The Cantonese *ne1* Revisited: A Syntactic and Semantic Study on the Sentence-final Particle

Keywords: Cantonese, sentence-final particles, cartography, ne

Background: One of the major questions of the Cantonese SFP *ne1* is whether the particle provides [+Q] scope to a question, or marks the focalized element of the sentence. This issue is particularly crucial for the sketching of its cartographic syntax in the functional level, in which it may serve to unify further comparative analysis of SFPs. In this paper I adopt the clausal periphery of Tang (2020) and propose a syntactic position for *ne1* based on its discourse functions and the results of various syntactic diagnostic tests. Essentially, I agree with Tang's (2015) categorization that *ne* is an SFP of the focus type, because the question operator in the questions with *ne1* comes from other elements. In addition, since questions that are formed by non-interrogative elements and *ne1* should be the truncated form of wh-questions and A-not-A questions (Li 2006), I argue that the non-interrogative elements are underlyingly interrogative. As a result, the particle *ne1* should have nothing to do with questions. However, the follow examples may arise one question: how many *ne1* do we have in Cantonese?

(1)   a. 提咗你㗎啦，係咪呢(*嚙) ？
      Tai   zo   nei   gaa   laa   hai   mai   ne   ho
      Remind   ASP   you   SFP   SFP   be   NEG   SFP   SFP
      'I have told you, see?'

      b. 佢飲唔飲咖啡*(呢)嚙 ？
      Keoi   jam-m-jam   gaafe   ne   ho
      he   drink-not-drink   coffee   SFP   SFP
      'Does he drink coffee?'

      (1a) shows that *ne* cannot co-occur with *ho*, although the position of the head of Focus must be fulfilled with *ho* following the *[focus ∅] Degree rule proposed by Tang (2020: 6).
Proposal: To answer the research question, this paper holds a conclusion that Cantonese is a language with one *ne*, and whether the Focus-Degree movement takes place subjects to the presence of focus in the sentence attached. Specifically, if the sentence does not have a focus to point at, *ne* will move from Focus to Degree to encode the speaker's evaluation to the proposition. The major distinction between the two positions that *ne* can land is observed in the complementary distribution with different types of SFPs, followed by the presence of the focus-pointing function of *ne* in various syntactic environments.

References

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北部吴语的焦点结构

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摘要：

作为偏离 VO 语序最甚的汉语方言之一，吴语"受事前置"现象很难通过"语言接触"等外部原因来解释（de Sousa 2015）。因而，此类现象一度被认为是源于"话题结构"（刘丹青 2015）。针对此种说法，本文吸收罗仁地（LaPolla 1995）的思想，提出不同观点：吴语的受事前置应是"焦点结构化"使然，体现的是各类焦点在句法结构上的配置。具体地，本文通过归纳吴语绍兴话的句法表现，结合其他共时、历时材料，主张：其主句的核心谓词右侧存在一个"信息焦点位置"，左边则是"语义焦点位置"，二者分工明确、各自容纳不同类型的焦点。这才最终造成了：1）北部吴语在很多情况下偏离 VO 语序，2）其语序会受语义-语用因素影响而改变。

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