang   daxue.

    Zhangsan   almost   Neg get.into   college

    'Zhangsan barely got into college.'　(Zhangsan got into college.)

                            (Kaufmann and Xu 2015: 211)

    张三差一点没考上大学。　　　　　(张三考上了大学。)

(17) $[\![(7)]\!]^c=[\![chayidian_{NPI}]\!]^c(\lambda w.\neg[Z.\text{ got into college in }w])$

     This is defined only if there is a $q\in\{\lambda w.\neg[Z.\text{ got into college in }w],\ \lambda w. Z.$

     got into college in $w\}$, s.t. c-Undesirable(q). In context c, c-Undesirable$(\lambda w.$

     $\neg[Z.\text{ got into college in }w])$.

     Therefore, $[\![(7)]\!]^c=\lambda w. Z.$ got into college in $w\wedge$ there is a w' which is almost

   not different from w s.t. Z. did not get into college in w'.

The lexical entry of *chayidian*_{NPI} 'almost_{NPI}' nicely captures "expletive negation." However, the analysis is based on the assumption that negation can be ignored. Given the fact that negation is a fundamental part of logic, the assumption is not easily accepted. Furthermore, the proposed lexical entry is too complex, and its semantically selective nature is unprecedented. It is worth pursuing alternative analyses.

4.　Bi-clausal Analysis

In this section I will propose an alternative analysis. In doing so, I partly follow

Kaufmann and Xu (2015) and assume two kinds of *chayidian* 'almost': *chayidian*$_{PPI}$ and *chayidian*$_{NPI}$. For *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$,' however, I will propose an alternative lexical entry, which induces bi-clausal structure with a desirability presupposition in each clause. With this analysis, there will be no "ignored negation."

Chayidian$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' takes two propositions, p and q. The structure given below corresponds to the LF structure of '*chayidian*$_{NPI}$ p q.'[4] Each proposition comes with a desirability presupposition. p is an undesirable proposition and q is a desirable proposition.

(18)

chayidian$_{NPI}$ $p_{undesirable}$ $q_{desirable}$
'almost'
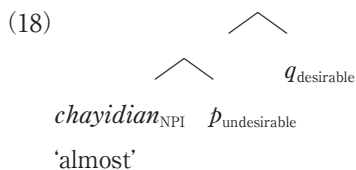
An additional assumption is required regarding how the NPI status of *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' is licensed. I assume that *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' is licensed by negation in its argument propositions, either p or q. This is obviously different from canonical NPI licensing. It can be regarded as an extended version of "inversely licensing," since the two propositions are arguments of *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$,' and in that sense in the "scope" of it. Let us state the assumption below.

(19) *Chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' is licensed by negation in its argument propositions.

The lexical entry of *chayidian*$_{NPI}$ 'almost$_{NPI}$' is given in (20). The bi-clausal structure as well as the desirability requirement on the two propositions are built in it.

(20) ⟦*chayidian*$_{NPI}$⟧^{c} = $\lambda p \lambda q \lambda w$: p is undesirable and q is desirable in context c.
$p(w)=0 \wedge$ there is a world w' which is almost not different from $w \wedge$
$p(w')=1 \wedge q(w)=1$.

Informally speaking, '*chayidian*$_{NPI}$ p q' can be paraphrased as "something undesirable almost happened but it did not, and something desirable happened."

As for *chayidian*$_{PPI}$ 'almost$_{PPI}$,' I assume the same lexical entry as Kaufmann and Xu did. Recall their (10). Unlike its NPI version, *chayidian*$_{PPI}$ 'almost$_{PPI}$' takes one proposition

as its argument.

(10)　$[\![chayidian_{\mathrm{PPI}}]\!]^c = \lambda p\, \lambda w.\ p(w)=0 \wedge$ there is a w' which is almost not different from w
$\wedge\, p(w')=1.$

In what follows, I will show how relevant data is accounted for. I will do so first with an undesirable proposition "Zhangsan died," and then with a desirable proposition "Zhangsan got into college." Keep in mind that there are NPI and PPI versions of *chayidian* 'almost.' The combination of both accounts for the data given below.

