

Sentence-final particles in contact: An exoskeletal approach?

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Sentence-final particles (SFPs) in the Chinese languages express various meanings. They cluster uninterrupted and in a fixed order, with aspectual and focus-related SFPs usually further left, closer to the TP, than discourse-relevant ones. The rules governing SFP co-occurrence are poorly understood, although they may be syntactically, phonologically, and semantically conditioned (Matthews & Yip 2011).

Here, I argue that understanding these co-occurrence rules is indispensable to refining theories regarding the syntax of particles at large. To this end, I examine how syntactically high SFPs have been borrowed along with their co-occurrence rules into two SFP-rich varieties of Yue Chinese. The first is Guangzhou Cantonese, for which I examine the Mandarin-derived SFP *baa3* ('uncertainty'), and the second Singapore Cantonese, where /la41~22/ ('finality'), probably from Colloquial Singapore English (Singlish) or Hokkien (Min Chinese), is studied. More specifically, I discuss how these high, borrowed SFPs interact with the lower, native Cantonese SFPs *ge3* ('assertion') and *zaa3* ("only").

In Cantonese, if the hypothetical SFPs A, B, and C are all mutually compatible (i.e. AB, AC, and BC are valid clusters), the cluster ABC would be valid, given the correct context. For instance, because *ge3*, *zaa3*, and the native high SFP *wo3* ('noteworthiness') are mutually compatible in this manner, the tripartite cluster *ge3 zaa3 wo3* is valid (1). However, unlike native high SFPs, the borrowed high SFPs block *ge3* and *zaa3* from co-occurring (*2[IV]), even though they are compatible with *ge3* and *zaa3* used alone (2[I],[II]).

I demonstrate that in Mandarin and Singlish/ Hokkien, SFPs of assertion (functionally proximate to Cantonese *ge3*) and restrictive focus (cf. *zaa3*) cannot co-occur, for different reasons. Therefore, the inability of *ge3* and *zaa3* to co-occur in the presence of a borrowed SFP in both Guangzhou and Singapore Cantonese is possibly a result of SFP clusters being calqued from the source language (3). In the process, low SFPs are replaced by semantically proximate native forms, while high SFPs remain phonologically non-native (cf. 2[I]/3[I]).

As the non-native structure of such clusters results in native low SFPs exhibiting irregular combinatorial properties, I next evaluate how the exoskeletal approach to language mixing (Åfarli 2015, Grimstad et al. 2018) may apply to SFP borrowing. Although striking similarities exist between the calquing of SFP clusters and the DP/VP mixing the framework conventionally covers, I observe that because SFPs can appear independently of one another, SFPs cannot be assumed to select each other in the same way as DP/VP-internal elements.

The above seemingly demonstrates that SFP clusters are borrowed whole, with differential treatment of SFPs based on syntactic position. This, supported by how SFP clusters can never be taken apart, would favour approaches (e.g. Sybesma & Li 2006, Pan 2019a,b) which postulate that SFPs are housed by separate functional heads in the same phase, instead of by heads in different phases (Erlewine 2017, Biberauer 2017).

In more general terms, SFPs being borrowed with co-occurrence restrictions intact may likewise threaten Biberauer's (2017) generalisation that particles are acategorical and therefore borrowed without syntactic features. However, further research is needed to determine to what extent co-occurrence properties transferred between languages are syntactic in nature. (493 words)

Guangzhou and Singapore Cantonese: **Native high SFP *wo3* can cluster with *ge3*, *zaa3*, or both at once (i.e. AC [I], BC [II], and AB [III] are valid clusters, therefore ABC [IV] is valid)**

(1) 間屋咁大 *ge3 wo3* [I]/ *zaa3 wo3* [II]/ *ge3 zaa3* [III]/ *ge3 zaa3 wo3* [IV]

gaan1 uk1 gam3 daai6 ge3 wo3[I]/ zaa3 wo3[II]/ ge3 zaa3[III]/ ge3 zaa3 wo3[IV]

CL house so big SFP(‘assertion’, ‘noteworthiness’)/ SFP(“only”, ‘noteworthiness’) ...

‘I see the house is this big, as a matter of fact.’ [I]/ ‘I see the house is only this big.’ [II]/ ‘The house is only this big, as a matter of fact.’ [III]/ ‘I see the house is only this big, as a matter of fact.’ [IV]

Guangzhou Cantonese: **Borrowed high SFP *baa3* (‘uncertainty’) can cluster with *ge3* and *zaa3*, but not both at once (i.e. AC [I], BC [II], and AB [III] are valid clusters, but ABC [IV] is not)**

(2) 間屋(應該)咁大 *ge3 baa3 [I]/ zaa3 baa3 [II]/ ge3 zaa3 [III]/ *ge3 zaa3 baa3 [IV]*

*gaan1 uk1 (jing1goi1) gam3 daai6 ge3 baa3[I]/ zaa3 baa3[II]/ ge3 zaa3[III]/ *ge3 zaa3 baa3[IV]*

CL house (probably) so big SFP(‘assertion’, ‘uncertainty’)/ SFP(“only”, ‘uncertainty’) ...

‘The house is probably this big, right?’ [I]/ ‘The house is probably only this big.’ [II]/ ‘The house is only this big, as a matter of fact.’ [III]/ *‘The house is probably only this big, as a matter of fact.’ [IV]

Mandarin: ***de* (cf. Cantonese *ge3*) and *éryǐ* (cf. *zaa3*) compatible with high SFP *ba* (‘uncertainty’), but not with each other (i.e. ABC [IV] not valid although AC [I] and BC [II] are valid, because AB [III] is not valid); *ba* (‘uncertainty’) likely source of Guangzhou Cantonese *baa3***

(3) 房子(應該)那麼大 *de ba [I]/ éryǐ ba [II]/ *de éryǐ [III]/ *de éryǐ ba [IV]*

*fángzi (yīnggāi) nàme dà de ba [I]/ éryǐ ba [II]/ *de éryǐ [III]/ *de éryǐ ba [IV]*

house (probably) so big (‘assertion’(?), ‘uncertainty’)/ SFP(“only”, ‘uncertainty’) ...

= (2)

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