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成果報告

漢語情態詞的層次結構研究

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Hierarchical Structure of Modality in Mandarin Chinese

In this paper, we will explore the interactions of modality in Mandarin Chinese. What are the relative positions of modal verbs and modal adverbs? We will display a portrait on the hierarchical structure of them. We first construct the hierarchical structure of modal verbs, sentence-final particles and modal adverbs in section 1. In section 2, we observe the relative hierarchical position of modals, negation and modal adverbs.

1 Hierarchy of modality

Modality in Mandarin Chinese is divided into three major types: modal verbs, sentence final particles and modal adverbs. Modal verbs and modal adverbs are expressed by being attached before the verb while particles in the sentence final position. We will separately discuss these three functional categories in the following sections.

1.1 Modal verbs

Semantically, the modal gives additional information about the function of the main verb. It has a great variety of communicative functions. Syntactically, the modal verbs usually precede the main verb of the sentence. It acts on the whole verbal phrase. Consider the following examples:

(1) a. 他打籃球。
   *Ta da lanchiu.*
   ‘He plays basketball.’

b. 他會打籃球。
   *Ta hui da lanchiu.*
   ‘He can play basketball.’

*Hui* adds the meaning of ability to the main verbal phrase *da lanchiu*. The hierarchy of modal verbs is higher than aspect and phase markers. That is, when post-verbal aspect and pre-verbal modal verb co-occur in a sentence, the modal is attached after the suffixation of the aspect or phase marker. Semantically, the aspect and phase marker affect the situation of the event so they are closer to verb. On the other hand, the modal verb stands in the higher position to show the attitude of the speaker toward the event, such as possibilities, necessity, permission, and so on. For example,

(2) 他必需吃完飯才能離開。
   *Ta bixu chi wan fan cai neng likai.*
   ‘He can leave only after he finishes the meal.’

Since *bixu* acts on the whole phase, including verbal phrase *chi wan fan*, it is attached after the suffixation of the phase marker ‘*wan*’ to the verb ‘*chi*’.
1.2 Sentence-final particles

The post-verbal sentential modality, mood, in Mandarin Chinese, is expressed by the sentence-final particle. It is located in the end of the sentence and, semantically, it can function as a question marker (ma), signal a current relevant event (le) and so on. Moreover, it acts on the whole sentence and pragmatically expresses the attitude of the speaker toward the sentence. As a result, the attachment of the sentence-final particle is the outer layer of the verbal phrase. For example,

(a) 他有兩棟房子。
   Ta you liang dong fangzi.
   he have two CL house
   ‘He owns two houses.’

(b) 他有兩棟房子嗎?
   Ta you liang dong fangzi ma?
   he have two CL house PAR
   ‘Does he own two houses?’

(c) 他有兩棟房子呢！
   Ta you liang dong fangzi ne!
   he have two CL house PAR
   ‘He owns two houses.’

The sentence in (3a) is a statement. The attachment of ma in (3b) adds the interrogative meaning of the speaker toward the statement in (3a). Besides, the attachment of other particles is allowed such as the sentence in (3c). According to Li and Thomson (1981), ne expresses the response to expectation toward the statement. Therefore, the sentence-final particle in Mandarin Chinese does not affect the internal structure of the sentence before it is attached. It is attached in the end of the sentence after the formation of the sentence and adds the semantic or pragmatic meaning toward the original statement.

1.3 Modal adverbs

Modal adverbs, such as nandao, daodi, jiujing and so on, are often put either before a verb or in the sentence-initial position. Like sentence-final particles, it acts on the whole phrase and adds the semantic or pragmatic meaning toward the sentence. For example,

(a) 你難道不如他？
   Ni nandao bu ru ta?
   you MODA NEG like him
   ‘Aren’t you better than him?’

(b) 難道你不如他？
   Nandao ni bu ru ta?
   MODA you NEG like him
   ‘Aren’t you better than him?’