Let us first see a normal case with "Zhangsan died" in (1). The prejacent does not come with negation. Thus *chayidian*$_{\mathrm{PPI}}$ 'almost$_{\mathrm{PPI}}$' applies as shown in the schema in (21).

'Almost'
(1)　Zhangsan　chayidian　　si　　le.
　　　Zhangsan　almost　　　die　LE
　　　'Zhangsan almost died.'　（Zhangsan did not die.）
　　　张三差一点死了。　　　　（张三没死。）

(21)　*chayidian*$_{\mathrm{PPI}}$ [Zhangsan died]

Next, let us examine the case of "expletive negation" in (2), repeated below. When the prejacent is negated, *chayidian*$_{\mathrm{NPI}}$ 'almost$_{\mathrm{NPI}}$' applies as shown in the schema in (22). Since "Zhangsan did not die" is desirable, it occupies the place of the second proposition. The first proposition is a null proposition in this case, which is understood as "some undesirable event." The interpretation can be paraphrased as "Something undesirable almost happened but Zhangsan did not die." This captures the intuitive meaning. Most importantly, the negation is not expletive. The truth conditions are given in (23). Without specific context, the null undesirable proposition is understood as "Zhangsan's death."

'Almost' with "expletive negation"
(2)　Zhangsan　chayidian　mei　si.
　　　Zhangsan　almost　　Neg　die
　　　'Zhangsan almost died.' (Zhangsan did not die.)　　　（Kaufmann and Xu 2015）
　　　张三差一点没死。　　　（张三没死。）

(22) *chayidian*$_\text{NPI}$ [$_\text{undesirable}$ Ø] [$_\text{desirable}$ Zhangsan did **not** die]

(23) λw: there is something undesirable and Zhangsan's not being dead is desirable in context c. The undesirable event did not take place in $w \wedge$ there is a world w' which is almost not different from $w \wedge$ the undesirable event took place in $w' \wedge$ Z. did not die in w.

The position of first and the second propositions can both be filled as in (24). *Chayidian*$_\text{NPI}$ is licensed by the negation in the second clause. The two propositions both satisfy the desirability presuppositions and the sentence is well-formed. The truth conditions are given in (26). 'Zhangsan did not die in w' appears twice, thus one is deleted at the end.

(24) Zhangsan   chayidian   si   le,   dan   mei   si.
     Zhangsan   almost   die   LE   but   not   die
     'Zhangsan almost died, but he didn't.'
     张三差一点死了，但没死。

(25) *chayidian*$_\text{NPI}$ [$_\text{undesirable}$ Zhangsan died] [$_\text{desirable}$ he did **not** die]

(26) λw: Z.'s death is undesirable and his not being dead is desirable in context c.
     Z. did not die in $w \wedge$ there is a world w' which is almost not different from $w \wedge$ Z. died $w' \wedge$ Z. did not die in w.
     $= \lambda w$: Z.'s death is undesirable and his not being dead is desirable in context c.
     Z. did not die in $w \wedge$ there is a world w' which is almost not different from $w \wedge$ Z. died in w'.

My analysis predicts that the positions of the two propositions in (24) cannot be switched. Consider (27) and its scheme in (28). *Chayidian*$_\text{NPI}$ 'almost$_\text{NPI}$' would be licensed by the negation in the first clause, but such a sentence does not satisfy the desirability requirement. This prediction is borne out, as (27) is not well-formed.

Presupposition failure
(27) #Zhangsan chayidian   mei si,   dan si   le.[5)]

Zhangsan almost　　　not die　but die　LE

'Zhangsan almost did not die, but I died.'

＃张三差一点没死，但死了。

(28) *chayidian*_{NPI} [_{undesirable} Zhangsan did **not** die] [_{desirable} he died]

（presupposition failure）

Note that the sentence cannot be saved by *chayidian*_{PPI}. Consider the scheme in (29). The second clause is not an argument of *chayidian*_{PPI}, and it is just an independent clause. The sentence is ruled out by the PPI status of *chayidian* 'almost.'

