

Paper title: Modal Doubling in Hong Kong Hokkien

Subfield: Formal syntax

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This was the first paper ever written on modal doubling in Hong Kong Hokkien, a less-studied southeast Asian language. To the author, it is interesting to explore modality in this language because of two reasons: Firstly, in Cantonese and Mandarin, the modal element tends to appear at the preverbal position. Hong Kong Hokkien, however, shows an exceptional instance where the modal occurs postverbally. Secondly, modal doubling, which is totally absent in Cantonese, does occur in Hong Kong Hokkien. In languages with two modal elements, like Dutch, the doubling in modals gives double modal readings. However, it is found that in Hong Kong Hokkien modal doubling, the two modality parts form only single epistemic modality reading. The data under study are taken from the author of this paper, a native Hong Kong Hokkien speaker. The goal of this paper is to investigate how modality is expressed in Hong Kong Hokkien. There are two hypotheses:

- a. There are specific lexical items to express universal-necessity ‘should’ and ‘must’ and existential-possibility ‘can’ and ‘may’ in Hong Kong Hokkien.
- b. In modal doubling, the two modal elements must be identical. The two modal elements only give one modality reading.

In my presentation, the literature on modality (Barbiers, 2002; Kratzer, 1991; Cinque, 2006; Hsin, 1999, etc) will be briefly stated, followed by general properties and syntactic behavior of modals and modal doubling in Hong Kong Hokkien. Specifically, I suggest modal doubling is an instance of syntactic reduplication. I will exemplify and explain why in modal doubling the two modal elements have to be the same and I will propose that the two modal elements only give single modal reading. Concerning methodology, I used ELAN 2.6.3 in building up the textual database of Hokkien. Regarding the significance of the study, it confirms the hypotheses laid down in the beginning: (i) there are specific lexical items to express universal-necessity and existential-possibility quantificational forces in Hong Kong Hokkien; (ii) In modal doubling, the two modal elements must be identical. The head of VP first creates a copy, then the copy appears in the Spec of MOD1P. It is this copy that checks the feature. As a result only one modality reading is available. To conclude, despite the fact that Cantonese, Mandarin and Hokkien all belong to Sino-Tibetan family, Cantonese does not allow modal doubling. Structurally, Hokkien has its own system in syntax and is a very different Chinese variant.

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