In sentences (4a) and (4b), nandao can be located in either pre-verbal or sentence-initial
position. The position of nandao doesn’t affect the meaning of the sentence. Nandao acts on the whole sentence ni bu ru ta. Thus, like sentence-final particles, mood adverbs are attached to the outer layer of the sentence. It adds the semantic or pragmatic meaning toward the original sentence it is attached. It not only modifies the verb phrase following it.

2 Interaction of modal verb, negation and modal adverb

The functional categories, modal, negation and adverbial mood are pre-verbal elements. What is the limit of their co-occurrence? Let’s take a look at the relation between modals and negation first.

(5) 他應該不喜歡有夫之婦。

Ta yinggai bu xihuan youfuzhefu.
he MODV NEG like married woman

‘Maybe he doesn’t like a married woman.’

(6) 他不應該喜歡有夫之婦。

Ta bu yinggai xihuan yaofuzhefu.
he NEG MODV like married woman

‘He shouldn’t like a married woman.’

Sentences (5) and (6) don’t have the same meaning. In sentence (5), the modal yinggai precedes the negation bu. The scope of the modal yinggai is higher than that of the negation bu. Thus, yinggai modifies the phrase following it, bu xihuan youfuzhefu. However, in sentence (6), the negation bu dominates the modal phrase yinggai xihuan yaofuzhefu. It negates the whole phrase following it. That is, the hierarchy of the negation is higher than that of the modal in (6). The nearer to the verb the functional category is, the lower of the hierarchy it is.

Now, let’s turn to the interaction of the modal adverb and the negation. Unlike the relation of the modal and negation, the modal adverb always precedes the negation as in sentence (7). The reversed order is not allowed in sentence (8).

(7) 他難道不愛自己的孩子？

Ta nandao bu ai zijide haizi?
he MODA NEG love own child

‘Doesn’t he love his own child?’

(8) *他不難道愛自己的孩子？

Ta bu nandao ai zijide haizi?
he NEG MODA love own child

The following two examples demonstrate the irreversible ordering of negation mei and modal adverbs.

(9) 難道沒人幫忙你嗎？

Nandao mei ren banman ni ma?
MODA NEG person help you PAR
‘Is there anyone to help you?’

(10) *沒人難道幫忙你嗎?

Mei ren nandao banman ni ma?

NEG person MODA help you PAR

The examples show that modal adverbs always dominate the negation phrase while the negation cannot dominate the modal adverb phrase. The scope of negation is always lower than that of modal adverbs.

Now, let’s take a look at the interaction of modal verb, negation and modal adverb in the same sentence.

(11) a. 他難道不會去台北?

Ta nandao bu hui qu taibei?

he MODA NEG MODV go Taipei

‘He cannot go to Taipei?’

b. 他難道會不去台北?

Ta nandao hui bu qu taibei?

he MODA MODV NEG go Taipei

‘He will not go to Taipei?’

The patterns in example (11) are like this:

(11a) Subject + MODA (nandao) + NEG + MODA (hui) + VP

(11b) Subject + MODA (nandao) + MODA (hui) + NEG + VP

On the other hand, nandao can be sentential-initial like example (12):

(12) a. 難道他不會去台北?

Nandao ta bu hui qu taibei?

MODA he NEG MODV go Taipei

‘He cannot go to Taipei?’

b. 難道他會不去台北?

Nandao ta hui bu qu taibei?

MODA he MODV NEG go Taipei

‘He will not go to Taipei?’

The patterns in example (12) are like this:

(12a) MODA (nandao) + Subject + NEG + MODA (hui) + VP

(12b) MODA (nandao) + Subject + MODA (hui) + NEG + VP

From the patterns in (11) and (12), we can say that modal adverb and subject are at the same level, while modal verb and negation are at the same level. The level of the modal adverb is higher than that of modal verb.

To sum up, in this chapter, we display an overall portrait on the hierarchical structure of modality. We first discuss the preverbal modal verbs, sentence-final particles and modal adverbs respectively in section 1. Then, we discuss the interaction of modals, negation and
modal adverbs in section 2. The ordering of the negation and the modal verbs is reversible. That results in the semantic differences. However, the modal adverbs acts on the whole proposition. It is located in the highest position in the hierarchical structure of modality.

References


1-1:14-37.