(29) *chayidian*_{PPI} [Zhangsan did **not** die] ∧ [_{desirable} he died]

（Ruled out by PPI.）

Next, consider examples with a desirable proposition in "Zhangsan got into college." Recall a normal case of (6). *Chayidian*_{PPI} 'almost_{PPI}' applies here.

'Almost'

(6) Zhangsan　　chayidian　　　gaoshang　　le daxue.

　　Zhangsan　　almost　　　　get.into　　　LE college

　　'Zhangsan almost got into college.'　（Zhangsan didn't get into college.）

　　张三差一点考上了大学。　　　　　（张三没考上大学。）

(30) *chayidian*_{PPI} [Zhangsan got into college]

When the proposition is negated as in (7), repeated below, *chayidian*_{NPI} 'almost_{NPI}' applies. Since "I did not get into college" is undesirable, it becomes the first proposition, and the second proposition is null, as shown in (31). The truth conditions are given in (32). "Zhangsan's not having gotten into college is false" is equivalent to "Zhangsan got into college." Without context, the desirable null proposition is likely to be understood as "Zhangsan got into college."

"Almost" with negated proposition

(7) Zhangsan　　　chayidian　　　mei　gaoshang daxue.

Zhangsan   almost   Neg get.into   college

'Zhangsan almost did not get into college.'   (Zhangsan got into college.)

张三差一点没考上大学。   （张三考上了大学。）

(31) *chayidian*_NPI [_undesirable Zhangsan did **not** get into college][_desirable Ø]

(32) λw: Z.'s not getting into college is undesirable and there is something desirable in context c. Z.'s not having gotten into college is false in $w \wedge$ there is a world w' which is almost not different from $w \wedge$ Z. did not get into college in $w' \wedge$ the desirable event took place in w.

$= \lambda w$: Z.'s not getting into college is undesirable and there is something desirable in context c. Z. got into college in $w \wedge$ there is a world w' which is almost not different from $w \wedge$ Z. did not get into college in $w' \wedge$ the desirable event took place in w.

Both propositions can be overtly filled as in (33). The first proposition is negated, thus *chayidian*_NPI 'almost_NPI' applies. The desirability presuppositions are met, and the sentence is well-formed. The truth conditions are given in (35). "Zhangsan's not having gotten into college is false" is equivalent to "Zhangsan got into college in w." It will appear twice, thus one of them is deleted.

(33) Zhangsan   chayidian   mei gaoshang   daxue,   dan gaoshang le.[6]
     Zhangsan   almost   not get.into   college but get.into LE
     'Zhangsan almost did not get into college, but got in.'
     张三差一点没考上大学，但考上了。

(34) *chayidian*_NPI [_undesirable Zhangsan did **not** get into college][_desirable he got into college]

(35) λw: Z.'s not getting into college is undesirable and his getting into college is desirable in context c. Z.'s not having gotten into college is false in $w \wedge$ there is a world w' which is almost not different from $w \wedge$ Z. did not get into college in $w' \wedge$ Z. got into college in w.

$= \lambda w$: Z.'s not getting into college is undesirable and his getting into college is desirable in context c. Z. got into college in $w \wedge$ there is a world w' which is almost not different from $w \wedge$ Z. does not get into college in w'.

In （36）, the relevant two propositions are flipped from （33）, thus the second proposition is negated. When *chayidian*_{NPI} 'almost_{NPI}' applies, however, it is predicted to be presupposition failure, because the first proposition "Zhangsan got into college" is desirable.

（36）Zhangsan　　chayidian　　gaoshang le　daxue,　dan　mei　gaoshang.[7]

　　　Zhangsan　　almost　　　get.into　LE college　but　not　get.into

　　　'Zhangsan almost got into college, but did not get in.'

　　　张三差一点考上了大学，但没考上。

（37）*chayidian*_{NPI} [_{undesirable} Zhangsan got into college][_{desirable} he did **not** get into college]

　　　（presupposition failure）

The fact is, however, that the sentence is intuitively well-formed. In this case, *chayidian*_{PPI} 'almost_{PPI}' can save the sentence as shown in （38）. The first proposition does not contain negation, and it is the argument of *chayidian*_{PPI} 'almost_{PPI}.' The second proposition is not its argument, and it is an independent clause.

