

Abstracts of the Chinese papers in English

Lizhen Peng and Yibin Liu

Subjective and objective modality of modern Chinese

This paper probes the distinction between subjective and objective modality based on Chinese modality expressions, mainly on Chinese modal verbs, so as to achieve a better comprehension on this still quite poorly understood subject.

Firstly, the distinction between subjective and objective modality is illustrated by the successive co-occurrence of Chinese modals expressing different types of modality. As a semantic arrangement, different types of Chinese modals occur successively by the EDD rule, with the order epistemic > deontic > dynamic, which is motivated by the diversity of their subjectivity. The epistemic modality is the most subjective at one end, the dynamic one is essentially objective at another, and the deontic one falls in between. Under the layered model of the clause structure, the dynamic modals with a high degree of objectivity function as the operators at the core, and the epistemic modals with subjectivity play a role as the operators in the periphery of the clause. The co-occurrence order of different types of modal verbs represents the degree of the subjectivity of the modality indicated by the modal verbs; the more subjective the modal verb is, the easier it precedes the other types of modal verbs. The distinction between subjective and objective modality is also supported by evidence from the semantic diachronic evolution of the polysemic modal verbs and the evidences from children's language acquisition of modality.

Secondly, the distinction between subjective and objective modality is also marked by the diversity of the subjectivity of the same type of modality which is manifested adequately by the successive co-occurrence of two synonym-like modal verbs. The semantic arrangement [necessity] > [necessity] (no matter the epistemic one or deontic one) expressed by “*kěndìngděi*” or “*bìxūděi*” is not a redundant arrangement, because the former [necessity] is subjective, with the modal source of speaker and the latter objective, with the modal source of circumstance. In other words, this semantic arrangement should be more accurately described as [subjective necessity] > [objective necessity], and the two necessities function as distinct grammatical operators of the respective layer. The distinction between subjectivity and objectivity also exists in the necessities expressed by “*bùnéngbù*” and “*bùdebù*”; the former is subjective, the latter objective, with a

discrepancy in volition, source of modality, illocutionary force and the strength of the command.

Finally, the distinction between subjective and objective modality is manifested by the objectification of modality. For the sake of pragmatics (such as politeness principle), speakers will make the primal subjective modality to be objective, so as to make their propositions scoped by the modality more convincing or to soften their commands, by changing the modal source from speakers to circumstances and by withdrawing themselves from the foreground to background. The objectification of modality demonstrates the distinction between subjective and objective modality more intuitively and reveals the pragmatic motivation of this distinction to a certain extent.

Keywords: modality, subjective, objective, objectification, modal verbs, co-occurrence, Chinese

Lifang He

Learning strategies of successful adult phonetics learners from Canada: A supplementary study of Critical Period Hypothesis

It is widely believed that, compared with children, adults are less successful as far as second language learning is concerned, and this appears to be particularly true for the acquisition of accent. This paper, based on the study of a group of university students in Canada, reports that there are exceptional cases in which adult learners who, like young learners, have attained near native pronunciation. It argues that some adults who have passed the critical period can acquire a near native Chinese phonetics level if they employ appropriate learning strategies. The paper also examines the strategies shared by the most successful learners of Chinese phonetics.

The paper finds that successful adult learners all have strong motivations of and proactive attitudes toward learning, but there are no fixed strategies of successful learning that can be applied to every student. The paper concludes that it is essential for learners who aim at achieving native or near native phonetics proficiency by employing different learning strategies in accordance with their varied situations, monitoring closely their own learning progress, and actively interacting with their teachers and fellow students.

Keywords: critical period; Chinese phonetics; learning strategies

Ming Zhao

Cultural interpretation of words in textbooks of Chinese as a Second Language

The integral characteristic of language and culture determines cultural interpretation of words is an important part in the textbooks of teaching Chinese as a second language. Through the analysis of six typical intermediate level textbooks of teaching Chinese as a second language, we have found that the existing problems of cultural interpretation of words in the intermediate level textbooks of teaching Chinese as a second language are the ignorance of words' cultural meaning, insufficiency of presence of cultural meaning, and inability of provision for the examples concerned with culture. The emergence of these problems have some common reasons such as the ignorance of the hierarchical nature of culture and covertness of cultural meaning, and the subjective failures of textbook compilers of teaching Chinese as a second language. In order to solve these problems, the 'appropriate, effective, preferred, multidimensional' principles should be followed in the cultural interpretation of words when we compile them in the textbooks of teaching Chinese as a second language. At the end, this study points out there are still many aspects that should be improved and perfected about the cultural interpretation of words in textbooks of teaching Chinese as a second language. The author hopes that this study can offer reference to future textbook compilers.

Keywords: cultural interpretation of words; cultural factors; textbook of teaching Chinese as a second language

