

Modality Sources and Potential Verbal Bases in Postverbal Modal Construals

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This paper presents a syntactic account for modality sources and potential verbal bases in the postverbal modal construals, investigating the selectional relationship as well as (a)symmetries among those alternatives both associated with core syntactic-semantic requirements. Chinese exhibits its typological property, analyticity, at all levels and provides a good perspective to the syntactic-semantic correspondence under the cartographic approach (Rizzi 1997; Cinque 1999; Rizzi & Cinque 2010). Through the comparative study of Mandarin Chinese and Hakka dialect, a fine-grained topography is offered to empirically capture the restrictions on postverbal modals differing in their verbal bases, and to theoretically elaborate the modality sources denoted by those construals, which is crucially affected by the robust system of light verbs, well demonstrated Chinese analyticity.

Postverbal modals, Mandarin *de* and Hakka *tet* in (1), have long been known and discussed in the literatures, since both raise a language-internal divergence in SVO languages that modals typically occur in the preverbal position with this one exception. Things attract more attention when we consider Hakka dialect: the postverbal modal *tet* could be realized as three alternatives at the surface, leading to two-layered modality, namely dynamic modality in (2a) [V-Mod-Res] and deontic modality in (2b) [V-Mod]. Moreover, deontic *tet* has another alternative as (2c) [*v*-Mod V] if a light verb is overtly realized as *zo* ‘do’ (Huang 1997; Lin 2001 for Mandarin). This one-step distinction causes serial asymmetries between two alternatives, derived by the V-to-*v*-Mod movement or *v*-to-Mod movement (Chung 2012).

- (1) a. Zhangsn he-de-wan na-guan pijiu. (Mandarin)
 Zhangsan drink-DE-RES that-CL beer
 ‘Zhangsan can [will manage to] drink off that bottle of beer.’
 b. Amin lim-tet-het ge-gon bilu. (Hakka)
 Amin drink-TET-RES that-CL beer
 ‘Amin can [will manage to] drink off that bottle of beer.’
- (2) a. Amin siid-tet-het ng-von fan. (Dynamic: V-Mod-R)
 Amin eat-TET-RES five-CL rice
 ‘Amin can [will manage to] eat five bowls of rice.’
 b. Amin siid-tet ng-von fan. (Deontic: V-Mod)
 Amin eat-TET five-CL rice
 c. Amin zo-tet siid ng-von fan. (Deontic: *v*-Mod V)
 Amin DO-TET eat five-CL rice
 ‘Amin can [is permitted to] eat five bowls of rice.’

A system of light verbs in Mandarin and its dialects has an implicit-explicit contrast pair, due to the analyticity of Chinese, therefore raises more interesting issues about the potential verbal bases of this postverbal modal, *tet*. A straightforward prediction is that other explicit light verbs in Hakka are qualified as candidates. Fortunately, this possibility is attested by (3):

- (3) a. Amin sii-tet siid ng-von fan. (Deontic: CAUSE^v-Mod V)
 Amin CAUSE-TET eat five-CL rice
 b. Amin tung-tet siid ng-von fan. (Deontic: MOVE^v-Mod V)
 Amin MOVE-TET eat five-CL rice
 ‘Amin can [is permitted to] eat five bowls of rice.’

More interestingly, compared with dynamic modality expressed by Mandarin *de* in V-*de*-R, these alternatives of Hakka deontic *tet* consistently deliver the permission modality,

but differ in the source of modality. The modality tends to be conveyed by *sii-tet* V if the permission comes from an authority. In addition, the subject restriction should be with respect to the light verb base. Thus, the inanimate subject is prohibited in *tung-tet* or *zo-tet*, owing to *tung* ‘move’ and *zo* ‘do’ as typical introducer of a Performer and an Agent, respectively. This asymmetry in (4) is just an apparent counterexample to the feasibility of light verbs serving as modal bases. In fact, it opens a clearer perspective on how the argument structures of postverbal modal construals would be, and helps us have a better understanding about the source of permissive modality, both sensitive to its verbal base.

- (4) a. *fablid guitin siibbad se sii-tet siid jiu.* (Deontic:
 law stipulate eighteen years old CAUSE-TET eat alcohol CAUSE^v-Mod V)
 ‘It is permitted to drink alcohol over eighteen years old by law.’
 b. **fablid guitin siibbad se zo-/tung-tet siid jiu.* (Deontic:
 law stipulate eighteen years old DO-/MOVE-TET eat alcohol DO^v/MOVE^v-Mod V)

Drawing the interaction between the modality sources and the subject restrictions, the proposed structures are illustrated in (5): the light verbs, *sii* ‘cause’ and *tung* ‘move’, on a par with *zo* ‘do’ serve as a potential verbal base of modal, *tet*. *Tung* ‘move’ stands as the introducer of a Performer and an Agent relies on *zo* ‘do’, leading to the subject agentivity requirement. On the other hand, another permissive modality source, an authority, introduced by *sii* ‘cause’ occurs at the specifier of Evidentiality Projection (Uriagereka 1995; Rizzi 1997; Tenny 2006). Furthermore, the counterpart involved an implicit light verb, *V-tet*, shows respect to constraints on what detected in those taking explicit ones.

- (5) a. [IP Subject_k [MPDeo [V_{i-v}]-*tet* [_{vP} t_k [_{v'} t_j [_{VP} t_i]]]]]] **V-tet**
 b. [IP Agent_j [MPDeo *zo*^{v_i}-*tet* [_{vP} t_j [_{v'} t_i [_{VP} V]]]]]] **DO^v-tet V**
 c. [IP Performer_j [MPDeo *tung*^{v_i}-*tet* [_{vP} t_j [_{v'} t_i [_{VP} V]]]]]] **MOVE^v-tet V**
 d. [EvidP Authority_k [IP Cause_k [MPDeo *sii*^{v_i}-*tet* [_{vP} t_k [_{v'} t_i [_{vP} t_j [_{VP} V]]]]]]]] **CAUSE^v-tet V**

In sum, this paper from a comparative perspective scrutinizes the selectional relationship between modality sources and verbal bases in the postverbal modal construals. This analysis, if on the right track, not only empirically captures the contrasts in the permissive modality sources and the subject selections, but is advantageous in: (i) the interactions with rigid-hierarchically merged adverbs under the cartographic approach, give another piece of empirical evidence for such notable syntactic-semantic restrictions tied a proper (light) verbal bases to postverbal modals. (ii) Other (a)symmetries within those alternatives of postverbal modals, as the formulation of A-not-A questions and the prohibition force implicated in the rhetorical questions, are also closed related to which verbal base token. (iii) Cross-linguistically, the alternatives of postverbal modals and the correlated distinction of modality sources in (5) could be attested by the selectional relationship observed in other subdialects of Hakka. (iv) The most desirable consequence is that theoretically, this study of modality sources and potential verbal bases, a serial of lexical light verbs, may provide insights into the high analyticity of Modern Chinese (Chao 1968; Huang 2005, 2015), from the perspective of language typology.

Selected References: Cinque G, Rizzi L. 2010. The cartography of syntactic structures. In *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis*, ed. B Heine, H Narrog, pp. 51–65. New York: Oxford Univ. Press. Huang, C.-T. James. 2015. Syntactic Analyticity and Parametric Theory. In A. Li (Ed.), *Chinese Syntax in a Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. Oxford Univ. Press. Lin, T.-H. Jonah. 2001. *Light Verb Syntax and the Theory of Phrase Structure*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Irvine.