（38）*chayidian*_{PPI} [Zhangsan got into college] ∧ [He did **not** get into college]

The given set of data is accounted for by *chayidian*_{PPI} 'almost_{PPI}' and bi-clausal *chayidian*_{NPI} 'almost_{NPI}.' The good news is that the lexical entry of *chayidian*_{NPI} 'almost_{NPI}' is simpler than what Kaufmann and Xu proposed. On the other hand, my analysis comes with extra assumptions, namely unconventional NPI licensing and null-propositional arguments. They need to be independently justified in future research.

5.　Conclusions

In this paper, I attempted to provide an alternative analysis for the mysterious "expletive negation" that appears in *chayidian* 'almost' constructions in Mandarin Chinese. The phenomenon is hard to tackle. Kaufmann and Xu （2015） put all the burden on the lexical entry of *chayidian*_{NPI} 'almost_{NPI}' in order to account for that fact, whereas my analysis puts less burden on *chayidian*_{NPI} 'almost_{NPI}' but more on additional assumptions of unconventional NPI licensing and null propositional arguments. Further research will

reveal which analysis is preferable empirically and theoretically.

The lack of relevant existing research is one of the main obstacles we face. To my knowledge, however, behaviors of "expletive negation" of *chayidian* 'almost' constructions have been extensively studied in traditional research on the Chinese language as well as in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Literature in these fields, though mostly in Chinese, can be expected to contribute to the study of *chayidian* 'almost' in the framework of generative linguistics.

Notes —————————

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1) One of my informants says that (2) is ambiguous, and its meaning depends on where the stress is located. When *mei* 'Neg' is stressed, the negation is canonically interpreted, thus the sentence literally means "Z. almost did not die." That implies "Z. died." On the other hand, when *si* 'die' is stressed, the negation is expletive, and the sentence is understood as "Z. almost died." That implies "Z, did not die." This is an interesting phenomenon, and it needs to be further confirmed by other native speakers. I regret that this information was not brought to my attention earlier.

2) In *almost p*, where *p* is a proposition, *p* is called a prejacent of *almost*. The term is cited from Horn (2002).

3) Kaufmann and Xu are aware of the criticisms against the lexical entry of *fast* 'almost,' where "almost" appears in the definition of "almost," which is unfortunately circular. See Horn (2002) for relevant criticism against that circularity. Alternative analyses would treat a polar component as a presupposition or a conversational implicature. See Ducrot (1973) and Anscombre and Ducrot (1983) for presupposition analyses, and Sadock (1981) and Ziegeler (2000) for conversational implicature analyses.

4) The LF structure is tentative and needs to be investigated further.

5) According to the informant mentioned in footnote 1, the same ambiguity arises in this sentence. Therefore, when *mei* 'Neg' is stressed, the negation is canonically understood, and the first clause literally means "Z. almost did not die." That implies he died, thus the whole sentence makes sense. On the other hand, when *si* 'die' is stressed, the negation is expletive, and the fist clause is understood as "Z. almost died." That implies "Z. did not die"; thus, the whole sentence is odd, as indicated by "#." This judgment also needs to be confirmed by other native speakers.

6) In order to make the sentence sound more natural, extra morpheme can be added as follows.

   (i) Zhangsan　chayidian　mei　gaoshang　daxue,　dan　zuihouhaishi gaoshang le.

Zhangsan almost not get.into college but in.the.end get.into LE

'Zhangsan almost did not get into college, but in the end he got in.'

张三差一点没考上大学，但最后还是考上了。

7 ）In order to make the sentence sound more natural, an extra morpheme can be added as fol-
lows.

（i）Zhangsan chayidian gaoshang le daxue, dan zuihouhsaishi mei gaoshang.

Zhangsan almost get.into LE college but in.the.end not get.into

'Zhangsan almost did not get into college, but in the end he got in.'

张三差一点考上了大学，但最后还是没考上。

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